



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG  
WARSAW

| Bertelsmann Stiftung

**„European Union and its Eastern Neighbours.  
Challenges and new chances of policy shaping”**

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## **Opening Remarks on the Organizers' Behalf**

In 2011, the Polish presidency will have a unique opportunity to shape European policy toward its eastern neighbours. Since its accession to the EU, Poland has been an important motor of Europe's Eastern policy. Furthermore, Poland's Eastern policy has also been interrelated with Germany's strategic approach of combining Eastern policy with working toward a democratic and reliable Russia. Hungary and Poland will hold the rotating presidency of the European Council in 2011, giving the two countries an opportunity to use their geographic proximity and historic closeness to Eastern Europe to shape the Union's Eastern policy. Considering the standstill and even regression in the democratic development and European orientation of some of the neighboring countries, a paradigm change—bringing in bottom-up actors—might be very helpful for European policy-making.

After ten years of struggling with constitutional reform, the adoption of the Lisbon treaty constitutes a milestone of European policy-making. However, the implementation of the new treaty has already proven to be no easy exercise, mainly because in many cases the new provisions are not very specific. This vagueness has become a source of confusion—both inside and outside the Union—and a source of fierce bureaucratic and political turf wars in Brussels, between EU institutions and member states, and among EU capitals. In the end, it will take the "new EU" some time to reach a new institutional equilibrium. Despite the temporary conflict about the control of the foreign policy in Brussels, the new diplomatic service of the EU will play an important role in the near future. The Treaty of Lisbon has a double significance for the EU's Eastern policy: It brings about institutional changes in the area of external relations, and contains explicit provisions concerning neighbourhood and enlargement policy.

Well aware of the strategic challenges and opportunities, the three organizers of this conference, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Warsaw and Demos Europa intend to initiate a discourse at an early stage in order to start a debate among shapers of policy and civil society actors, between EU member states and actors from Eastern Europe, including Russia. The broad spectrum of participants derives from an inclusive understanding of Eastern policy.

The three policy papers, written by experts on European and East European affairs from Poland and Germany, also emphasize the responsibility of both countries to use best practices and experience, and to generate new ideas in facing the challenges in Eastern Europe in a European context.

## **European Union and its Eastern Neighbours in the Light of Lisbon Treaty Implementation**

*Janis A. Emmanouilidis, Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Centre, Brussels*

*Paweł Świeboda, President, demosEuropa, Warsaw*

The relationship between the European Union (EU) and its Eastern neighbours and the ultimate question of "Europe's borders" has haunted the EU and its member states since the end of the Cold War. Before 1989 the world was much simpler. Belonging to the Western camp and projecting decent democratic credentials guaranteed that one would sooner or later be welcomed into the fold of European and Euro-Atlantic organisations. Today, the story is much more complicated. The "big bang" accession of 12 new members in 2004/2007 was historic, as it was about the reunification of the continent. But it was more than that: EU widening has been a key source of economic and political dynamism throughout Europe, from which both new and old members have profited. However, enlargement has become the victim of its own success. Today, one can witness symptoms of exhaustion and indigestion in many corners of the European Union. And this fatigue has negative effects on the relationship between the EU and its Eastern neighbours.

### **The new context**

In the future the European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU will need to be formulated in a changing political and economic reality. EU foreign policy may evolve in line with any of at least three different scenarios. In the first, the Union remains faithful to its global ambitions, which were expressed most thoroughly in the "politics of persuasion" in the run-up to the Copenhagen summit last December. In the second scenario, an introverted tendency prevails and the EU is preoccupied with navel-gazing, concentrating predominantly on its own internal affairs. An intermediate scenario would be that of a regional consolidation, that is, a more deliberate and premeditated strengthening of the EU's position in the closest neighbourhood.

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*Foreign policy scenarios*

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For Eastern Europe to advance on the EU agenda, new goalposts need to be sighted. The European Neighbourhood Policy was launched as a function of the EU's internal evolution. It relied on a defensive approach, aiming to guard the Union against unwanted turbulence outside of its borders. Its intention was not to project influence in the new geographical areas, but rather to protect the EU legacy and counteract destabilisation.

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*Defensive  
neighbourhood  
policy*

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In the future, the EU's policy towards its neighbourhood will have to follow a different paradigm, that of a "global Europe". The deepening of the Union's relationship with its eastern neighbours, and especially the possibility of extending EU membership further, will only be contemplated if the EU itself decides to be an open and confident actor in international relations. The key message to be communicated is that a European Union that lives up to its regional responsibilities will be able to play a more powerful role in a less Eurocentric world, in which the "old continent" is no longer the centre of gravity and history, but instead struggling to defy the danger of gradual marginalization.

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*Need for a new  
paradigm*

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The Union's paradigm is affected by fundamental changes, which took place in the context of the EU's relations with its neighbours in at least three areas. First, by means of a growing commonality of interest, especially in the field of energy. Second, as a result of the impact of globalisation, both inside the EU and in its external relations.. Third, by virtue of more clarity emerging as regards the objectives of Russian engagement in the region.

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*Three  
fundamental  
changes*

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The normalisation of energy relations is a new factor at the outset of 2010. The EU has contributed to this through its engagement in the process of modernising the Ukrainian gas network, which was one of the most important developments in neighbourly relations in 2009. EU climate policy, investment in energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean coal, the gasification of coal, and shale gas exploration will successively translate themselves into greater energy independence for Europe and hence reduce the sensitivity of this issue in relations with Russia and the transit countries.

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*Energy*

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In EU policy towards Eastern Europe a new factor has gained particular weight: The process of democratisation is beginning to bear fruit, as evidenced by the Ukrainian elections and the transformation in Moldova. It can no longer be argued that the region is structurally incapable of democratic consolidation. This is not only an important argument in the European debate for the proponents of an active approach to Eastern

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*Democratisation*

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Europe, but also a key factor with regard to future political developments in Russia.

For years, EU policy towards Eastern Europe was under the strong influence of an either overly optimistic or an overly pessimistic vision of strategic relations with Russia. Concerns about Russian reactions prevented more ambitious action towards countries in the Union's neighbourhood. Today, Russia is in a state of crisis and the EU's assessment of Russian intentions is much more realistic than in the recent past. Awareness is growing that the weight of Russia was exaggerated in the European political debate. Hence, Eastern Europe has a chance to be treated in a more objective fashion, because policy-makers will find it less important to look over their shoulders to see how Russia reacts. Over all, "normality" in relations with the East could help to produce results, as it would help the region cast off the stigma of being an area requiring "special care", leading to increased investor and business confidence.

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*More realistic  
view of Russia*

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### **The Treaty of Lisbon and the "new EU"**

Europe went through almost ten years of agony before the Treaty of Lisbon (finally) came into force on December 1, 2009. Although the Union's new primary law is by no means perfect, it is better than the Nice Treaties in that it offers advantages with respect to the further parliamentarisation, personalisation and politicisation of the enlarged Union. However, implementation of the new Treaty has already proven to be fraught with difficulties, mainly because many of the new provisions are so vague. The result has been confusion—both inside and outside the Union—and fierce bureaucratic and political turf wars, which will take some time to settle into a new institutional equilibrium.

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*Need for a new  
institutional  
equilibrium*

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Concerning the EU's Eastern policy, the Treaty of Lisbon does two things: It brings about institutional changes in the area of external relations, and codifies explicit provisions concerning neighbourhood and enlargement policy.

The Treaty creates a novel institutional setting in the area of external relations, by introducing new actors and adapting the functions of existing ones. Besides the introduction of an elected semi-permanent President of the European Council, one key innovation is particularly significant with respect to the EU's relationship with its Eastern neighbours: the establishment of an

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*Key innovation:  
EEAS*

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European External Action Service (EEAS) under the authority of the new triple-hatted EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton (High Representative; Vice-President of the Commission; chair of the Foreign Affairs Council).

One of the main purposes of the EEAS is to forge a more coherent, consistent and better coordinated policy *vis-à-vis* the EU's neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe. However, at the time of writing (March 2010) many questions surrounding the set-up and functioning of the EEAS are still unclear. The following three unsettled issues seem particularly relevant with respect to the future of European Neighbourhood Policy.

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*Three  
unresolved  
issues*

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- **Geographical responsibility:** It is not yet clear which institution(s) will manage political relations with the EU's neighbouring countries. There is an agreement in principle between member states (supported by HR/VP Catherine Ashton) that the geographic (and thematic) desks should be duplicated neither in the Council nor the Commission. However, it is doubtful whether this principle will be applicable in practice or whether some degree of duplication ultimately will prove unavoidable. In more concrete terms, it is not entirely clear which Commission services (besides DG Relex) will be transferred to the EEAS. It seems rather certain that the responsibility for enlargement policy and for the management of the pre-accession instruments will remain the responsibility of the Commission. It is, however, not yet entirely clear who will be "responsible" for other countries in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood – although it seems rather likely that the EEAS will be the one managing political relations with all of these countries.
- **Programming:** The programming of financial instruments is one of the most contentious issues, which needs to be settled before the EEAS becomes operational. There is a need to decide on the allocation of responsibilities between the services of the Commission and the EEAS. With regard to the countries in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood it seems rather likely that the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) will have its centre of gravity in the EEAS, whereas the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) will be managed by the services of the Commission. In this case, again there will be some institutional separation between neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe who are (potential) EU candidates and those who are not (yet).
- **EU Delegations:** The European Commission representations in the region have already begun to function as representations of the European Union. Once the new system is properly in place, a facilitated implementation of the

Eastern policy should be expected, although one should not exclude or underestimate the potential for conflicts of responsibilities. The latter may be rooted in the circumstance that Union Delegations will include not only staff from the EEAS but also staff of the Commission and the Council. This mixture raises questions about the chain of command in those policy areas where the Commission also enjoys key competences.

In the area of institutional matters lies another innovation which deserves attention. In the Barroso II Commission there is now a Commissioner combining the responsibility for enlargement and neighbourhood policy. This move represented a strong political gesture by Commission President Barroso, which can be interpreted as a sign that the EU's borders must not end at the borders of those countries that are already (potential) candidates for EU accession. However, the role of Czech Commissioner Štefan Füle, who has taken over this function in the new Commission, will require tremendous *finesse*.

In the course of his hearing in the European Parliament on 12 January, Commissioner Füle spoke in favour of politicising the enlargement process by means of actively engaging national politicians in the debate. He also signalled that he would attach more importance to substance than procedures where both enlargement and neighbourhood policy are concerned. When it comes to Ukraine, he declared he would approach the issue of this country's possible membership in the EU "in the spirit of openness".

For the first time, a new article 8 of the Lisbon Treaty contains a direct reference to the EU developing a "special relationship" with neighbouring countries. To this end, the EU may conclude special agreements with interested countries. These are meant to be agreements based on a political contract, given that the treaty speaks of joint rights and obligations, and also about joint actions. Such legal measures are a strong foundation for deepening relations with the neighbours and should be used actively in Eastern policy initiatives.

The new voting system in the Council, which from 2014/2017 onwards will reflect both the number of states and the number of citizens represented by EU countries supporting a certain decision in the Council, is bound to be an important factor when it comes to future rounds of EU enlargement. Enthusiasm for further widening will not benefit from the growing realisation that the current candidate Turkey may become the most powerful EU

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*Enlargement and  
Neighbourhood  
Commissioner*

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*Neighbourhood  
article*

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*Effects of double  
majority*

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member state in terms of voting weight, while Ukraine, with 46 million inhabitants, will be more powerful than Poland on the same account.

Clearly, the Lisbon Treaty provides a new legal and institutional framework for EU foreign policy, but this leaves open the EU's political orientation, which is a reflection of many internal and external tendencies. In the years to come, centrifugal and centripetal forces will collide in the EU. According to the latest Eurobarometer poll, 61 percent of Europeans believe that the Union has enlarged too fast. This shows that the mandate for an assertive neighbourhood and enlargement policy remains weak. Eastern European neighbouring countries will thus have to fight to promote the message that their offer towards the European Union is attractive and constitutes true value added. Further EU enlargements will not be driven by the same kind of historic momentum that motivated widening after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Compared to the latest rounds of enlargement, the countries now aspiring to join the Union will have to provide even more convincing arguments that their accession is not only in their own interest, but also in the political and economic interest of the EU and its member states. This increases the pressure on every aspirant to demonstrate a high level of preparedness and willingness to join "the club". The individual success of internal economic, political and social reforms will be the most decisive factor in "persuading" the Union and its member states to deepen cooperation and eventually to enlarge further.

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*Need to increase attractiveness*

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The EU's attitude to Eastern Europe will be less emotional and more pragmatic. The new treaty strengthens EU institutions but does not address the issue of how the accession of new members will influence the Union. When it comes to the model of political belonging, the most probable is the linear scenario, in which the EU gradually becomes more convinced of the virtues of enlargement as the Eastern Partnership countries carry out the necessary reforms. However, this development requires the EU to transform as well. The Union and its members must see Europe's Eastern neighbourhood as part of the concept of its own development—and not merely as a one-way street from which the EU itself has nothing to gain.

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*Change of attitude in EU*

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### **Policy responses**

Eastern Partnership fits well into the "demystified" vision of relations with the EU's neighbours. It does not have the features of a "grand project". Rather, its objective is to link a political signal with organic work, for which an

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*Filling EaP with life*

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appropriate institutional infrastructure with thematic platforms and multiannual programmes has now been created. However, this new framework still needs to be filled with life.

It is not impossible that countries of the region will become even more clearly divided into those which are more democratic and interested in cooperation with the EU, that is Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia; and those that are more authoritarian, which keep their distance from the EU: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. Today, the region's lack of cohesion is the most significant challenge for the Eastern Partnership. Hence, different objectives and priorities have to be reflected on the strategic level.

One of the untold objectives of Eastern Partnership is to maintain interest in Eastern Europe among the countries of the European Union. Critical mass within the EU requires the engagement of Germany and France and the renewed involvement by the United Kingdom. There is thus a need for a strategic review of the EU's relationship with its Eastern neighbourhood, including the most critical and contentious issues related to the question of future rounds of EU enlargement.

The strategic dimension of the Eastern Partnership may profit if Turkey, a regional actor with a significant political and economic potential, takes on a greater role. It is not unthinkable that Russia's attitude would change significantly as a result of closer ties between Turkey and the EU. Russia would soon become aware of the high political costs of remaining outside of a framework that includes both the EU and key regional actors. Finally, it is essential to coordinate more closely the relationship between the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy.

The EU is likely to focus more attention on the most important problems of the region rather than a broader range of policy areas, as in the initial model of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Increasingly, the modernisation of energy systems and enhancement of energy efficiency, liberalisation of the visa system, introduction of a free-trade agreement and the battle against corruption are the priorities of EU actions. This trend will continue in the years to come. It is in both sides' interest to exploit the potential for concrete cooperation. The EU and its Eastern neighbours should aim for the highest possible level of cross-border and intra-regional cooperation. Over time, intense political, economic, social and cultural interaction as well as cooperation on environmental matters will improve each side's knowledge of the other, increase the understanding of the problems the other side is facing,

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*Lack of cohesion  
between EaP  
countries*

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*Need for a  
strategic review*

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*Role of Turkey*

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*Exploiting  
potentials for  
cooperation*

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and reduce the level of mutual distrust and prejudice. Both sides would benefit from the establishment of such close ties, regardless of the ultimate *finalité* of the EU's policy towards its Eastern neighbours.

**Policy Recommendations for the Polish Presidency:**

- Proceed towards speedy adoption of the deep free trade agreement with Ukraine setting up ambitious objectives for regulatory harmonisation.
- Build on the EU's commitment concerning the modernisation of the Ukrainian energy system, including adjustment of prices and strengthening of energy efficiency.
- Advance the visa liberalisation agenda.
- Encourage closer ties with Turkey and other key third partners such as the United States and Japan in an attempt to build increased momentum for the Eastern Partnership.
- Join forces with the Hungarian Presidency in the first half of 2011 in order to come up with a concrete joint project aiming to provide Eastern Partnership a political and practical boost.

## **European Eastern Policy: Identifying an Agenda for the Polish EU Presidency**

*Iris Kempe, Director, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Regional Office South Caucasus*

### **Executive Summary**

In 2011 Poland will hold the rotating presidency of the European Union; its next opportunity to set the European agenda will come again in 2024 at the earliest. Like every national leadership seeking to maximize a limited and rare opportunity, Poland's decision-makers want to find ways to have a long-lasting, positive effect on Europe's development. Conditions are good for making policy toward Eastern Europe a central point of the Polish presidency's agenda, for three reasons. First, since its accession Poland has built connections to and expertise on the countries to the Union's east, making it one of the main drivers of EU policy in the wider region. Second, Poland and Hungary share the rotating presidency in 2011, offering the entire EU a full-year opportunity to place Eastern questions prominently on the agenda. This parallels the Finnish and German presidencies in 2006–07, which did much to further similar goals. Third, the new EU institutions, particularly the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, will have overcome their initial start-up challenges, but their agendas will still be open to a new direction. The Polish presidency should take advantage of this favorable constellation to make progress in four main areas; a number of more detailed suggestions follow throughout this paper.

First, the Eastern Partnership, which was originally proposed by Poland, has shown its value as an innovative forum for deepening relations between the Union and its eastern neighbors. In particular, the formal role for civil society actors raises the EU's profile, provides a better understanding of how it works and increases its legitimacy. During its presidency, Poland should make use of and extend the Eastern Partnership. Second, Polish leadership should ensure that a new European Eastern policy addresses both Russia and the EU's other eastern neighbors. Each depends on the other, and leaving either one out makes for half a policy.

Third, the Polish presidency should engage Catherine Ashton, the High Representative, in Eastern questions, ideally centered on opening the Turkish-Armenian border. Her office will set priorities over a longer period of

time, and maintaining active interest at the highest EU level will keep Europe's East on the agenda. Fourth, Poland should connect with Germany. Together, the two countries are the motor of Eastern policy. They have the historic connections, the geographic proximity and the internal heft to make Eastern questions a continuing part of European debates. They can also engage states that, on their own, would not be interested in the areas beyond the EU's eastern border.

## **Introduction**

The latest elections in Ukraine, the Georgia-Russia war, and the efforts of civil-society actors in Belarus to free themselves from Lukashenko's autocratic influence all show how the European Union's need for improved policy toward its eastern neighbors is increasing. The EU has done more for security and stability in the regions beyond its eastern border than any other actor. Prospects for EU membership pushed the states in East Central Europe to press forward with their transformation and develop free-market democracies that were suitable for joining the Union. This process emancipated them as much as possible from the Kremlin's sphere of influence, and they have instead become the sharpest critics of European cooperation with Russia. At the same time, they have become advocates on behalf of the EU's eastern neighboring states. To date, however, neither the European Union nor its member states have found a sustainable strategic approach to developments in the European neighborhood.

Since its accession to the EU, Poland has been an important motor of Europe's eastern policy. Hungary and Poland will hold the rotating presidency of the European Council in 2011, giving the two countries an opportunity to use their geographic proximity and historic closeness to Eastern Europe to shape the Union's Eastern policy. One consequence of the Lisbon Treaty is a new approach to decision-making processes, both at the European level and between the European institutions and the member states. Under these new conditions, Warsaw has the means to bring previous initiatives such as the "Eastern Dimension" or the "Eastern Partnership," which Poland launched in 2008, to the center of European policy.

In daily practice, the European Union's Eastern policy has been strongly shaped by the formation of alliances of member states. Poland's will be the first EU presidency since the Lisbon Treaty came into force to advocate the importance of Eastern policy to both the High Representative of the European

Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, and the permanent president of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy. The Polish goal should be to replace the complacency of enlargement fatigue with European prospects for the EU's Eastern neighbor states. Prospects of membership must, of course, be conditioned on developments in the states themselves.

The current agenda must respond to both the challenges emanating from the region and the EU's ability to shape events. The greatest challenges lie in successfully supporting democratic transformation, linked with increasing alignment with European institutions. In this area, the EU should use its new opportunities to integrate with the Union. Two aspects are decisive for a pan-European security order: energy, and handling the eastern neighbors' ethno-territorial conflicts. In both of these aspects, the roles of Turkey and Russia as potentially positive actors should be respected far more than they currently are in the "Eastern Partnership."

### **Challenges of democratic transformation**

None of the eastern neighbors has established a stable democratic system. Despite individual advances, such as the Rose Revolution in Georgia or the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the political systems of the neighboring states range from autocracy to unsteady democracy. The core of a European Eastern policy must be to strengthen democratic developments so that the states of the region are less vulnerable to crises and to efforts by Russia to influence domestic political developments. The stronger the neighboring states' democracies become, the more reliable they will be as partners for European cooperation. Consolidated democracies in the EU's Eastern neighborhood would also give the states of the region the basis for independent foreign relations. Furthermore, consolidated democracies and successful market economies in its direct neighborhood would have a positive effect on Russia's development. The societies of the region are too intensively intertwined for any potential new Iron Curtain erected by the elite to shut out spillover effects. To take advantage of the potential offered by current conditions, European policy should make strenuous efforts to increase societal and democratic contacts.

Key moments for these developments are elections, and the conditions surrounding them including electoral law, party financing and media freedom.

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*Strengthening  
democracies  
through  
values-based  
integration*

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Early identification and support for agents of change must be a top priority. In contrast, parties run the danger of prematurely following the patterns of Western parties and, as a result, finding little organic support in the neighboring countries' societies. Organized civil society encounters a similar problem. NGOs are often designed around the priorities of Western donors, or are organized by the state in the Soviet tradition of transmission belts. European Eastern policy must be able to react carefully to the specific conditions in each country. Careful understanding of the situation in the neighboring states cannot be abandoned in the interest of rashly importing Western approaches.

Belarus and Azerbaijan, countries with autocratic systems, pose the greatest democratic challenges. To date, European policy has centered on contacts with civil society and sanctions against the regime in Belarus. European Eastern policy should make a cool, reasoned assessment of the experience with this approach. Furthermore, the EU should be prepared for a variety of possible scenarios regardless of the present regime, and it should be particularly prepared for systemic change. In the event of democratic transformation, the European Union should be ready with strategies for strengthening democracy in the countries affected by the change.

Russia plays a special role. Its political leadership is drifting ever further from democratic standards, and yet it plays an important role in numerous aspects of European Eastern policy. Only if Russia also feels obligated to meet democratic standards will it be able to develop a neighborhood policy in its "near abroad" that goes beyond hegemony and spheres of influence. The European Union and selected member states see themselves obligated to press for stronger democratic standards in Russia. So far, implementing this policy has fallen short as a result of the dominance of other common interests, particularly European energy security. These interests have made it impossible to base European policy toward Russia on democratic fundamentals. Former German Foreign Minister Steinmeier's approach of "rapprochement via interdependence" did not lead to the hoped-for strengthening of democracy. If the member states could reach a consensus on priorities, the EU's negotiating hand would be stronger. The Treaty of Lisbon offers a chance to strengthen the Union's capacity in Russian policy, a chance that should not be missed. The same holds true for the necessity of spelling out a European energy charter.

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*Agents of  
change*

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*Towards a  
democratic  
Russia*

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The most promising strategy strengthening democracy would be the prospect of membership in the European Union. As long as this remains unlikely, the EU and its member states, as the actors in a new Eastern policy, must offer attractive incentives for democratic transformation. Depending on the neighbors' domestic developments, possibilities include visa-free travel and free-trade agreements. Membership in the Union should not be excluded as a matter of principle. Implementing these possibilities depends on both the development of the neighboring states and the EU's ability to continue with integration. Apart from enlargement fatigue, policy-makers should recall that developments in nearby states are also a motor for European integration. Breaking through the neighbors' isolation should be understood as a contribution to supporting democracy. While Ukraine is solidly networked with Poland, the southern Caucasus is much more isolated from European debates.

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*EU  
membership  
prospects*

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### **Europe as a national priority**

To date, conceptual advances in European Eastern policy have come as the EU has reacted to developments in the neighboring states. European Neighbourhood Policy was a reaction to the "color revolutions"; Eastern Partnership came as a reaction to the Georgia-Russia war.

Without going into too much detail about the democratic development and European orientation of each neighboring state, it is appropriate to sum up significant shortcomings. In none of the eastern neighbors has the Union succeeded in making European Neighbourhood Policy an attractive policy instrument that effectively reaches beyond a small elite. The way the states have handled the neighborhood action plans has shown that the governments implement its contents in a formal sense, but that legal and regulatory reforms fail to have significant visible effects. In principle, the Eastern Partnership offers a broad spectrum of new opportunities for cooperation and includes a wider range of actors, particularly representatives of civil society and actors from within the region. Nevertheless, the neighboring states have not sufficiently recognized the Partnership's potential and do not understand the difference between European Neighbourhood Policy and its successor, Eastern Partnership. There are already indications that input from the neighboring countries for future-oriented debates about

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*Using the  
European  
potential*

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structuring Europe is quite limited. One task of the Polish presidency should be to explain the potential of European cooperation.

Without attractive incentives, the neighboring states remain unlikely to make European integration an actual national priority. For this reason, it is important for a new European Eastern policy to be communicated clearly, beyond governmental circles, and for it to have attractive incentives for active cooperation. The civil-society format of the Eastern Partnership offers a promising method to address democratic deficits in the neighboring states by prominently including the promoters of change. Poland should strengthen this approach and promote it among other EU member states, particularly Germany.

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*Poland:  
Added value in  
the European  
neighborhood*

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### **Actors: Civil society and neighboring states**

To show that it takes democratic developments in the neighboring states seriously, Polish Eastern policy should continue to center on the Eastern Partnership and civil-society actors. Civil society should participate in the conceptualization, execution and monitoring of European Eastern policy. It should also be supported more strongly than before in the implementation of European policy. Fundamentally, it is important to bear in mind which role civil society plays, and how far it is developed. It is particularly important to recognize that “civil society” is often a matter of organized experts outside the official channels of politics, with limited ties to the public at large. Nevertheless, its participation is very important to develop entry points into the processes of policy formation and to build the means for communication with the broader public about the European Union.

Including civil society means engaging with the actual promoters of democratic change. A selection should not be made from formal and abstract criteria, but on the basis of close understanding of the countries in question. Polish leaders have the advantage of their networks in and knowledge of the eastern neighbors. Just as important for civil-society projects as the disbursement of EU funding are the timely education of civil-society actors about the current European discourse and including them as participants in the process of policy formation. The Polish presidency should assist civil society where it is already strongest, namely in Ukraine and Georgia, by creating a platform for non-governmental experts from both countries. With this approach, strategies can be developed in concert and experiences with

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*European  
integration:  
bottom-up*

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implementation exchanged. The European Union should also support networking among democratic civil society throughout Eastern Europe, including Russian and Turkish actors, on a larger scale.

The regional and local levels should constitute a more important element of European Eastern policy. Regional actors are important supporters not only of European integration, but also of democratic transformation. Establishing federalism is a task of democratic transition and an element of modern governmental practice. Furthermore, functioning local and regional authorities are also basic pre-conditions for cross-border cooperation. Depending on the territorial situation of a given neighboring state, cross-border cooperation may mean building relations between the EU and a neighbor, as between Poland and Ukraine, or constructive relations at the regional level, as in the Caucasus. Both point toward the goal of reducing isolation and thus enable the exchange of experiences during the transition, strengthening civil society's ability to act. The Polish presidency should support this process both intellectually and financially with special neighborhood programs. It should also examine what benefits could accrue from Euroregions. The neighboring states face the challenge of providing their regional and local authorities with sufficient administrative and budgetary powers to make it possible for them to become European actors. It also makes sense to engage the largest neighbors, Russia and Turkey, on the regional level. One problem that must be solved for effective cross-border cooperation on the regional level is the limits imposed by the visa regimes in force between the European Union and its eastern neighbors. The Polish presidency should live up to the promises of reducing dividing lines and advocate simplified visa procedures. The presidency can base its approach on previously ratified agreements between the EU and the neighboring states for simplified travel.

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*Membership  
by sectoral  
integration*

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### **Cooperation and integration — The “Norway Scenario”**

Sectoral cooperation will deliver the greatest impact of European Eastern policy, because the neighboring states will, step-by-step, become elements of European integration. Particularly attractive for the eastern neighbors is the development of visa-free travel, as well as easing restrictions on limited work permits within the European Union. The Polish presidency should speak out in favor of allowing the citizens of Eastern Europe to travel and work within the EU without tiresome bureaucratic and financial obstacles. Visa-free travel

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*The  
democratic  
significance  
of regional  
actors*

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would be a significant contribution, not only to Eastern Europe's economic development, but also to societal convergence with the rest of Europe. By relaxing such visible rules, the EU would send a clear signal that it is putting its rhetoric against new dividing lines into practice.

In taking this step, the EU should ensure that the reduction of restrictions on trade is executed as publicly as possible, not only in the neighboring states but also within the European Union. Publicity will ensure that freer travel serves as a major incentive for transformation within the neighboring countries.

The Union should also examine which EU institutions could offer the neighbors actual membership, with the goal of increasing economic integration with these states' EU partners. This will become possible as soon as the conditions in selected areas of sectoral cooperation are met. For example, it could be attractive for both sides if the neighboring states were to join the European Energy Agency. Sectoral cooperation would have the advantage that the eastern neighbors could work out a concrete agenda to drive their reforms. By meeting European standards in a particular field, they would be able to approach the EU step –by step, rather than having to accomplish the entire politico-economic transformation at once.

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*From  
Northstream  
to  
Homestream*

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## **Energy**

Energy supply and energy security are key parts of any European Eastern policy. No other field of policy so tightly ties or deeply influences the interests and dependence of Russia, the neighboring states and the European Union.

Polish policy toward Eastern Europe should advocate a change in the paradigm of Europe's energy supply. "*Homestream*" should take priority. The more effectively Europe uses its energy, the greater the reduction in its dependence on Russia. At present, the neighboring states have the least efficient energy use in Europe, thus offering considerable scope for improvement. The use of renewable energy sources should also be expanded. The goals of improving efficiency and using more renewables should also be reflected in the programs for technical assistance offered by the EU.

From a strategic perspective, security of delivery is every bit as important as security of sourcing. European policy makers have chosen to improve the

security of both by diversifying potential sources and the pipelines required to deliver oil and natural gas. The variants currently under consideration include the Yamal pipeline, North Stream, South Stream and Nabucco. Even if South Stream and Nabucco are regarded as a means of diversification, dependence on Russia cannot be completely ignored. Relations between Russia and gas-producing states such as Azerbaijan are too solid for the EU to expect that these states would choose the EU over Russia in the event of a conflict. The more the European Union is able to construct a common energy policy, the greater its room for maneuver vis-à-vis Russia. The goal should be to tie the interests of energy consumers, transit states and producers together so that all sides benefit.

### **Ethno-territorial conflicts**

The Russia-Georgia war brutally showed that handling ethno-territorial conflicts such as Abkhazia, Transnistria, Karabakh, South Ossetia or Gagauzia will be an integral part of European Eastern policy. To date, the EU has only partially succeeded in finding solutions to ethno-territorial conflicts. Both the six-point plan that ended the Russia-Georgia war and the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) are important steps toward strengthening the Union as an actor capable of securing peace within the wider European neighborhood.

Nevertheless, current European solutions will reach their limits over the medium term; the Polish presidency should recognize this challenge and put it on the European agenda. The EUMM has a fundamental problem, namely that, in contrast to the previous missions of the UN and the OSCE, it has no access to the actual conflict zones. To follow developments in the contested areas, a requirement for early warning of conflicts and appropriate reactions, the mission needs accurate information about the situation in those places. This cannot be left to sources who are parties to the conflict, whether they be Russian, Georgian, or in the case of Transnistria, Moldovan. Poland should advocate international observer missions with robust mandates.

At this level, European actors have an opportunity to strengthen democratic reforms with offers of cooperation. These offers are one approach to break through the present political blockade, which maintains that cooperation with the autonomous areas calls the territorial integrity of the larger state into question. Instead, an EU presence should be seen as an alternative to

Russian dominance, and as a sign of the potential for strengthening the development of democracy and a market economy. As long as these entities are used by Russia as instruments for advancing its narrow interests, however, this approach will reach its limits.

To apply this idea in practice, cooperation must be established with civil society and a spectrum of democratic actors. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that the processes have both depth and breadth. Neither can the unrecognized authorities work for a constructive future without having to come to terms with events in their most recent past. A key moment for dialogue processes of this type is the opening of borders. This is true for borders between neighboring states, for the borders of the internationally unrecognized territories, and for potential crossing points to Turkey, Russia or the European Union. There will not be any simple or quick solutions for the ethno-territorial conflicts, just as there will not be any simple or quick solutions for integrating the neighboring regions with the rest of Europe. Dealing with ethno-territorial conflicts requires perseverance, combined with detailed knowledge of developments in the affected regions. The search for a quick solution was a major contributor to the war in August 2008.

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*Beyond  
football  
diplomacy*

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### **Russia and Turkey as integral elements of a European Eastern policy**

Starting with the football diplomacy between Turkey and Armenia in September 2008, both states have taken initial steps toward reaching an understanding. Antagonized by questions of recognizing Turkish genocide against Armenians in 1915, the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Armenia has been shaped by hatred and division, with sharply negative consequences for opportunities for economic and political development. By contrast, if a thaw in Turkish-Armenia relations were to take hold, Armenia would gain an additional opening in the direction of the EU. The eventual shape of the opening, however, depends on progress in relations between Turkey and the Union. The Polish presidency should pay particular attention to developments in Turkish-Armenian relations. Above all, any border opening should be taken as an opportunity to exert a positive influence on bilateral and regional relations. One goal should be to integrate Turkey into the framework of a European Eastern policy. On the other hand, Turkish-Armenian reconciliation also increases the need for the EU to pursue a proactive policy toward Turkey. The normalization of relations between

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*Deep and  
far-reaching  
dialogue*

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Turkey and Armenia would also have an effect on Russia's role in the southern Caucasus. Turkey, not Russia, would likely become Armenia's most important international partner, which would in turn strengthen European norms such as good governance, democracy and stability. Turkey will also play a key role in questions of Europe's energy supplies. The discussion concerning a "Southern Energy Corridor" is predicated on Turkish participation.

Russia poses the greatest challenge for European, and particularly Polish, Eastern policy. European actors may not ignore Russia, nor may the EU member states allow European institutions to be held hostage by Russian pursuit of particular interests. Poland blocked European policy toward Russia in the negotiations for a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). Differentiating views on Russia and replacing blockages with constructive measures will be a particular challenge for the Polish presidency, which will constantly be tempted to recall the country's recent history. But beyond hegemonial approaches from the administration in the Kremlin and the refusal of states in East Central Europe to engage in dialogue with Russian actors, a more neutral perspective shows numerous synergies such as transportation corridors, energy security and economic integration. To date, it has not been possible to use these commonalities to go beyond mutual interests and strengthen democratic values. A European Eastern policy should include a broad spectrum of actors and work to change gears from confrontation to cooperation. It remains very important to support democratic alternatives outside the Kremlin administration. The ongoing economic crisis has also increased the opportunities to exercise influence within Russia. In any event, Russian infringements against democratic fundamentals call for clear rhetoric from the European Union. The more the EU can speak with one voice in both its policy toward Russia and its energy policy, the more effective its voice will be. The creation of alliances should begin, in the first instance, among states that have a similar relationship with Russia. On a second level, a goal must be to link the various actors together to secure the effectiveness of the European Union's common policy. One instrument for doing this is to establish linkages between the Hungarian and Polish presidencies. Further, there should be at least a minimal consensus that EU member states will no longer contradict each other in their approaches to Russia, which has undermined the effectiveness of the Union as a whole.

Whenever new ideas such as the Eastern Dimension or the Eastern Partnership have been tabled, it has been important to keep the “Russian factor” in mind. With the current state of the political system in Russia, this means signaling to Russia, with the help of democratic cooperation, that there are limits to the influence it can expect to exercise in the “near abroad.” At the same time, representatives of democratic civil society should be engaged. Poland’s task is to support the broadest possible channels for discussions. Such a democratic European dialogue is an instrument for medium-term change, just like reconciliation with the Soviet past. If this dialogue is not kept going, new stereotypes and enmities will easily arise, making it simple for the Kremlin to think and act in Soviet-like spheres of interest. Maintaining a discussion requires the appropriate programs, financial resources, as well as porous borders. For example, societal dialogue between Georgia and Russia is not possible at present. Georgian citizens, with very few exceptions, cannot travel to Russia because they cannot get the necessary visa. There are still no diplomatic relations between the two countries. One of Europe’s tasks is to initiate a dialogue and to create the necessary diplomatic conditions for one to take place. The Polish presidency can play a significant role in achieving these goals.

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*A common  
EU Russia  
policy*

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#### **Policy Recommendations for the Polish Presidency:**

- Poland should make use of and extend the Eastern Partnership it proposed, which has shown its value as an innovative forum for deepening relations between the Union and its eastern neighbors. In particular, it should reinforce the formal role for civil society actors, supporting the broadest possible channels for discussions.
- Polish leadership should ensure that a new European Eastern policy addresses both Russia and its other eastern neighbors. Russian infringements against democratic fundamentals call for clear rhetoric from the European Union. The more the EU can speak with one voice in both its policy toward Russia and its energy policy, the more effective it will be.
- The Polish presidency should engage Catherine Ashton, the High Representative, in Eastern questions, ideally centered on opening the Turkish-Armenian border. Maintaining active interest at the highest EU level will keep Europe’s East on the agenda.

- Fourth, Poland should connect with Germany. Together, the two countries are the motor of Eastern policy. They have the historic connections, the geographic proximity and the internal heft to make Eastern questions a continuing part of European debates. They can also engage states that, on their own, would not be interested in the areas beyond the EU's eastern border.
- Polish policy toward Eastern Europe should advocate a change in the paradigm of Europe's energy supply. The more effectively Europe uses its energy, the greater the reduction in its dependence on Russia. There is considerable scope for improvement in the efficient use of energy; the use of renewable energy sources should also be expanded. These goals should also be reflected in the programs for technical assistance offered by the EU.
- The current European solutions to ethno-territorial conflicts will reach their limits over the medium term; the Polish presidency should recognize this challenge and put it on the European agenda.

## **The European Union and its Eastern Neighbours: Challenges for the Polish EU Presidency**

*Grzegorz Gromadzki, independent expert on Eastern Europe, Warsaw*

### **Introduction**

In Poland, the EU, and all over Eastern Europe, expectations are high in regard to the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union on matters related to the EU Eastern Policy. Trying to meet those expectations, the Polish government keeps saying that the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours will be extremely high on the Polish Presidency's agenda. It should be noted, however, that too little attention is being paid—both in Poland and in other countries—to the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, which has sharply curtailed the powers of the EU rotating presidency with respect to the external relations of the EU. Close cooperation with the new EU institutions, in particular, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union (EU) and the European External Action Service (EEAS), should become the main task of the new presidency. It looks as if the times when the rotating presidency could impose new ideas in the field of the EU's external relations are in the past. However, this does not necessarily mean that the presidency must remain completely passive on external matters. It is crucial to find a *modus vivendi* between the presidency and the new institutions. A country with experience in external relations holding the presidency may turn out to be useful to the new EU institutions—as a partner rather than a competitor. Therefore, Poland should already be working with these institutions on matters concerning the Eastern neighbours to ensure mutual understanding during the Polish presidency in 2011. It would be ideal if all three of the member states holding the presidency (Poland, Denmark, and Cyprus) cooperated closely with the High Representative and EEAS. It is hardly to be expected, however, that Poland will be able to set a detailed, common agenda on Eastern matters with the other two countries. Neither should Poland be expected to work out a common stance with Hungary, which will hold the presidency directly before it, because the Hungarian perception of Eastern Europe is different than the Polish view. For instance, Belarus plays no role at all in Hungarian policy towards Eastern Europe, but Belarus is one of the key issues for Poland. But despite these circumstances, the Polish presidency can play significant role in the development of EU relations with Eastern neighbours.

### **Relations between the EU and its Eastern Neighbours: Poland's Role.**

The 2004 accession to the European Union marked a turning point in Poland's Eastern policy, which continues to be one of the government's priorities. One might say it has been Europeanized. Polish political elites have reached a consensus, according to which transferring Eastern policy to the European level is the best way to derive substantial benefits. The 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine became an example of the validity of this thesis. President

Kwaśniewski's mission accentuated the involvement of Poland and emphasized the interests of the EU as a whole, reinforced by the visit to Kyiv by Javier Solana, then High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU.

The agreement regarding the necessity to Europeanize the Eastern policy did not result, however, in common consent over its shape. Over the last two years, particularly in 2009, a serious internal debate took place in Poland. Different opinions came to light on the kinds of Eastern policy favoured by various Polish politicians and experts. On the one hand, Donald Tusk and his government were accused of departing from the previous principles of unconditional support for Ukraine's European aspirations. On the other hand, an increasing number of people said it was necessary to adapt a more pragmatic stance towards Poland's Eastern neighbours, including Ukraine. President Lech Kaczyński and Donald Tusk's government did not seem to agree on how to tackle relations with Eastern Europe, with the disparity most striking in the case of Georgia. The deep, emotional engagement of President Kaczyński in the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia contrasted with a much more reserved government reaction.

Nevertheless, the abovementioned disagreements exert little influence on the main goal pursued by Poland. Warsaw wants to promote an active Eastern strategy in the EU. It was no coincidence that the first large project presented by Poland (along with Sweden) on the EU forum was the Eastern Partnership, created as a set of policies towards six countries—Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova; and three South Caucasian countries—Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. It should be underlined that the Eastern Partnership combines active EU policy towards Ukraine and European involvement in relations with Belarus. It is a key combination for Poland, supported by all political forces. The new policy of the European Union also proved to be an opportunity to increase Polish activity in other countries that do not border Poland directly. A good example of such a shift is the attention paid to Moldova, a country previously treated marginally by Poland. Radosław Sikorski was the first Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs to visit Chisinau since Moldova became independent in 1991. Poland wants to act as Moldova's advocate in the EU, especially after the parliamentary elections in Moldova in July 2009. The new Moldovan government seems to be very interested, as it is quite beneficial for it to be supported by a country other than Romania, Moldova's natural partner.

It may be said that the major goal pursued by Poland is to attract its Eastern neighbours to the EU. The strategy pursued by Warsaw is similar to the one Germany used in the 1990s with regard to Poland and other countries of Central Europe. Poland, like Germany in 1990s, does not wish to be a borderline country. It aims to expand the stability zone eastward. Therefore, it supports the

existing Eastern democracies—Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia—and attempts to initiate a dialogue with authoritarian Belarus.

Poland spares no effort to reach those goals, taking advantage of possibilities stemming from its EU membership. It tries to find partners within the EU not only among ex-Communist member states, but also among those with much longer EU seniority. The Eastern Partnership, proposed jointly by Poland and Sweden, is an excellent example of this approach. Poland, particularly its present government, is willing to discuss the EU's Eastern strategies with Germany. Polish politicians and experts realize that, in spite of different attitudes towards the East, Germany is Poland's key partner in this regard. The engagement of as many as possible member states from different parts of the EU in the Eastern Partnership would be the best scenario from Poland's point of view.

EU membership allows Poland to boost the engagement of European institutions in the execution of Eastern strategies. Example: successful lobbying for the new portfolio in the second Barroso's Commission for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, ultimately awarded to Štefan Füle. The new portfolio adds to the Commissioner's duties the subject of enlargement with the Eastern Partnership countries, which has been pursued by Poland for many years. Moreover, it is worth underlining that – not accidentally – the heads of two European Parliament delegations (one for Ukraine, the other for Belarus) are Polish MEPs.

These are all proof that Poland plays an important role in shaping the EU policy towards the six countries making up the Eastern Partnership. The situation is quite different, however, in the case of Russia. One could say that relations with Russia constitute a serious challenge for Poland, which tries to participate in the attempts to create a common EU policy towards that country. Poland's relations with Russia have been bad for a long time. The current government wishes to improve them. The basic source of conflict is Polish involvement in the countries situated between the EU and Russia (described above), perceived by Russia as infringement upon an area belonging to its sphere of influence. The Russophobic image with which Poland is associated in many EU countries certainly does not make things easier. Apart from this, one should understand how difficult it is to create a common EU approach towards Russia—much more difficult than towards the Eastern Partnership countries. Poland's standpoint on relations with Russia is a far cry from views expressed by Germany, France or Italy. Taking all of this into consideration, Poland should not be expected to play such an active role in shaping EU relations with Russia as it does for the Eastern Partnership countries.

## **The Eastern Partnership: Potential for Democratic Development**

The Eastern Partnership should be perceived in terms of a useful tool for partial integration of the Eastern European countries into the EU. The added value of the Partnership stems from the fact that the EU proposals, previously put forward to certain Eastern partners (in particular Ukraine and to some extent Moldova), have become an official packet available—with some exceptions—to all six of the participating countries. The major elements of the packet include a possible signing of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreement and the lifting of visas to the EU as a long-term goal. The EU has suggested that the new agreements with the Eastern partners be called Association Agreements, a term that bears great symbolic meaning to the Eastern Partnership states, especially those pursuing EU membership. The abovementioned Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area is to play an important role in these agreements.

It should be borne in mind that the new EU policy targets six countries that are quite different from one another. To treat them as a unified area would be a mistake. The group is composed of three democracies—Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, two totalitarian regimes— Belarus and Azerbaijan, and Armenia somewhere in between. Apart from the general framework of the Eastern Partnership, there must be a well-defined policy addressed to each particular country. Therefore, no matter how advisable the efforts to interact the whole group of six with the EU, the bilateral relations of the EU with each Eastern partner will be crucial.

As for the democratic states willing to cooperate with the EU, the submitted proposals should be turned into reality. The Association Agreement with Ukraine should be signed this year. A similar agreement with Moldova should be concluded at the same time or not much later. Association Agreement negotiations should also be conducted with Georgia. The key issue in these three countries—which still seem far away from the consolidated democracy model—is the implementation of a liberal democracy with functional institutions ensuring checks and balances. Only liberal (constitutional) democracies stand a chance of gradual integration with the EU. Obviously, liberal democracy will not be built by the European Union. It remains a challenge faced by the political elites and societies of these states. The EU can only support this difficult process through consistent openness. This is why it is so important to liberalize the visa system immediately and implement visa-free travel as soon as possible. Civil society plays an immense role in the process of building liberal democracy in the Partnership countries. European assistance provided within the Eastern Partnership framework, for NGOs including watchdog organizations, is absolutely necessary. The Civil Society Forum, an official component of the Eastern Partnership, could become one of the tools used to support this development.

A more difficult challenge is faced by the EU with regard to the authoritarian states. A breakthrough in relations with Belarus is hardly to be expected. That does not mean, however, that the dialogue with the Belarusian authorities should be broken off. At the same time, civil society in Belarus—still weak and divided—should be offered as much support as possible. In the case of Azerbaijan, the actions of the EU and its particular member states are often dependent on energy issues, with no regard for human rights and democratic freedoms. A major change in the EU's approach does not seem likely. Nonetheless, remaining totally oblivious to the violations of basic freedoms, so frequently observed in Azerbaijan, undermines the EU's image of a union promoting democracy. In its relations with the societies of the authoritarian Eastern Partnership states, the EU should be no less open than with respect to the democratic ones. Therefore, the demand to liberalize the visa system and implement visa-free travel as soon as possible remains as plausible as ever. It should be noted that visa policy concerns society first of all, i.e. ordinary citizens of neighbouring countries, not representatives of authoritarian regimes. In the EU's relations with the authoritarian states whose citizens are often oppressed by the government, support for civil society becomes even more important.

In relations with both the democratic and the authoritarian countries of the Eastern Partnership, the issue of energy seems to be crucial. It is a key challenge for Eastern Partnership countries in their internal and external policies, not only towards the EU but to others as well, especially Russia. This would thus justify the decision to include cooperation on energy as one of the main topics in the Eastern Partnership, in all dimensions of the new policy: for bilateral relations between the EU and each partner country, for multilateral cooperation among Partnership countries as a group, and for cooperation between them and the EU. Partner countries can integrate with the EU only in the case of profound changes to their energy sector. First of all there is a need for transparency, as the energy sectors of Eastern Partnership countries are still one of the least transparent parts of their economies.

### **EU policy towards its Eastern Neighbours versus EU policy towards Russia. A Dilemma?**

The question “Why are EU policy towards the Eastern Partnership countries and EU policy towards Russia developed as two parallel approaches?” is frequently asked during discussions about the EU's strategies towards its Eastern neighbours. The answer is quite simple. The relations are parallel because the addressees are fundamentally different. Russia, which is not just a mere state but almost a continent on its own, borders both the EU and China, and aspires to the role of a leading global actor. It wants to be treated by the EU as an equal partner. It has no intention of being integrated with the Union or accepting—even in part—the *acquis communautaire*. The Eastern Partnership countries, on the other hand, have no such ambitions. Some of them wish to be integrated with the EU, their ultimate goal being full membership.

Therefore it is natural for these states to adapt EU rules. It would be rather imprudent for the EU to use the same strategy with regard to Russia and the Eastern Partnership countries. The methodology of using one set of policies towards Russia and another towards the Eastern Partnership states does not prove the superiority of the former over the latter or vice versa. All it means is that the policies are fundamentally different.

The EU's policy toward the Eastern Partnership states should not depend on relations with Russia (or derive from them). Nor should Russia have a say in it. The European Union should always treat the Eastern Partnership countries as independent actors. Only then will it become their credible partner - both for the countries interested in full integration and those which are not, for instance Belarus. Fortunately, ever fewer EU experts seem to perceive Eastern Europe in terms of a unified territory dominated by Moscow.

A clear distinction drawn between policies regarding Russia and those earmarked for the Eastern Partnership, however, does not preclude any interaction between the two respective sets. Under appropriate circumstances, Russia should be invited to participate in Eastern Partnership activities, just as the Partnership states should be encouraged to take part in the strategic EU-Russia dialogue.

The involvement of the European Union in the Eastern Partnership countries is one of the basic reasons behind difficulties in setting a course for proper EU-Russia relations—perhaps even the most important one. Russia treats these countries as its own sphere of influence, and any diligence by others (in this case, the EU) is perceived as an attempt to take away something that rightfully belongs to Russia. Unfortunately, in recent years such a perception—coupled with rising authoritarian tendencies—has been gaining popularity among the Russian political elites. For an increasingly authoritarian Russia, the existence of democracies on the post-Soviet territory is undesirable, maybe even dangerous. The departure of the Baltic states, which had been perceived differently than the rest even during Soviet times (the so-called internal abroad), was a tough enough for Russia to come to terms with. As for the other countries built on the debris of the Soviet Union, especially the Slavic Ukraine, the Russian authorities cannot accept their democratic governments.

The EU faces the following dilemma: should it dwell upon the Russian perspective, admitting that the Eastern Partnership countries belong to the Russian sphere of interest, and limit its engagement, or should it be responsive to signals sent by the Eastern Partnership states desiring integration with the EU, even at the price of worse relations with Russia? This is not a theoretical

question, but a matter of practical politics. Here is another one: what should we do under the unfavourable circumstances that are bound to last many more years? How can the EU cooperate with Russia successfully without rejecting the European aspirations of the Eastern Partnership states?

### **Priorities for the Polish EU Presidency**

Taking the above remarks into consideration, a short list of priorities for Polish presidency can be proposed:

- Poland should be well prepared for the new type of presidency and cooperate closely with new institutions: the President of the European Council, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union and EEAS on Eastern issues. Cooperation with the new Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, is also imperative.
- As intensive a cooperation as possible within the trio (Poland, Denmark, Cyprus) on Eastern matters should be strongly supported by the Polish government. It could create an additional synergy between presidencies and new EU institutions.
- Poland should make efforts to implement all of the proposals included in the EaP that are already on the table—first of all, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and visa liberalization (abolishment of visas). It should be noted that no new package (EaP+) can be proposed until the current proposals have been implemented.
- Poland should support civil society in all six Eastern Partnership countries. Positive changes and closer cooperation by these countries with the EU cannot be achieved only by authorities, but have to be supported by society.
- The Polish presidency should be proactive not only towards the six Eastern Partnership countries, but should be deeply engaged in EU-Russia relations.