

CORLEAP: Local and Regional Governments' Voice in the Eastern Partnership

What is the Eastern Partnership initiative?

The aim of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is to improve the relationship between EU and countries located in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine - by deepening political co-operation and economic integration. The Partnership also seeks to develop bilateral co-operation and introduce new mechanisms for improved regional cooperation.

The Eastern Partnership aims at increasing political, economic and cultural links between the European Union and partner countries interested in moving towards it. It is based on a shared commitment to the EU's fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

The Eastern Partnership has been established in Prague in May 2009. Subsequent summits - in Warsaw in September 2011, in Vilnius in November 2013 and in Riga in May 2015 - discussed the progress achieved in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, reviewed the cooperation and provided the direction for further joint action.

The Partnership Goals

- promoting democracy, and the rule of law for all citizens
- economic development, integration and cooperation
- support for civil society
- increased mobility of people
- energy security
- providing additional funding for projects to reduce social inequality and increase stability

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

The Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)

CORLEAP is a joint body of local and regional authorities from the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries. It is the EU platform offering an opportunity to discuss the contribution of cities and regions to the development of the Eastern Partnership. Involving local and regional levels of government should help strengthen local and regional self-government in the partner countries and bring the Eastern Partnership closer to its citizens.

CORLEAP has been called upon to strengthen the capacity of partner countries at local and regional level with regard to public administration reform and to support the monitoring of the implementation of the EaP Roadmap in cooperation with other relevant actors, such as the Civil Society Forum, the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Objectives of CORLEAP

- to promote dialogue and cooperation between local and regional authorities in the EU with their counterparts in the EaP countries;
- to ensure that local and regional authorities provide input to Eastern Partnership policy;
- to provide the framework for a consistent and stable cooperation between the European Committee of the Regions and representatives of local and regional authorities of partner countries;
- to promote the contacts between local authorities from partner countries and other EU institutions and bodies;
- to promote the basis and principles of local democracy, fiscal decentralisation and autonomy both in partner countries and at EU level.

CORLEAP: areas of focus

CORLEAP is focusing on three main areas in 2016 – 2017:

1. **Decentralisation and public administration reform**
2. **Exchange of good practice of public administration and economic development, including in the context of territorial cooperation**
3. **Funding opportunities for local and regional authorities**

Possible aspects of interest 2016-2017:

- Active citizenship and multi-stakeholder approach for sustainable local and regional development, including better communication about the benefits of EaP policies through people-to-people contacts.
- Enhanced mobility of citizens in a secure and well-managed environment, including the added value of Mobility Partnerships and cross-border cooperation programmes for the management of migration flows and labour mobility.
- Latest developments in territorial cooperation between local and regional authorities (LRAs) in the partner countries and EU cities and regions, taking account of the existence of new instruments, such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) or other means of cooperation, such as the establishment of macro-regions.
- Energy efficiency and the role of LRAs in responding to climate challenges.
- Association Agreements (AAs) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), the potential role of LRAs in the effective implementation of AAs and how LRAs can act as a driver for economic development in the regions of the EaP using the opportunities provided by the DCFTA.
- EU financial assistance available to LRAs in the partner countries in the new programming period 2014-2020 and the relevant institutional framework.
- The devolution of powers to sub-national level and fiscal decentralisation – experience from the EU and developments in the partner countries with regard to key CORLEAP priority areas (fiscal decentralisation; reform of public administration; territorial cooperation), lessons learned and actions for joint advocacy at EU level and at national level in the partner countries.
- Identification of regional skills needs and dissemination of lessons learned from entrepreneurial communities in Eastern Partnership countries.

How does CORLEAP work?

CORLEAP functions as a “Territorial cooperation platform”. Local and regional associations from the partner states are contact points for CORLEAP in their countries, while the European Committee of the Regions is the natural contact point for the EU institutions. This enables CORLEAP to collect and share information relevant to the local and regional dimension of the Eastern Partnership. By reaching out to local authorities in partner countries as well as private, public, academic, business and government networks, which are linked by a common interest and objectives, the Conference and its members promote multilevel governance, enhance the credibility and acceptance of a relationship with the EU and communicate the benefits of this relationship for local and regional authorities.

Permanent observers to CORLEAP are:

- The Civil Society Forum (CSF) - active actors in promoting democratic and market-oriented reforms based on shared values, i.e. respect for democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, principles of market economy and sustainable development.
- The EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly contributes to the strengthening, development and visibility of the Eastern Partnership, as the institution responsible for parliamentary consultation, supervision and monitoring.

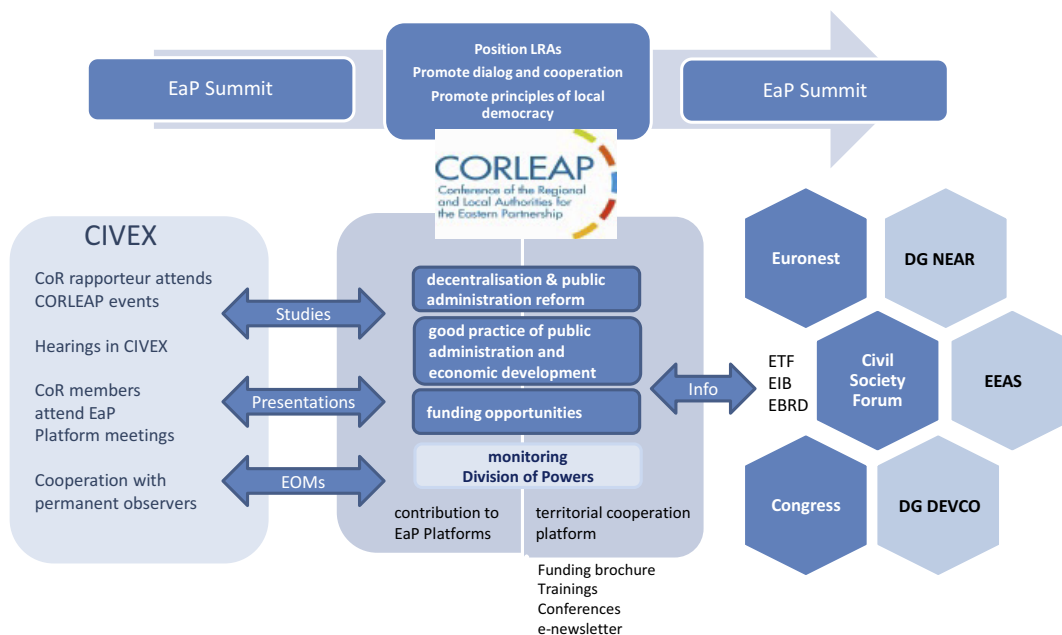
- The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has a role in promoting local and regional democracy, improving local and regional governance and strengthening their self-government. It pays particular attention to application of the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. It encourages the devolution and regionalisation processes, as well as cross-border co-operation between cities and regions.

The permanent observers contribute to the work of CORLEAP through their expertise on partner countries and the wide range of activities they carry out. CORLEAP co-organises topical events with each of them, such as training sessions, hearings, conferences and seminars.

The members of CORLEAP

Aiming at balanced political and geographical distribution of its members, CORLEAP brings together 36 regional and local politicians (mayors, members of local and regional assemblies or parliaments), 18 from the six Eastern partner countries and 18 from the European Committee of the Regions. The EU seats are distributed according to the political composition of the European Committee of the Regions, which is divided between five political groups: European People’s Party (EPP), Party of European Socialists (PES), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), European Alliance (EA) and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR).

Strategic framework



At the 2015 Eastern Partnership Summit, the Heads of State and Government stated that they “welcome the further steps taken by the Conference of local and regional authorities of the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) in promoting cooperation at the regional and municipal levels of government. They {participants} invite the European Commission to ensure appropriate, targeted support to local and regional authorities to assist their role in pursuing the goals and objectives of the Eastern Partnership”.



More info

[http:// cor.europa.eu/en/activities/corleap/Pages/corleap.aspx](http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/corleap/Pages/corleap.aspx)

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