



Parliamentarians of Europe call for a more individual approach to Eastern partners

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Tailor-made approach to Eastern partners in revised Eastern partnership policy, including in trade, more cooperation for energy security to be independent from Russia, easing of access to the EU's transport market and a suggestion to establish cultural visas to Eastern artists were messages delivered by MEPs and MPs from Eastern Partnership countries in the 4th Euronest Parliamentary Assembly concluded on Wednesday in Yerevan, Armenia.

Solidarity with Ukraine for Russian aggression and the need to recognize Armenian genocide was also expressed in the adopted reports.

"EURONEST is an unique fora for MEPs and MPs from Eastern partner parliaments to discuss and agree even on very sensitive issues, such as Armenian genocide and Russian aggression in Ukraine", said the Euronest co-president from the EU side MEP Heidi Hautala (Greens, FI) after the conclusion of the session.

She highlighted as a priority the need to address the current trade complications, with the six Eastern European countries "sandwiched between the EU and Russia". "Maybe the revised European Neighbourhood policy should strive to develop our trade and economic relations in a way where choosing would not mean losing", she added.

Trade with Russia vs the EU: a tough choice

While condemning Russia for its trade measures against the EU and Eastern partners who have chosen association with the EU, MEPs and MPs in the political committee resolution acknowledge that for Eastern partners "access to the EU market is equally important as the access to the Russia market", and call for more effort to make the two economic areas - the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EUEA) - compatible.

Also, the EUEA could only be beneficial as long as Russia does not force the Eastern neighbourhood states to join it "via economic pressures, threats over security and energy supply".

More energy cooperation: to counter Russian pressure

The energy security committee report regrets that Russia has used energy trade for political pressure, and stresses that the upcoming Eastern Partnership summit in Riga should deliver more cooperation between the EU and its Eastern partners to "strengthen mutual energy security and to make them more independent and resilient".

MEPs and MPs in particular stress the need to cooperate in areas in renewable energy production and energy efficiency.

EU should let Eastern partners in its transport market

Press release

The EU member states should not exert protectionist measures against Eastern partners who want to compete in the EU road transport market, they say. The EU Commission, from its side, should take care that the partners apply the EU relevant safety, security, environmental and social standards and offer removal of quantitative restrictions in exchange.

They also suggest to the Commission a possibility of connecting the TEN-T core network to the transport network in the Eastern Partnership countries. All sides should facilitate border crossing procedures, as 40% of total transportation time is lost at the borders.

Russian aggression in Ukraine

"All the partner countries except for Belarus are confronted with separatism and territorial disputes in which Russia is directly involved or exerts large influence" MEPs and MPs say, in a special resolution addressing the particular case of Ukraine whose peace and security was a common interest for the whole of Europe.

They ask Russia to compensate material losses it caused to Ukraine, its citizens and institutions, by occupying Crimea and its military activities.

Artist visas

In the resolution reflecting on how to strengthen intercultural dialogue, MEPs and Eastern MPs call for a creation of a cultural visa for Eastern European partner countries artists and other culture professionals.

Belarus: still out

Belarus, even though it is an Eastern Partnership state, does not participate in the activities of the parliamentary assembly, due to political reasons. Instead MEPs and MPs in the Euronest session met with its opposition leaders, where they discussed the current political and human rights situation in Belarus behind closed doors.

In the political affairs committee resolution they state that release of Belarussian political prisoners was still a necessary condition to relaunch political and economic dialogue with the EU.

They also deplored the confrontation between the government and opposition in some of the other partner countries and urged their governments to refrain from 'political retribution and selective justice'.

100 years since Armenian genocide

To mark the occasion of 100 years since the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire, MEPs and MPs in a separate document reminded that "denial of genocide was a final stage of genocide", deplore attempts to that end, pay tribute to the victims and invite Turkey to "come to terms with its past".

Further information

- EuroNest website: <http://www.euronest.europarl.europa.eu/euronest/>
- Programme of the EuroNest session in Yerevan 16-18 March: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20150313IPR34601/html/EURONEST-to-meet-for-the-4th-time-in-Yerevan>
- EP Study: The Eastern Partnership after Five Years: Time for Deep Rethinking: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EXPO_STU\(2015\)536438](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EXPO_STU(2015)536438)

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