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P8_TA(2015)0272

Review of the European neighbourhood policy

European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (2015/2002(INI))

(2017/C 265/13)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3(5), 8, and 21 of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to the joint consultation paper from the Commission and the Vice-President/High Representative entitled ‘Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy’, published on 4 March 2015 ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the joint communications by the Commission and Vice-President/High Representative entitled ‘A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean’ (COM(2011)0200) ⁽²⁾, published on 8 March 2011, and ‘A new response to a changing neighbourhood’ (COM(2011)0303) ⁽³⁾, published on 25 May 2011,
- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 11 March 2003 entitled ‘Wider Europe — neighbourhood: a new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern neighbours’ (COM(2003)0104) ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 18 February 2008 on the European Neighbourhood Policy ⁽⁵⁾ and of 20 April 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy,
- having regard to the Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council of 24 June 2013,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on the European Neighbourhood Policy, namely those of 20 November 2003 on relations with our neighbours to the east and south ⁽⁶⁾, of 20 April 2004 on ‘Wider Europe — new neighbourhood policy’ ⁽⁷⁾, of 19 January 2006 on the European Neighbourhood Policy ⁽⁸⁾, of 15 November 2007 on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy ⁽⁹⁾, of 7 April 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy — Eastern dimension ⁽¹⁰⁾, of 7 April 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy — Southern dimension ⁽¹¹⁾, of 14 December 2011 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy ⁽¹²⁾, of 23 October 2013 on ‘The European Neighbourhood Policy: towards a strengthening of the partnership: EP’s position on the 2012 reports’ ⁽¹³⁾, and of 12 March 2014 on assessing and setting priorities for EU relations with the Eastern Partnership countries ⁽¹⁴⁾,
- having regard to the Riga Declaration of the EU Eastern Partnership Summit of 22 May 2015,

⁽¹⁾ JOIN(2015)0006.

<http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/consultation/consultation.pdf>

⁽²⁾ http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/com2011_200_en.pdf

⁽³⁾ <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0303:FIN:en:PDF>

⁽⁴⁾ http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ External Relations Council, conclusions of 18 February 2008 — http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/98818.pdf

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 87 E, 7.4.2004, p. 506.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 104 E, 30.4.2004, p. 127.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 287 E, 24.11.2006, p. 312.

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 282 E, 6.11.2008, p. 443.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ C 296 E, 2.10.2012, p. 105.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ C 296 E, 2.10.2012, p. 114.

⁽¹²⁾ OJ C 168 E, 14.6.2013, p. 26.

⁽¹³⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0446.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0229.

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- having regard to the report of the High Level Reflection Group on the Energy Community for the Future,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A8-0194/2015),
- A. whereas the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was created to deepen relations, enhance cooperation and strengthen the EU's partnerships with neighbouring countries in order to develop an area of shared stability, security and prosperity as underlined in Article 8 TEU; whereas the objective remains the same;
- B. whereas the neighbourhood is currently in a state of flux due to the increasing number of long-standing and newly emerging security challenges, and is less stable, considerably less secure and facing a more profound economic crisis than when the ENP was launched;
- C. whereas the revised policy should be based on mutual accountability and shared commitment to EU values and principles, including democracy, the rule of law, human rights and efficient, accountable and transparent public institutions, and whereas these are in the interest of neighbouring societies as much as of our own in terms of stability, security and prosperity; whereas, despite the complexities and challenges in practice, the EU must remain steadfastly in support of transition processes in all and any countries and democratisation, respect for human rights and the rule of law;
- D. whereas large parts of the neighbourhood continue to be affected by armed or frozen conflicts and crises; whereas partner countries must strive for a peaceful solution to existing conflicts; whereas the existence of conflicts, including frozen or protracted ones, hampers economic, social and political transformation as well as regional cooperation, stability and security; whereas the EU should play a more active role in the peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts;
- E. whereas these conflicts are undermining the development of a genuine and effective multilateral dimension of the ENP; whereas peace and stability are fundamental elements of the ENP; whereas partner countries must abide by these principles;
- F. whereas the EU firmly condemns all forms of human rights violations, including violence against women and girls, rape, slavery, honour crimes, forced marriages, child labour and female genital mutilation;
- G. whereas developments in the region since 2004, but in particular in the last few years, have shown the ENP to be unable to respond adequately and promptly to rapidly changing and challenging circumstances;
- H. whereas the ENP remains a strategic priority of the EU's foreign policy; whereas the review of the ENP must be conducted with the objective of strengthening it and in the spirit of sustaining progress towards a comprehensive and effective EU Common Foreign and Security Policy as a whole;
- I. whereas the Commission and the EEAS, together with the Council and Parliament, have tried to reshape the ENP so as to address its flaws and adapt it to changed national and international circumstances, in particular following the Arab Spring; whereas this was reflected in the new financing instrument for the ENP for 2014-2020, the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI); whereas the current challenges posed by the crisis in eastern Ukraine, the occupation of Crimea and Da'esh should be taken into account in the review of the ENP;
- J. whereas insecurity, instability and unfavourable socio-economic conditions in the neighbourhood countries can have negative impacts and reverse past democratic trends;
- K. whereas since the introduction of the new approach in 2011, political developments in the neighbourhood have demonstrated that the EU needs to further rethink relations with its neighbours, taking into account the different external and internal realities; whereas the EU needs to address new challenges in its neighbourhood and adjust its strategy by examining its interests and priorities and assessing its policy tools, incentives and available resources and their attractiveness to its partners;
- L. whereas the 2011 revision of the ENP stated that the new approach must be based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law;

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- M. whereas the EU should play a more active role in the peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts, notably those of frozen or protracted nature, which currently represent an insurmountable obstacle to the full development of the ENP both in the East and in the South, hindering good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation;
- N. whereas the ENP includes different 'neighbourhoods', encompassing countries with different interests, ambitions and capabilities;
- O. whereas a differentiated approach and a tailor-made policy are needed, especially as the EU neighbourhood has become more fragmented than ever, with the countries differing in many respects, including in their ambitions and expectations as regards the EU, the challenges they face and their external environment; whereas the EU's bilateral relations with ENP countries are at different stages of development; whereas the effective use of the 'more for more' principle is of fundamental importance in shaping and differentiating relations with partner countries, and the EU should 'reward' countries which demonstrate enhanced cooperation with it and progress in achieving European values, in terms both of resources and of other incentives within the framework of the ENP; whereas the EU's neighbours should be able to determine their future free from external pressure;
- P. whereas progress in the resolution of conflicts and controversies between ENP countries should be considered a criterion to be assessed in the annual Progress Reports;
- Q. whereas respect for the territorial integrity of sovereign states is a fundamental principle of relations between countries in the European neighbourhood and the occupation of a territory of one country by another is inadmissible;
- R. whereas the resources available to the EU for its action as a 'global player' until 2020 within the multiannual financial framework only amount to 6 % of the total budget and cover all related programmes, including development and cooperation assistance;
- S. whereas the ENP has contributed to the articulation of a single voice of the EU in the neighbourhood as a whole; whereas the Member States should play an important role in the European neighbourhood by aligning their efforts and increasing the EU's credibility and ability to act by speaking with a single voice;
- T. whereas the consultation process carried out by the Commission and the EEAS should be comprehensive and inclusive so as to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are consulted; whereas the importance of encouraging women's rights and gender equality organisations to participate in this consultation process should be stressed; whereas further efforts should be made to enhance the ENP's visibility and awareness of it in public opinion in the partner countries;
- U. whereas the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods face different problems and tackling these successfully requires that the ENP be flexible and adaptable in terms of the specific needs and challenges of each region;
1. Stresses the importance, necessity and timeliness of the review of the ENP; emphasises that the revised ENP should be able to provide a quick, flexible and adequate response to the situation on the ground, while also putting forward an ambitious strategic vision for developing relations with the neighbouring countries in both a bilateral and a multilateral framework, in line with the commitment to promote the core values on which the ENP is based;
 2. Stresses that the ENP is an essential part of the EU's foreign policy and must remain a single policy; considers that it forms a part of the EU's external action whose potential and uniqueness lie in the vast range of diplomatic, security, defence, economic, trade, development, and humanitarian instruments available to be deployed; maintains that an effective ENP is vital to enhance the EU's foreign policy credibility and global positioning, and that the ENP must demonstrate the EU's real leadership in the neighbourhood and in relations with our global partners;
 3. Believes in the continued value of the ENP's initially stated objectives of creating an area of prosperity, stability, security, and good neighbourliness, based on the common values and principles of the Union, by providing assistance and incentives for deep structural reforms in the neighbouring countries, carried out under their own responsibility and agreed with them, which will allow for reinforced engagement with the EU; stresses, therefore, the need to take into account lessons learned, go back to basics and bring these objectives back to the top of the agenda;

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4. Underlines the strategic importance of the ENP, as a policy creating multi-layered relations and strong interdependence between the EU and its partners in the neighbourhood; highlights that the fundamental challenge of the ENP lies in delivering tangible and concrete improvements to the citizens of the partner countries; considers that the ENP should become a stronger, more political and more effective policy, also through the reinforcement of its positive elements, including greater focus on partnership with societies, differentiation and the 'more for more' approach;
5. Stresses that respect for the universal fundamental values of human rights, the rule of law, democracy, freedom, equality and respect for human dignity on which the EU is founded must remain at the core of the revised policy, as stated in Article 2 of the association agreements between the EU and third countries; reiterates that strengthening the rule of law and support for democracy and human rights are in the interests of the partner countries, and calls for stronger conditionality regarding respect for these common fundamental values; underlines the role of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights and the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) in this regard;
6. Stresses that the renewed policy must be more strategic, focused, flexible and coherent, and politically driven; calls on the EU to formulate a clear and ambitious political vision on the ENP, and to pay special attention to its own political priorities in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, taking into account the different challenges facing countries in each region, as well as their differing aspirations and political ambitions; maintains that the Eastern and Mediterranean partnerships are crucially important; calls for special representatives to be appointed for the East and the South, with the task of politically coordinating the revised policy and being engaged in all EU action in the neighbourhood;
7. Underlines the important role of the Member States, their expertise and their bilateral relations with the ENP countries in shaping a coherent EU policy; stresses the need for proper coordination between the VP/HR, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, the EU delegations and the EU Special Representatives in order to avoid duplication of efforts; maintains that the EU delegations have a major role to play in implementing the ENP;
8. Calls on the VP/HR to develop proposals for cooperation with willing European Neighbours based on the model of the European Economic Area, which could constitute a further step in their European perspective, be based on enhanced inclusion in the EU area in terms of freedoms and full integration within the common market, and also include closer cooperation in common foreign and security policy (CFSP);
9. Urges that short-, medium- and long-term priorities and strategic objectives be defined, bearing in mind that the ENP should aim to create a differentiated approach to promote cooperation in different areas among and with the ENP countries; stresses that in defining its approach the EU should look at its interests and priorities and those of the individual countries concerned, together with their level of development, considering the interests and aspirations of societies, political ambitions and the geopolitical environment;
10. Emphasises that local ownership, transparency, mutual accountability and inclusiveness should be key aspects of the new approach so as to ensure that the benefits of the ENP reach all levels of community and society in the countries concerned, rather than being concentrated within particular groups;
11. Emphasises its conviction that, if the partner countries are to be helped to strengthen their own development potential, the political dialogue which currently characterises the ENP must give way to a broader social, economic and cultural dialogue which embraces all facets of the political, social, ethnic and cultural diversity of the partner countries; stresses the value of the progress achieved through territorial cooperation with the direct involvement of local authorities;
12. Regrets the limited resources allocated to the EU's cooperation with its partners within its neighbourhood, notably in comparison with the significantly higher levels of resources invested in ENP countries by stakeholders from third countries; notes that this undermines the EU's ability to promote and implement policies that are in line with its strategic interests in its neighbourhood; stresses the need to streamline support and increase funds in order to effectively reward and support partner countries which are genuinely committed to and make tangible progress towards achieving reforms, democratisation and respect for human rights;

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13. Emphasises the need to strengthen accountability and transparency mechanisms in the partner countries in order to ensure that they have the capacity to absorb and spend the funds in an efficient and meaningful way; calls on the Commission, therefore, to ensure efficient mechanisms of monitoring and oversight of spending of EU assistance in the ENP countries, including via scrutiny by civil society;

14. Calls on the EU to improve its coordination with other donors and international financial institutions, including through the AMICI initiative, in line with its commitment to become a more consistent, respected and effective global actor, and stresses the need for joint programming with and among the Member States; underlines that better coordination with the Member States and with the regional and local authorities (RLAs) is necessary in order to pursue and achieve a common, coherent and effective approach to the short- and medium-term goals of the EU's cooperation with neighbouring countries, and calls for a discussion to be opened on this matter with the Council;

15. Underlines that the EU should match the ambitions of reinforced engagement in its neighbourhood with sufficient financing; considers that the mid-term review of the external financing instruments should take into account the revised policy, and that the ENI should therefore reflect the ambition of making the ENP more efficient and ensure the predictability and sustainability of the EU's engagement with our partners, as well as an adequate degree of procedural flexibility; calls, furthermore, for more coherence and consistency between the various EU external financing instruments;

16. Underlines the facilitating role of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), complementing EU instruments with a new approach that is more flexible and responsive, gap-filling and financially efficient; calls on the Commission to allocate more resources to the EED;

17. Recognises that attitudes toward Europe and the EU in neighbouring countries have a real impact on conflict, but rejects any complicity with repression and human rights violations in neighbouring countries arising from a misguided short-term pursuit of stability;

Added value of action at EU level

Reshaping the European Neighbourhood Policy

18. Stresses the need to reshape the ENP in order to build strong, strategic and lasting partnerships with the ENP countries based on the preservation of, and in coherence with, the EU's values and principles and the promotion of mutual interests; calls for the technical aspects of the policy to be underpinned by a clear political vision;

19. Notes that the ENP should deploy its own methodology and tools, which should correspond to the level of ambition and the needs and objectives that the ENP countries and the EU seek to achieve;

20. Calls on the Commission to focus on sectors identified together with its partners, on the basis of common interests, in which progress and universal added value can be achieved, and to gradually expand progress- and ambition-based cooperation, in particular in order to contribute to economic growth and human development with a focus on the new generations; stresses that economic reforms must go along with political reforms and that good governance can only be achieved through an open, accountable and transparent decision-making process based on democratic institutions;

21. Stresses that enlargement policy and neighbourhood policy are separate policies with different objectives; reiterates, however, that European countries within the ENP, like any European country, can apply for EU membership if they satisfy the criteria and conditions of eligibility and admission under Article 49 TEU; considers, whilst recognising that reform and transition must come first and not wishing to raise unrealistic expectations, that a membership perspective must be sustained as an incentive to all countries which are eligible and have expressed evident European aspirations and ambitions;

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Support for democracy, judicial reform, the rule of law, good governance and institutional capacity-building

22. Considers support for democracy, the rule of law, good governance, state-building and human rights and fundamental freedoms to be central to the ENP; underlines that no policies that contribute to jeopardising these core values should be adopted under the ENP; stresses that the EU and its Member States should offer incentives and know-how for undertaking and supporting democratic reforms and overcoming the political, economic, and social challenges;

23. Underlines the continuous need to focus on strengthening and consolidating democracy, the rule of law, good governance, the independence of the judicial system, the fight against corruption, respect for diversity and the rights of minorities, including religious groups, the rights of LGBTI persons, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities; highlights that capacity-building in national institutions, including national assemblies, together with support for civil society, pro-democracy groups and political parties, will enhance political dialogue and pluralism;

24. Stresses that women's rights, gender equality and the right to non-discrimination are fundamental rights and key principles of the EU's external action; underlines the importance of promoting the rights of children and young people and gender equality, as well as of the economic and political empowerment of women, with a view to building inclusive, prosperous and stable societies in the EU's neighbourhood;

25. Considers that the revised ENP should strengthen the promotion of fundamental freedoms in the ENP countries by fostering freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and freedom of the press and of the media as enabling rights for realisation of economic, social and cultural rights;

26. Highlights the importance of developing the social dimension of the ENP, by engaging with the partners in the fight against poverty and exclusion, stimulating employment and fair growth, facilitating healthy labour relations and promoting education and decent work, thus also tackling some of the root causes of irregular migration;

27. Acknowledges the importance of cultural dialogue between the EU and the neighbouring countries, in areas such as conflict prevention and peace-building, the development of creative industries, strengthening of freedom of expression, support for social and economic development, and reinforcement of dialogue with civil society and intercultural and interreligious dialogues, also in order to tackle the increasing discrimination against and persecution of minority and religious groups; calls for strengthening frameworks for cultural relations, enabling the development of programmes for mobility, training and capacity-building and exchanges in the fields of culture and education;

28. Emphasises that the approach based on 'Partnership with Societies' should be strengthened and promoted; urges that the common interests and goals of the policy be defined in consultation with all stakeholders from the various societies, and not only with the authorities;

29. Stresses the importance of developing a thriving and active civil society in the processes of transformation and democratisation, including social partners and the business community; calls for further support for civil society, local SMEs and other non-state actors, since these constitute a driving force in the reform process, and for a more engaged dialogue and partnership between the different civil society actors and sectors in the EU and the neighbouring countries in the ENP framework; underlines the importance of European companies and their role in the promotion and dissemination of international standards for business, including corporate social responsibility;

Differentiation and conditionality

30. Calls for the ENP to be developed into a more tailor-made and flexible policy framework that is able to adapt to the diversity that exists among partner countries, and for a consistent implementation of the 'differentiated approach'; underlines that differentiation should take place between the ENP countries;

31. Stresses the need to apply effective conditionality in relation to reform processes, and underlines the need for a coherent approach on the part of the EU between its positions and conditionality in financial allocations; emphasises that the EU cannot compromise its fundamental values and rights and should avoid creating double standards; stresses that countries that are making progress in implementing reforms, leading to long-term political, economic and social developments and seeking a deeper political engagement with the EU, should be granted more substantial EU commitment and support and should be assessed on the basis of individual achievements in these reform processes; underlines the importance of fully applying the 'more for more' principle;

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32. Stresses that Association Agreements are the most advanced but not the final step in relations between the EU and its neighbours;

33. Considers that the EU should invite non-association partner countries to engage in sectorial cooperation, including the possibility of concluding new or reinforcing existing sectorial agreements such as the Energy Community that would facilitate the integration of such countries into specific sectorial parts of the single area of the four basic freedoms of the EU;

34. Considers that in pursuing the ENP special attention should be focused on cooperation related to economic governance and the sustainability of public finances in ENP countries;

Security dimension

35. Notes that preserving peace, security and stability is a fundamental concern in the neighbourhood and that the security environment is sharply deteriorating; calls for a strong security component in the ENP, with adequate policy tools which have regrettably been missing to date; stresses that the EU should focus on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its current crisis management instruments with a view to establishing capacities to broaden the spectrum of crisis management interventions; stresses that security, stability and development go hand in hand and that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the security concerns in the region and the root causes thereof;

36. Observes that the stability of the Sahelo-Saharan belt should be regarded as the nerve- centre of insecurity in both northern and southern Africa, and that the instability of that region is caused by the duplication of trafficking networks dealing in arms, drugs and human beings and is harming Europe's stability;

37. Calls for closer coordination between the ENP and wider Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) activities, alongside strengthening the links between internal and external security and addressing different aspects of the security of ENP countries and of the EU; stresses the need for coherence and full alignment between the review of the ENP and the revision of the EU Security Strategy;

38. Underlines the need for an overarching political strategy while ensuring full compliance with international law and commitments, as laid down in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, based on respect for human rights, minority rights and fundamental freedoms, independence, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of states, inviolability of borders, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and peaceful resolution of conflicts; notes that the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as the biggest regional organisation responsible for security, can play an important role in this regard and believes it should acquire a new impetus by taking on the role of mediator; supports the right of partners to make independent and sovereign choices on foreign and security policy, free from external pressure and coercion;

39. Calls for the revised policy to support partner countries in building proper state structures to deal with security issues, such as effective law enforcement, terrorism and organised crime, and intelligence and security, including cybersecurity, which should be developed on the basis of full respect of human rights and accompanied by proper parliamentary democratic control; stresses that the EU should engage in areas such as security sector reform (SSR), and, in post-conflict situations, in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); calls on the EU to focus on capacity-building for border control on the part of the partner countries; acknowledging the ongoing contribution already being made by some of those countries; invites the neighbourhood countries to contribute to CSDP missions where relevant; calls on the EU to promote joint initiatives by the neighbouring countries in the security field, so as to enable them to take on more responsibility and make a positive input into security in their region;

40. Reminds the Member States of their obligations under the Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP on arms exports) which inter alia requires them to deny an export licence for military technology or equipment to any neighbourhood country if there is a clear risk that the military technology or equipment to be exported might be used for internal repression or in committing serious violations of international humanitarian law, would provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing tensions or conflicts in the country of final destination, or would be exported aggressively against another country or used to assert a territorial claim by force;

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41. Stresses the need to actively promote and assist in the peaceful settlement of conflicts and in post-conflict reconciliation policies in the EU's neighbourhood, using different tools and instruments on the basis of the added value they may provide; believes such measures should include the work of the EU Special Representatives, confidence-building programmes, restoring dialogue, mediation promoting people-to-people contacts, and CSDP missions; calls on the VP/HR and the EEAS to develop innovative measures and approaches, including public communication strategies and informal consultations, in order to support dialogue and reconciliation; observes that the EU delegations have a key role to play in establishing early warning systems by building up finely-meshed prevention networks with the various civil society organisations;

42. Reiterates its support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the partner countries; takes the view that the ENP should contribute to and be supportive of these principles in practice; stresses that that frozen or protracted conflicts hamper the full development of the ENP; regrets, in this regard, that since the launch of the ENP no progress has been made in the resolution of the existing conflicts; recalls its position that the occupation of territory of a partner country violates the fundamental principles and objectives of the ENP; emphasises the need for the earliest peaceful settlement of the frozen conflicts on the basis of the norms and principles of international law; calls on the VP/HR to play a more active role making clear that the deepening of bilateral relations is linked to peaceful conflict resolution and respect for international law; underlines, in this context, the importance of pursuing a principled policy of promoting accountability for all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and of avoiding double standards, in particular in this regard;

43. Urges the EU to apply to regional conflicts the spirit and lessons deriving from the historical experience of European integration, since bilateral issues must be solved peacefully and good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation are fundamental elements of the ENP; calls, in this regard, for the involvement of citizens and the engagement of public actors in horizontal partnerships and twinning with counterparts from the Union, and for engagement with society and the younger generation as a factor for change;

Fostering regional integration

44. Stresses the importance of the regional dimension of the ENP and the need to promote and contribute to regional synergies and integration by means of regional cooperation programmes; underlines that enhanced economic cooperation among the ENP countries is necessary for achieving stability and prosperity in the European neighbourhood;

45. Calls, in this respect, for the complementing of the EU's bilateral relation with ENP countries with its multilateral dimension by increasing the number of activities and initiatives in this context, paying particular attention to strengthening cross-border projects, stepping up people-to-people programmes, developing incentives for regional cooperation, and further enhancing an active dialogue with civil society; considers that the future ENP should offer an inclusive regional platform for discussing human rights issues, in line with the core principles of the ENP;

46. Calls for systematic human rights impact assessments — including gender perspectives — of trade agreements and EU financial support to programmes and projects within the framework of the ENP;

47. Calls for the revised policy to strengthen the existing platforms for cooperation, namely the Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership, in order to further support regional integration where the priorities identified by the partners are similar for a specific policy field, to address specific sub-regional issues such as mobility, energy or security, and to bring the partners closer together in terms of economic standards and legislation; believes that the multilateral structures of the ENP should be consolidated and developed more strategically;

48. Underlines the importance of the role of multilateral assemblies, such as Euronest and PA-UfM, as fora for political dialogue and as a tool for fostering ownership of the Neighbourhood Policy, and strongly encourages them to increase their engagement therein in an adequate and effective manner;

49. Highlights the added value of parliamentary diplomacy and of the regular bilateral interparliamentary meetings the EP holds with the counterparts from the Neighbourhood as a tool for exchanging experiences and evaluating the status of the individual countries' relation with the EU; encourages the Member States' national parliaments to hold their bilateral interparliamentary meetings within the framework of the ENP, as a means of ensuring a coherent approach;

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50. Highlights the importance of the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) and the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), which enable local and regional representatives to engage in dialogue with the EU institutions and to pursue economic, social and local and regional cooperation;

51. Emphasises that the development of regional civil society platforms such as the Eastern Partnership and the Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Fora strengthens a multi-stakeholder engagement driving the democratisation and economic reform agenda in the Neighbourhood;

Neighbours of neighbours

52. Emphasises the need to build strong partnerships with neighbouring countries; stresses the importance of ensuring that the ENP is part of the EU's broader external policy and of acknowledging the other strategic players that have influence on the neighbourhood — the 'neighbours of neighbours' — as well as international and regional organisations, by, inter alia, addressing issues of common interest and mutual concern, including regional and global security, through existing bilateral frameworks or multilateral dialogue where deemed appropriate and relevant;

53. Stresses that the EU should realistically consider the different policy options that its partners face, as well as how to build bridges with their neighbours on different levels and how to address the foreign policy of third countries in its neighbourhood, ensuring that it is for the EU and its sovereign partners to decide on how they want to proceed in their relations;

54. Reiterates its conviction that the DCFTA provisions do not represent any commercial challenges for the Russian Federation and that the Association Agreements should not be seen as an impediment to good relations of Eastern Partners with any of their neighbours;

55. Calls on the EU to develop effective mechanisms of support for ENP partner countries which are pursuing an ambitious European agenda and, as a consequence, are suffering from retaliatory measures, trade coercion or outright military aggression from third countries; reiterates that, while the ENP is not aimed against any other strategic player and rejects the notion of a zero-sum geopolitical competition in the neighbourhood, the EU must provide credible commitments and robust political support to partners who wish to align more closely with it;

56. Calls on the EU to take advantage of the expertise of the regional organisations to which the neighbours belong, such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the African Union, the relevant Regional Offices of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, and to actively involve and cooperate with them in order to address regional conflicts; recalls that these are important fora for engaging partners in carrying out reforms, addressing concerns on human rights and regional issues — for which they should assume greater responsibility — and fostering democratisation;

Policy objectives and tools

A diversified offer: priority sectors

57. Calls for the EU to explore and identify, together with its partners, priorities for strengthened cooperation and integration in different policy fields, such as economic and human development, conflict and disaster prevention, infrastructure and regional development, the environment, trade competition policies, SMEs, migration, security, energy and energy efficiency, with the aim of creating an area of prosperity, stability and good neighbourliness;

58. Considers that the aim of achieving coherence in the internal and external policies of the EU, as well as the close and growing links between certain internal and external issues, should be reflected in the new ENP;

59. Considers that stronger cooperation in the field of the future digital single market, support for e-administration reforms and open government solutions, constitutes an instrument for citizens' engagement;

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60. Stresses the importance of the free movement of people, and supports enhancing mobility within the neighbourhood, in a secure and well managed environment, through visa facilitation and liberalisation, particularly for students, young people, artists and researchers; calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to further enhance mobility partnerships within the neighbourhood and develop possibilities for circular migration schemes which would open up safe and legal routes for migrants; calls on the EU to make a clear distinction between asylum seekers fleeing persecution and irregular economic migrants; condemns trafficking in human beings, most of the victims of which are women, and stresses the importance of reinforcing cooperation with partner countries in order to combat it;

61. Calls on the Commission to pay attention to the gender equality perspective when promoting vocational and academic training, as well as in the framework of circular migration programmes with the neighbourhood countries, in order to strengthen women's participation in their economies;

62. Notes that high unemployment, particularly among young people, lack of free access to information, social exclusion and poverty, and lack of protection of minority rights, combined with low political and socio-economic participation of women, poor governance and high levels of corruption, are root causes of instability, and demands engagement beyond the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs); notes that the mere prospect of trade deals and free trade agreements no longer provides a sufficiently effective lever to strengthen our partnership with the neighbourhood, in the southern Mediterranean countries in particular; notes the lack of regional economic cooperation between the EU's neighbouring countries, and calls for the establishment of sub-regional initiatives in order to increase trade among them;

63. Highlights the importance of investing in projects for youth, women and future leaders, by making full use of the scholarship opportunities under the Erasmus + programme, in order to foster student and teacher exchanges between ENP countries and the Member States, aiming at the formation of future leaders from both ENP countries and the Member States, as well as further promoting academic and educational projects which have already proved their value in this field, such as the College of Europe;

64. Calls on the Commission to explore and offer to the ENP countries different levels of participation, cooperation and engagement in EU policies, programmes and agencies, such as EUROPOL, FRONTEX, and customs management, in the field of fighting against human trafficking, economic and cross-border crimes and in that of the Energy Community, which as a successful integration agreement can play a greater role in the ENP; highlights the importance of energy security and closer energy cooperation within the European neighbourhood, with a view of reaching a shared goal of uninterrupted supply of affordable, sustainable, efficient and clean energy; calls for the gradual opening-up of the Energy Union to the ENP countries; encourages the Commission to promote the Budapest convention on fighting cybercrime among the ENP countries and to call on them to join it if they have not yet done so;

65. Considers that greater emphasis should be placed on using technical assistance programmes such as TAIEX and Twinning, and that the partners should be included in EU programmes such as Erasmus and Horizon 2020, as they contribute to sharing knowledge and establishing networks at different levels and are the basis for creating a Common Neighbourhood Area;

66. Takes the view that the parliamentary dimension of the policy needs to be reinforced by enhancing the effectiveness of the interparliamentary meetings and the joint parliamentary bodies established under agreements with the EU, and of the parliamentary assemblies; welcomes, in this context, the new approach that Parliament has adopted to parliamentary democracy support; underlines the role played by parliaments of ENP countries in holding governments accountable, and encourages the strengthening of their monitoring capacity; calls for Parliament to be involved in the implementation of the new ENP and to be kept regularly informed and consulted on its progress in the partner countries; takes the view that European political parties and groups in the national parliaments of Member States and the European Parliament can play an important role and can take on crucial responsibility as regards the promotion of a political culture based on fully-fledged democratic institutions, the rule of law, multi-party democracy and full participation of women in decision-making;

67. Emphasises that for the ENP to be a successful policy, it should also ensure that there is ownership by the Member States, also by expanding Flagship Initiatives; calls on the Commission, therefore, to reinforce policy coordination and joint programming of financial assistance, and to provide mechanisms to foster information-sharing among Member States and EU structures on ENP countries, as well as consultation between the Member States, EU structures and neighbouring countries; considers that the EU's financial and technical assistance should be conditional on successful achievement of tangible benchmarks in the reform process, on the basis of which further support will be allocated;

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Assessment and visibility

68. Emphasises that the action plans established in close partnership with the authorities of the partner countries and in consultation with CSOs should focus on a limited number of realistic priorities to be implemented, and that their implementation should be assessed on a regular basis or when prompted by changing circumstances, with policy options which could be commonly agreed; points out the importance of developing a consultation process with CSOs as regards the definition of benchmarks;

69. Stresses that the progress reports should focus on the implementation of the priorities identified in the action plans and should reflect the level of engagement of the partner country; reiterates its call for the data contained in the reports to be put into perspective by bearing in mind the national context and by including trends from the previous years; takes the view that all the main stakeholders of ENP countries, including civil society, should be genuinely involved and consulted before drafting the reports; calls for key documents such as progress reports to be readily available on the respective EU delegation websites and translated into the local language; calls on the EU to employ more qualitative means of measuring the extent of progress in the partner countries and to implement effective cross-compliance measures regarding progress by partners in terms of human rights, the rule of law and democracy;

70. Considers that the visibility of EU assistance should be enhanced in order to make clear to the populations of the partner countries and the EU Member States the benefits of EU support; calls on the Commission to design a special mechanism for providing EU humanitarian assistance to the neighbourhood countries that would differ from the model used for third countries worldwide and would ensure high visibility for the EU and its political agenda, among other goals; underlines the importance and necessity of a mechanism able to ensure transparency in relation to the financial assistance granted by the EU;

71. Calls for the EU to strengthen its capacity to counter misinformation and propaganda campaigns against itself and its Member States which are aimed at diminishing their unity and solidarity; calls for the EU to strengthen its visibility in order to show clearly its support for and engagement with and in the partner countries; underlines the importance of promoting objective, independent and impartial information and of freedom of the media in the ENP countries, as well as the need for strategic communication efforts in its neighbourhood, including on its values and objectives, through the development of a comprehensive, effective and systematic communication strategy within the revised policy;

72. Calls for the EU to increase its presence in the partner countries using more interactive audiovisual means and social media in the respective local languages, in order to reach all of society; calls on the Commission to prepare a clear communication strategy for societies in the ENP countries, in order to explain to them the benefits of the Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Trade Areas (DCFTA's), as a tool for modernising their political systems and economies;

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73. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the ENP countries, the Parliamentary Assemblies of Euronest and the Union for the Mediterranean, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE.
