



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

Directorate for Legislative Works I  
CIVEX Commission

## **Background information**

### **Stakeholder consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership**

30 September 2019, 15:00 - 17:00

European Committee of the Regions, Room VMA1

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Rapporteur: **Tadeuš ANDŽEJSKI (LT/ECR)**

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## 1. Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy initiative

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint policy initiative, inaugurated in 2009, aiming at deepening and strengthening relations between the European Union (EU), its Member States and its six Eastern neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The strategic policy is guided by the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, the New Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, and the revised European Neighbourhood Policy, with all of them calling on the need to focus on increasing the stabilisation and the resilience of the EU's Eastern Neighbours.

Within this politico-institutional framework, there is a joint commitment to provide tangible results for citizens across the region. At the recent Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels on 24 November 2017, an ambitious work agenda was set in the form of **20 key deliverables for 2020**. Amongst the leading priorities for the stakeholders are the following four:

- Stronger Economy (economic development and market opportunities);
- Stronger Governance (strengthening institutions and good governance);
- Stronger Connectivity (connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change);
- Stronger Society (mobility and people-to-people contacts).

With the EaP reaching its 10-year anniversary in 2019 of close cooperation and commitment, the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) have jointly launched an encompassing reflection process or the so-called *structured consultation process* to reflect on and shape the future strategic direction of the Eastern Partnership and a new "post 2020" generation of deliverables. EU representatives, Member States, other partner institutions and all types of stakeholders are invited to contribute to the elaboration of the strategic document for the next decade of the Eastern Partnership.

## 2. CoR contribution to the EaP

Shortly after the launch of the EaP initiative, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has set the **Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)** in 2011, which is a political forum of local and regional authorities (LRAs) of the EU and the six EaP countries, ensuring that the EaP has an active and vigorous local dimension. Its primary objective is to provide the possibility for discussion, consultation and monitoring in respect to all matters relating to the EaP at the local and regional levels, thus contributing to the strengthening, development and visibility of the local and regional scope of the EaP.

Both the CoR and CORLEAP has devoted significant amount of efforts in the last years as to contribute to the overall EaP progress and implementation. **CoR** produced six **opinions** within a ten-year period on the topic of the EaP. Furthermore, in relation to the "20 Deliverables for 2020", the CoR adopted the opinion "Eastern Partnership deliverables for 2020: The contribution of local and regional authorities (CDR 5903/2017) and the CoR Resolution on recommendations to the heads of state/government gathering in Brussels 24 November 2017 for the fifth Eastern Partnership Summit. Both documents outline possibilities of how LRAs can meaningfully contribute to achieving these goals.

The **draft opinion on "Local and Regional Authorities Shaping the Future Eastern Partnership"** also aims to contribute to the *structured consultation process*. Some cross-cutting deliverables that the rapporteur views as worth being reflected in the opinion are the following: 1) Decentralisation of

central state power in shaping the EaP, i.e. empowering and better involving LRAs in EaP policy making processes; 2) CoR/CORLEAP representatives should be systematically invited to EaP platforms, thematic events and fora; 3) Enhancement of institutional and administrative capacity of local public authorities as well as efficient public administration; 4) EU's tailor-made curricula ranging from e-courses, visiting scholar seminars/exchanges, short-term training to a possible design of a specialised Erasmus programme; 5) City diplomacy could be used to support/develop sustainable partnerships and cooperation within the EaP region can be fostered at sub-national level; 6) The EU should aim to encourage the EaP partners in taking ownership in the process of empowering LRAs and taking on board their contribution to national decision-making.

### 3. Guiding questions for the stakeholders:

During the consultation you are invited to reflect upon the following questions, that will contribute to shaping the final version of the CoR opinion:

1. How can EaP partners better involve the LRAs in the national level of decision-making?
2. What are the best ways to increase the efficiency of EU funding to LRAs and avoid the perils of local corrupt practices?
3. How can the participation of LRAs in the EaP policy-making be reinforced?
4. How to increase the transparency of decision making processes on local and regional levels?
5. What are the best ways to facilitate cooperation between LRAs and local businesses, media, civil society?
6. In what way can the cross-border cooperation within the EaP region be facilitated despite countries' differences?
7. How can the institutional and administrative capacity of local and regional public authorities could further be strengthened? Could you suggest concrete innovative ideas for educational programmes?
8. How can the media disinformation in the EaP region be countered more efficiently on local level?