



European Commission

Speech - 5 May 2015

Speech on the European Neighbourhood Policy Review and Package

Commissioner's Hahn remarks during the discussion on the European Neighbourhood Policy Review and Package with the European Parliament's AFET Committee and National Parliaments, European Parliament in Brussels

Chairman, honourable members,

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to exchange views with you today on the forthcoming review of the ENP and also on this year's ENP Package. I attach high importance to our structured dialogue. The important reflections in Mr Kukan's working document and in your discussions will help us ensure that the ENP can, in the future, more effectively support the development of an area of shared stability, security and prosperity with our partners.

You will have seen that the 4 March Joint Communication highlights four key points. I outlined them to you when we last met on March 25th. However, I would like to recap the four points very briefly for the benefit of the representatives of National Parliaments present here today.

First: what can we do to increase the scope for differentiation in the way we work with our partners? We need to do more to recognise that our partners are very diverse. Not just different east and south, but different within the east and within the south.

Some countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova want closer integration with us, and we need to reflect on what further steps are possible.

In the south, democratic transition has advanced considerably in Tunisia, and political and economic relations have been strengthened in Morocco.

BUT some other partners, East and South, do not - or not at present - want closer association with us in the way the Neighbourhood Policy has been presented so far. In some cases they are under pressure from their other neighbours, or are simply making other strategic choices. We must reflect honestly on how to build partnerships under these circumstances; making a realistic assessment of the EU's interests and theirs. Our approach needs to reflect each country's specific needs, priorities and aspirations and the common interests they share with the EU, while always promoting universal principles.

On top of this, we need to consider how to work with the neighbours of our neighbours – without giving them a veto over any partner's engagement with us in the ENP. First steps in this direction have already been taken for example when addressing jointly the consequences of the Syrian crisis.

The second key point is ownership. We will never get the best from this policy while it is seen as something more or less imposed by Europe, rather than a partnership actively chosen by the other side. We should develop a real partnership of equals.

The third point is about focus: I want to get away from the current model where we try to cover a very wide range of sectors with every partner. For those that want, and who are able, we should pursue the Association Agreements and DCFTAs. But, for those who can't, or do not want to engage so deeply, let's narrow the focus to where the real interests lie and build on more solid foundations. I'm thinking of essential areas such as:

- economic development
- energy/connectivity
- migration and mobility

- security
- governance
- and youth

A word on security: until now the ENP has relied almost exclusively on community instruments. This review offers the possibility to bring ALL our instruments together, to attempt a much more coherent approach to the key challenges in the region.

This greater coherence in the way we deploy our instruments should also help us to address some of the urgent challenges that we can only tackle with the help of our partners. Firstly the radicalism that feeds the terrorist threat to our citizens and theirs. Secondly the terrible chain of poverty and conflict, criminality and poor governance, that results in unacceptable loss of life as migrants try to cross the Mediterranean sea to a better life.

Lastly, we need to be more flexible: this means being able to react to changing circumstances, and crises when they arise, including with our financial instruments.

As regards the consultation process, I'm pleased to say that we're making good progress. We had an excellent Ministerial meeting in Barcelona on April 13th. The meeting was remarkable for several reasons: to start with, it was the first meeting with this particular grouping since 2008. The level of participation - 30 Foreign Ministers both from the EU and the Southern partners - showed how committed we all are to seize this opportunity to make European Neighbourhood Policy more effective and relevant. There was an open and constructive exchange of views and it confirmed the strong and unanimous support of our Southern partners for closer cooperation, even if the different partners may not have the same aspirations. The clearest message from Barcelona was that our partners want us to put our partnership on a more equal footing, and to explore new formats for our relations.

As regards our neighbours in the East, we had a good exchange of views at the Eastern Partnership ministerial on 20 April which was dedicated to preparations for the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga on May 21st and 22nd. This will be an important rendez-vous point for the ENP and the outcome of the Summit will inform the review. Here too it is already clear that partners want the review to offer new ways to recognise their different ambitions.

I would like to turn now to the package on the implementation of the ENP in 2014 which was adopted and published on 25 March. It includes two regional reports, east and south, and twelve country reports. The reports give a picture of the development of partner countries in 2014 in terms of democratic transition, human rights and fundamental freedoms, economic development and the Union's cooperation in areas, such as migration, mobility, justice, security, energy and transport.

2014 was a year of crises and major challenges: armed conflicts in Ukraine, atrocities and human rights violations by terrorists groups in the Middle East and North Africa and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; irregular migration and trafficking of human beings. The main objectives of the ENP, political association and economic integration, were often overtaken by the urgent need to react to political crises and by calls for humanitarian aid.

The overall assessment of this year's ENP Package presents a very mixed picture.

In the East: Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine signed Association Agreements with Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs). Democratic transition process is moving ahead. I have just attended the EU Ukraine Summit and International Conference in support of their support process.

Ukraine is making some remarkable progress given the challenging circumstances, particularly in legislation and deregulation. We are working to make our support to the implementation of key reforms more targeted and coordinated. Cooperation with Armenia continued although the country joined the Eurasian Economic Union. Azerbaijan remained an important economic partner, but the space for civil society narrowed.

In the South: Democratic transition advanced considerably in Tunisia and political and economic relations with Morocco were strengthened. The political and military/security situation in Libya with fighting militias continued to be a problem that also favoured irregular migration. Egypt has emerged again as a key foreign policy player in the region, its democratic transition process has however not much advanced.

The Middle East Peace Process stalled in 2014 around the hostilities in Gaza; Jordan and Lebanon showed extraordinary resilience against the flux of refugees coming from Syria and Iraq.

We also observe that the fight against terrorism by some of our partners means the limitation or reduction of human rights and fundamental freedoms in some cases: Jordan and Egypt cancelled their moratoria on the death penalty and carried out executions. We therefore need to carefully reflect how to balance the values aspect while at the same time ensuring that a strategic dialogue and engagement can be maintained.

Chairman, honourable members,

A final reflection on the future ENP: We need to find new ways to deliver our messages, and to be heard. I am looking for concrete ideas that will deliver results in the short to medium term, and ones the public can understand. And here I see a crucial role for MEPs and national parliamentarians in giving this review visibility on the ground in your countries and in ensuring that your constituents' views on the ENP are fed back to us.

Thank you for your attention.