

Non-paper

Our Strategy on the Future of Eastern Partnership

We should set the European Trio Process for the most advanced Eastern partners for the next decade, which should be supporting the leading EU Associated/DCFTA countries (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova)

I. A New Flagship Initiative – the Trio Strategy 2030: Our objectives

1) The EU has proved in the history that it has a huge soft transformative potential for neighbouring regions and countries. Since the World War II and especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall, a transformation of economically poor post-totalitarian or post-soviet countries into successful and democratic countries was happening only through the process of EU enlargements. Such a transformation of neighbouring Eastern Partnership countries would be beneficial also for the EU itself because, as the EU Commissioner J. Hahn has said, "We have to become smarter at exporting stability. If not, Europe will keep importing instability".

2) Up until now the EaP dimension, established by the EU in 2009, was very successful in supporting the efforts of a group of EaP countries – Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, which have each signed the Association Agreement with the EU, including its part on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (**the EU Associated Trio**), in moving more rapidly and effectively with implementation of necessary reforms and speeding-up ahead in the direction of deeper European political and economic integration with the EU. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) strategy, which has also formulated tangible political flagship objectives, such as introduction of a visa-free travel for the citizens of the EU Associated Trio, was a powerful soft-power instrument, which EU has used in order to assist those countries and their ordinary citizens to sustain a high-level political motivation for European type of difficult structural reforms. Overall, there has been a tangible progress on the implementation of the 20 Deliverables for 2020 in areas of political and economic integration, trade and investment opportunities, energy, transport, digital agenda and youth, while the new guidelines are now being discussed for the next decade to 2030.

3) Today, we find ourselves at a crucial point where we should add new additional long-term instruments in our strategy to help people of a leading group of the EU Associated Trio to keep their motivation and momentum for reforms for the next decade up to 2030. The EU integration reforms path is a difficult one, so the tailored-made instruments of EU soft power have become indispensable and crucial to assist these countries, which have made a geopolitical choice to join the EU family. The 10 years have passed since the establishment of the EaP strategy and now it is a proper time for the EU to move forward, promote a differentiated approach of the Eastern Partnership policy and present to the EU Associated Trio **a New Flagship Initiative – the Trio Strategy 2030.**

4) The EU could be more ambitious in using a ‘more for more’ principle and initiate a discussion on forward-looking strategic agenda and political objectives of the Eastern Partnership policy for the next decade. The goals and instruments of the EaP strategy should respond to the needs, expectations and interests of the countries, which have chosen an ambitious path of EU integration reforms. By applying a ‘more for more’ principle, the EU would be sending to the people in the EU East Neighbourhood a strong soft-power signal saying that the EU is not only demanding more and more of painful reforms, but also is gradually opening the doors to the EU Associated Trio themselves.

5) A New Flagship Initiative – the Trio Strategy 2030 should have three major long-term strategic policy objectives for the period of 2020 – 2030. Our strategy should be not only demanding what the EU Associated Trio needs to do, but also suggesting what the EU can and should do for these countries up until 2030. These policy objectives can be formulated as follows:

a) The creation of the European Trio Process – a new EU soft-power instrument to improve motivation to continue reforms, which will include tailor-made more intensive instruments of cooperation with the EU and its Member States. On the EU side, the differentiated treatment of EU Associated Trio (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova) could lead to an establishment of institutions and policy instruments, which would include more ambitious EU political and economic integration objectives to compare with the ones shared by the rest of EU Eastern partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus). This will help to achieve the main objective until 2030, which is to keep motivation and support from the of EU Associated Trio societies to the implementation of necessary and painful reforms.

b) The European Trio Process will be led by the EU institutions and a coalition of like-minded countries of the Trio Strategy 2030. The European Trio Process will replicate the one initiated in 2014 by Germany to speed up the process of the integration of Western Balkans (so called ‘Berlin Process’ initiative). The creation and implementation of the Berlin process was supported by the EU institutions and led by a coalition of like-minded countries (Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Greece, United Kingdom, Poland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia) to reinvigorate the Western Balkan EU integration reforms. The coalition of Trio Strategy 2030, in analogy with the Berlin Process, could be formed of countries having a special interest in promoting the Eastern Partnership dimension and its success, and which will be also in the lead of forthcoming EU Presidencies for the period of 2020 – 2030 (e.g. Finland in 2019, Croatia and Germany in 2020, Czech Republic and France in 2022, Sweden in 2023, Poland and Denmark in 2025, Lithuania in 2027, Latvia in 2028 and so on).

c) The European Trio Process will have an intensive agenda of tangible projects and programs, which will take on board the best experience of increased cooperation and deeper integration from Berlin Process and the instruments of European Economic Area.

6) The success of implementing EU integration reforms by the EU Associated Trio will create new incentives in the EU East Neighbourhood for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus to choose an ambitious path of European integration. The Trio Strategy 2030 should be complementary to the Eastern Partnership instruments and will not aim at replacing the existing initiatives in this area. On the contrary, it will contribute to the discussion on how we can make the Eastern Partnership policy more effective.

II. The main principles of the Trio Strategy 2030

1. Promoting a differentiated approach of the Eastern Partnership policy: what should we do?

We should build upon the tangible achievements of the EU Eastern Partnership within the last decade marked by a signing and entry into force of the EU Association Agreements and launching of the visa-free regimes.

We should set up a forward-looking strategic agenda, which should go beyond and concentrate on an increased cooperation and deeper integration of the EU Associated Trio with the EU. It could

focus on updating and upgrading the multilateral track of cooperation by taking an example from the Berlin Process and the instruments of European Economic Area.

We should include in the EU long-term strategy additional instruments and approaches to support the EU Associated Trio in order to help them to sustain the implementation of ambitious reforms over the next decade.

We should emphasise that, by supporting the EU Associated Trio, the international community will be also sending a message and example of success to remaining countries of EU Eastern Partnership to choose an ambitious path of European integration reforms.

We should support geopolitical aspirations of the EU Associated Trio to deepen their ties with the EU and welcome the progress over the last years in delivering reforms, especially in areas of macroeconomic stability, justice reform, anti-corruption, public administration reform and decentralization, energy and digital market, better regulation, corporate governance and public investment management. We should also recognise the need to continue these reforms in the framework of the EU Association Agreements and other international obligations such as the implementation of agreements with the International Monetary Fund and EU macro-financial assistance programs. These reform measures will be of a key importance for the EU Associated Trio to advance on their path towards deeper EU integration.

We should underline, that the EU Association Agreements are the roadmaps for EU related reforms in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, which require our support, and to recall the fact that there is a wide and steady support of the citizens in these countries to enter the family of the EU countries.

We should note that keeping a momentum of reforms and investments in the Eastern Partnership region in general and in the EU Associated Trio in particular, remains crucial for the aspirations to advance more in the EU integration path.

We should create the New Flagship Initiative and to show to the citizens of associated EU East Neighbourhood countries that the doors of the EU will remain open. We need to have an advanced integration perspective for the EU Associated Trio in order to assist public actors and private interests, as well as civil society organisations, in giving a powerful impetus to further implementation of crucial reforms. Each country's progress nevertheless must be assessed against the individual efforts to comply with the Copenhagen criteria and the conditionality process of the EU Association Agreements, including its part on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA).

We should create the EU long-term conditional framework of national reform agenda and investments. One of the first steps into this direction is an announcement made by EU Commissioner J. Hahn in 2018 on the Reform Contract for Investment to Ukraine.

We should make a full use of EU support instruments and to boost the implementation of our strategy by setting of reform support group for the EU Associated Trio. The EU has an excellent example to follow, which is a Support Group for Ukraine (SGUA).

2. Making the Trio Strategy 2030 work: how can we set a process and what agenda?

We should invite the EU and its partners to build the European Trio Process, which would follow an example of the Berlin Process led by Germany and launched by a group of EU countries and institutions to reinvigorate an EU dialogue with the Western Balkan countries in 2014. It will help

to mobilise a support to reforms and investments into an economic growth of the EU Associated Trio. The international community, EU and G7 partners, donors and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) should be involved in this process.

We should ensure that the European Trio Process will lead to more stability, justice and economic growth, and would lay the foundations to strengthen the European perspectives and economic growth in the region over the next decade. The European Trio Process should aim at making additional progress of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in the reform implementation and attracting investments. It should help improving investment climate and support reforms for economic growth.

We should demand that the European Trio Process will be contributing to the implementation of the EU Association Agreements and the Association Agenda to include, among others, the EU political oversight of the reform implementation in the EU Associated Trio.

We should include in the forward-looking agenda the following objectives:

a) consolidation of investment policy linked to investment intensive sectors of Energy, Environment, Transport and Digital Agenda, which would be supported by investment platform and coordination of IFI instruments,

b) working with an increased number of EU programs and instruments, such as a new generation of sustainable trade and stabilisation agreements, agreements for Conformity Analysis and Assessment (ACAAs), Common Transit Convention, European Connectivity Agenda, Energy (ENTSO-E, TEN-E) and Transport (TEN-T), Horizon 2020 plus or integration in to EU Youth Strategy,

c) employing a new generation of institutions and policies, establishing the EU Support Group for the Trio, adopting EU policy initiatives for the EU association countries in areas of European Green Deal, Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, SME Strategy and Access to Finance, Youth Guarantee, Digital Europe of New Generation of Technologies, Promoting European Way of Life and European Democracy, the peoples say at a Conference of the Future of Europe.

3. The European Trio Process: what elements and drivers?

The European Trio Process should have agenda drivers (Annual Leaders' Summits) and important investment-led flagship initiatives (Connectivity Agenda, List of Major Infrastructure Project, Internal Market Creation, Investment Policy, Digital Europe, Research and Innovation, Youth, Employment, Institution-building for Trio platforms).

The European Trio Process should become a geopolitical process, supported by the EU. As was the case with the Berlin Process for Western Balkans, the EU should support establishment of a coalition of like-minded countries for the Trio Strategy 2030 and contributed to its agenda setting. The coalition of like-minded countries will be a driving force for the EaP strategy success – each of the countries in the coalition will be also in the presidency of EU Council over the period from 2020 to 2030.

The European Trio Process will be driven by Annual Leaders' Summits of a coalition of like-minded friends, which would have a support from the EU and International Financial Institutions. The Annual Leaders' Summits could have a rotating presidency and follow an agreed agenda as well as other specific initiatives to support the implementation of EU Association Agreements.

The European Trio Process should focus on access to EU internal market creation, in particular, by setting a Connectivity Agenda in areas of energy, transport and digital infrastructure to improve connections between the EU and associated countries, individually, and as a region.

The European Trio Process will establish and manage a list of major regional connectivity investment projects linked with Trans-European Network (TEN) and EU Connecting Europe Facility. The progress on the implementation of the projects will be regularly reported at the Annual Leaders' Summits. The list of major infrastructure projects could work as a link between reforms and investments and could be accompanied by a report on reform implementation in areas of EU market creation and better investment climate.

The European Trio Process should be supported by the EU Association Investment Platform, which can be launched and managed by the EU institutions (e.g. SGUA plus for the EU Associated Trio) in cooperation with IFIs and National Investment Councils to assist Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in the investment process.

The European Trio Process should help to improve investment management, especially in the area of public investment projects implemented together with International Financial Institutions.

The European Trio Process could also encourage regional political and economic cooperation of the EU Associated Trio and could propose in the first Leaders' summit to consider establishing the Regional EU Association Council with participating countries of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. This Council together with EU institutions could establish instruments of regional cooperation in areas of trade agreements, technical assistance, sharing the best practices facilities, economic growth agenda, investment trust funds, youth exchange and professional training, rule of law and democracy peer reviews.

4. The global benefits of the European Trio Process

The European Trio Process will contribute to a success of EU associated countries. In this way, via the example of success of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, the EU will also have a major positive transformative impact on opinion of Russia's ordinary people in helping them to strive for an open democratic European country. At the end, the European Trio Process will make Russia's aggressive strategy towards Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova redundant.

The Eastern Partnership policy with inclusion of the European Trio Process and with an addition of the Trio Strategy 2030, can have a crucial importance in coming closer to final implementation of most ambitious goal on our continent of "Europe - whole, free and at peace". It will take time and will demand a lot of political will and resources from both sides, from the EU Associated Trio and the EU itself. This approach follows the recent European Parliament resolution on MR80 year anniversary, which said that it is **the only way, how the dividing lines on European continent, which were established by Hitler and Stalin 80 years ago, finally could be eradicated.**

Prepared by Lithuanian Delegation of the EPP Group in the European Parliament