



Policy Association for an Open Society

A network of independent policy centres
in Central and Eastern Europe
and Central Asia

in association with



INSTYTUT SPRAW PUBLICZNYCH
THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

by Elżbieta Kaca, Researcher, European Programme, Institute of Public Affairs (ISP), Poland, and
Jacek Kucharczyk, President, Institute of Public Affairs (ISP), Poland,
in association with Jeff Lovitt, Executive Director, PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society)

Partners in Eastern Promise: A chance for Polish-Czech co-operation

Forging Synergies within the Framework of the EU Eastern Partnership initiative

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. By adopting the Eastern Partnership as a priority during its presidency of the European Council, the Czech Republic has established the basis for co-operation with Poland to continue this project. Therefore, in spite of some initial misunderstandings around the promotion of this initiative within the European Union, **both countries have demonstrated their interest in the further development of the Partnership.**

2. The role of the Eastern Partnership is mainly to strengthen relations and deepen integration between the EU and its eastern neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). **Poland and the Czech Republic should therefore make a common effort in order to keep the Partnership visible on the EU agenda,** especially during the European Council presidencies of Spain and Belgium, whose governments are less interested in the EU's Eastern policy.

- Poland and the Czech Republic should set as a priority, at the EU level, **the removal of trade barriers and the liberalisation of the EU visa regime for Eastern European countries.** Those areas may also become a field for co-operation among Polish and Czech Members of the European Parliament.

- Both countries can provide conceptual support to the European Commission in implementing the Partnership programme by **submitting a joint proposal** outlining the short-term Partnership objectives that can be efficiently achieved, as well as roadmaps for gradual achievement of the long-term objectives of the Partnership, e.g. **visa liberalisation.**

- A key issue will be Polish and Czech support for the enhancing and developing the unit within the European Commission responsible for the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. **The nomination of Štefan Füle as EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy (whose portfolio will therefore include EaP) opens up new opportunities for Polish-Czech co-operation in this area.**

- At the level of bilateral co-operation, joint Polish-Czech promotion of various aspects of the Partnership is desirable. This could be done, for instance, by a series of conferences organised by diplomatic missions of the two countries in different European capitals, and particularly in Brussels, the countries of the European Council presidency-holders, and in Eastern European countries.

© PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society), Institute of Public Affairs (ISP), Poland, 7 December 2009

This policy brief was written as part of the project, **Eastern Partnership - Polish and Czech perspectives,** supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic, in the framework of the Czech-Polish Forum.

3. **An important element of sustaining interest in the Partnership will be to form an advocacy group of member states supporting its further development**, involving all Visegrad Four countries, the Baltic states, and also old member states, primarily Germany and the United Kingdom.

- To foster multilateral co-operation, it might be necessary to initiate coalitions of states that already have common interests. For instance, the Nordic states may be interested in sharing their experience of Baltic co-operation, while Austrian banks and Greek businesses have significant investment interests in Ukraine. France, meanwhile, has a significant Armenian diaspora community.

- In order to minimise competition for EU funding between individual initiatives, it is essential to co-ordinate support through involving in the Partnership activities those states interested in the development of other regional initiatives, that is Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

4. **The amount of funding committed by the EU for the Eastern Partnership is modest. Therefore it will be necessary to secure more funds**, e.g. in the form of business investment and assistance in securing new loans from international institutions.

- At the intergovernmental level, **Poland and the Czech Republic should aim at forming a group of friends of the Eastern Partnership**. Potential supporters might include Canada, Japan, Turkey, US, Norway, Australia, and New Zealand. One solution might be the establishment of a trust fund for the Partnership.

- In addition, Poland and the Czech Republic should support, at the EU level, greater access for Eastern European countries to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) facilities and increased access to loans from EU institutions, and should also advocate the development of additional assistance instruments with a structure similar to the existing Neighbourhood Investment Facility.

- In order to improve the effectiveness of spending of ENPI funds, a reliable mechanism should be created to evaluate the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

- In the long term, joint support could be considered for introduction in the next ENPI programming period of a mechanism encouraging expenditure of programme funds by local authorities – assigning more resources in return for greater participation by local authorities in the spending of funds. At the same time, a control mechanism should be developed by supporting the creation and strengthening of civil society watchdog organisations.

5. An important aspect of the Partnership, initiated during the Czech Presidency of the European Council, has been **the inclusion of civil society organisations in the implementation of the project**.

- In order to continue this process, Poland and the Czech Republic should provide greater financial and political **support to building the capacity of non-governmental organisations working jointly within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**.

- **Polish and Czech NGOs should take a leading role in the establishment of a number of working groups within the EaP Civil Society Forum** as well as remain in close contact with the members of the CSF Steering Committee (which includes Czech and Polish nationals) to provide feedback on any developments regarding the Forum.

- **A Polish-Czech Civil Society Contact Group could be established within the Forum**, led by Czech DEMAS and Polish “Grupa Zagranica” umbrella organisations.

- The activities of **Polish and Czech think-tanks engaged in the monitoring of Partnership implementation** in co-operation with similar organisations from EaP countries should be given particular attention and support.

- It is important to stimulate multilateral co-operation of Polish and Czech non-governmental organisations with partners from other EU countries, such as Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia, interested in Eastern Partnership issues, as well as with the NGO sectors in the Eastern Partnership countries and with NGOs in Russia and Turkey.

6. Multilateral co-operation introduced by the Partnership provides an opportunity for Polish-Czech co-operation. In order to develop multilateral platforms, work could be undertaken in a number of areas:

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE, AND STABILITY

- In view of both countries' experience in democratic and economic transition as well as the recent EU accession process, the governments of Poland and the Czech Republic should co-operate by initiating direct contacts between their development assistance units for the purpose of sharing information about their activities.

- EaP objectives and target countries should be included in Polish and Czech development and democracy assistance programmes.

- Both countries could also implement joint twinning projects at the government administration level, forming twinning consortia in EaP states.

- At the EU level, Poland and the Czech Republic should further support the implementation of the "EU Agenda for Action on Democracy Support in EU External Relations", which was initiated during the Czech European Council Presidency, and adopted by the Council during the Swedish Presidency. Both the Czech Republic and Poland should monitor, and give support to, the implementation of the framework during the Spanish and Belgian presidencies.

- Poland and the Czech Republic could shape a new channel of support for EaP objectives

through the International Visegrad Fund for project co-operation with Belarus in less politically sensitive areas: environment, education (building on the existing student exchanges), culture (supporting cultural heritage), and development of entrepreneurship.

- In conflict areas, Poland and the Czech Republic should seek to form a network of non-governmental organisations, from countries such as Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, which would undertake activities to support cultural dialogue and dissemination of reliable information in the Trans-Dniester region. A special focus should also be the Crimea region.

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND CONVERGENCE WITH EU POLICIES

- Poland and the Czech Republic should use their recent transformation and EU accession experience to provide technical support to EaP governments in order to help them meet the conditions for the establishment of a deep free trade zone with the EU.

ENERGY SECURITY

- Continuous Polish and Czech support in the EU for diversification of energy supply routes, including the Nabucco project, will be of importance to the Eastern Partnership initiative.

- In order to hold regional political dialogue on energy issues, a forum should be formed with the participation of interested EU member states and Eastern European countries (for instance, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Moldova, and the Czech Republic).

- Poland and the Czech Republic should engage in talks, at the working departmental level, on the directions in which to stimulate energy co-operation under the Eastern Partnership, and on how to participate in the existing ENP assistance instruments.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS

- It will be particularly important to regularly **monitor, at the EU and national levels, progress related to visa facilitation and liberalisation** for the citizens of EaP countries, and to share information on the issue. Poland and the Czech Republic should **provide technical assistance to EaP states** to enable them to fulfil the conditions set out in present and future visa agreements with the EU.
- Co-operation could be initiated, at the technical level, between Polish and Czech consulates, and **joint visa-issuing centres** could be created, following the example of the joint embassies of the Visegrad countries in Central Asia and South America.
- It would send a strong signal if Poland and the Czech Republic advocated the idea of creating **an academic centre in one of the Eastern Partnership countries**, which would provide education in the area of European integration and political transformation. It could be a centre modelled on the College of Europe campus in Natolin or the European University Institute in Florence, and its aim would be to educate a future generation of experts and scholars from EaP countries in the field of European integration.

Prague and Warsaw: the drivers of the Eastern Partnership

The development of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) has to date been driven largely by Poland and the Czech Republic. In May 2008, Poland and Sweden put forward a Partnership proposal, which was subsequently accepted at an informal summit of the European Council in June of the same year.

In December 2008, a European Commission Communication was issued which comprised specific proposals concerning the discussed

initiative.¹ The Communication met with a warm welcome on the part of the Polish government. Later on, in the course of negotiations between EU member states, Poland supported the allocation of € 600 million for the period to 2013 for the Eastern Partnership, which was finally approved at the European Council summit in March 2009, despite the global economic crisis and the reluctance of some net contributors to the EU budget.

The Czech position towards the Eastern Partnership was at first rather complex. In April 2008, prior to the presentation of the EaP project, Prague presented its own proposal in the area of the EU's Eastern policy at the level of the Visegrad Group, which was then accepted by Slovakia and Hungary. Poland, promoting its own EaP initiative, did not take into consideration the Czech proposal, which was not well received by other Visegrad Group countries. However, the Czech Republic eventually backed the Polish project and participated, along with Poland and Sweden, in the talks with the European Commission on the specific contents of the Partnership in October 2008.

As a consequence, the EaP became one of the priorities during the Czech Presidency in the European Council in the period January-June 2009. The stronger support given to the EaP by the Czech Republic during its presidency might have been influenced by the shift in Czech public opinion following the Russia-Georgia of August 2008 and the gas dispute between Ukraine and Russia in January 2009.

Partnership: EU Presidency priority that outlived Czech government crisis

Making the Eastern Partnership a priority during the Czech Presidency of the European Council helped to launch this project at the EU level. Furthermore, this priority was the principal one

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council "Eastern Partnership", COM (2008) 823, 3.12.2008.

pursued after the government crisis in March 2009, which showed how significant the EaP was for the Czechs.

The main task of the Czech administration was to secure the general adoption of the EaP at the meeting of the European Council on 19-20 March 2009 after a series of negotiations had been conducted between EU member states.

One of the key events during the Czech Presidency was the EaP inaugural summit, held in Prague on 7 May 2009 with the participation of the partner states. However, except for German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the meeting was not attended by the leaders of the large EU member states. The summit participants signed the Declaration of Eastern Partnership incorporating the main conclusions of the European Council of March 2009. Moreover, the Czech Republic acted as a mediator in the process of difficult negotiations over the wording of the declaration. For instance, one issue at stake was a prompt introduction of visa-free travel to the EU, which in the end was not incorporated into the declaration.

During their presidency, the Czechs launched a series of activities promoting the development of civil society within the framework of the EaP. They supported a conference on the eve of the inaugural summit, which included the participation of representatives of the NGO sector from the EU and the partner states, at which the future shape of Eastern Partnership policies, including the establishment of the EaP Civil Society Forum, were debated.² In consequence, results and recommendations were prepared and published by the representatives of the third sector.³ This engagement signalled to the Eastern Partnership countries that the EU was focused not only on its own economic interests, but also on support for the democratisation of the region.

² Conference: *Eastern Partnership: Towards Civil Society Forum*, 5-6 May 2009

³ *Policy recommendations for Eastern Partnership Summit*, available at: <http://www.pasos.org/www.pasosmembers.org/news/civil-society-workshop-recommendations-presented-to-eastern-partnership-summit>

A similar initiative, which combined the participation of the Czech government, the European Commission and civil society partners working on democracy support and human rights, took the shape of the conference "Building Consensus about EU policies on Democracy Support", held in Prague on 9-10 March 2009.⁴ It was organised by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission in co-operation with the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) and the Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights (DEMAS). Experts from EU institutions and member states as well as representatives of the third sector discussed the significance of giving support to democracy in third countries within the current EU policy framework. The meeting was part of the Czech supportive actions for the work of the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), which concentrates its efforts on the preparation of a "European Consensus on Democracy" (later to become known as an EU policy framework for democracy building in EU external relations).⁵

During the Czech Presidency of the European Council, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs successfully backed up the right to participation of the representatives of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in sessions of the multilateral thematic platforms of the EaP. Subsequently, the Czech diplomatic service strived to secure adequate funding for the Forum.⁶

The Czechs initiated a consultation cycle with NGOs at the national level in the form of an extensive exchange of opinions, both via the internet and through face-to-face meetings. The idea of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to identify those areas in which NGOs' know-how could be useful and then to stimulate relevant co-operation in those spheres. Among other issues, the consultations encountered a problem of recognition as NGOs, under

⁴ A. Fuksiewicz, A. Łada, *The Czech Presidency in the Council of EU – Poland's perspective*. Research report, July 2009

⁵ The document, which defines a common standpoint of the EU member states on the significance of support given to democracy in terms of external relations between the EU and third countries, was adopted by the European Council in November 2009.

⁶ Based on the interview with a government official held on June 2009.

the EaP's provisions, of organisations such as GONGOs, i.e. government-operated non-governmental organisations.

After the end of the Czech Presidency of the European Council, the government's interest in issues concerning the implementation of the EaP lessened, mostly due to the continuing unstable political situation in the Czech Republic and rising uncertainty before the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the Czechs still managed to launch inter-ministerial consultations and prepare consultations with the business sector on the involvement of Czech companies in Eastern Partnership markets.

Poland keeps Eastern Partnership in sights for 2011 EU Presidency

In the final months of 2009, the Eastern Partnership project moved from the level of political arrangements to the level of concrete policy proposals, which are being developed by the European Commission. At the same time, Poland is preparing to engage in EaP activities at the national level. A series of inter-ministerial consultations were conducted, which enabled specific ministries to collect proposals pertaining to all potential areas of co-operation with EaP countries. As a consequence, a list of Polish priorities for multilateral co-operation⁷ were drawn up, which partially constitutes a basis for the shaping of the Polish standpoint on further development of the EaP. For instance, Poland proposed the programme "Building Integrity and Reducing Corruption", to be developed in a multilateral track within EaP countries.

Following the consultations process, the ministries initiated several pilot projects within the framework of development aid so as to comply with the Partnership's objectives. However, the projects are essentially a continuation of

⁷ These priorities were presented at the meeting of the European Committee of the Council of Ministers in June 2009.

activities earlier undertaken by the ministries, which were in line with the EaP objectives.⁸

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that as from 2010 Polish international development aid would be aligned with the EaP objectives and would mainly be directed at Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. This initiated yet another process of consultations on the reform of development aid and, in particular, the introduction of long-term programming as well as talks with other countries' agencies on establishing co-operation, e.g. SIDA (Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency).

A series of consultations took place between the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Polish NGOs. In 2008, the MFA carried out consultations with the "Grupa Zagranica" member organisations⁹, which however did not produce tangible results. In July 2009, another round of consultations was conducted online, this time focusing on the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The Institute of Public Affairs was the only non-governmental organisation that submitted recommendations, which were subsequently endorsed by "Grupa Zagranica". The consultation process was run again in autumn 2009 on the eve of the EaP Civil Society Forum in Brussels, when prospective participants in the first meeting of the Forum were briefed by the Foreign Ministry representatives about recent developments regarding the EaP. Poland sent the largest delegation of NGOs among the EU27 countries, and one of Polish representatives was elected to the Forum Steering Committee.

Poland, as a country that feels particularly responsible for further development of the Partnership, is also taking steps to support the EaP on the international arena. In order to create

⁸ The Ministry of Regional Development will support the administrations of Ukraine and Moldova in their territorial reform (the Ministry will rely on its previous experience with Georgia), while the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration will be furthering police and neighbourhood co-operation. The Ministry of Environment, in co-operation with the government administrations of Belarus and Ukraine, is planning to launch a project within the framework of the EaP, whose aim will be to create the Commission for the Bug River Basin. The Plenipotentiary for Civil Rights Protection will advise on human rights in the judiciary.

⁹ "Grupa Zagranica" is an association of Polish non-governmental organisations working abroad in co-operation with and for the benefit of foreign partners.

a “group of EaP’s friends” – countries willing to invest in the Eastern Partnership countries – a series of talks were held, *inter alia*, with Canada and Japan. However, no binding declarations were made. Raising new funds is of paramount importance here, as the negotiated sum of € 600 million is insufficient and envisages the allocation of only € 350 million of new funds, while € 250 million come from the previously committed financial resources of the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).¹⁰ In view of the economic crisis, even the most interested EU member states (such as Sweden) are far from enthusiastic about allocating further funds from their own budgets.

Another issue highlighted by Poland at the EU level was to designate EaP issues to the portfolio of one of the new European Commissioners (e.g. for ENP and EaP issues) to give an appropriate rank and visibility to this initiative.¹¹

On the bilateral level, Poland supports the perspective of a new association agreement for Moldova and the South Caucasus countries (Ukraine is already negotiating such an agreement) and supports the launch of a visa liberalisation process for the EaP countries, which has encountered strong resistance from some EU member states.

Poland is also preparing for its Presidency of the European Council in 2011 and the Eastern Partnership, along with energy security issues, is expected to be declared as one of the Presidency priorities.¹² The Polish Committee for European Integration has conducted a series of meetings with think-tank and NGO representatives related to the preparations for the Presidency, and the Eastern Partnership was one of the top topics for these discussions.

¹⁰ On the basis of the European Commission’s decision, the already existing budget of ENPI for Eastern European countries (€ 3 billion) will be spent according to the EaP objectives, “Information on the state of work on the EaP”, Warsaw, 28 October, presented by the Polish MFA to NGOs.

¹¹ On 27 November 2009, it was announced that Czech Štefan Füle was nominated as European Commissioner for Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy. The new Commission will take office in January/February 2010.

¹² <http://prezycjaue.gov.pl/en/the-presidency-in-the-media/interviews-with-the-minister-dowgielewicz/70-dowgielewicz-polska-prezycja-bdzie-kosztowaa-330-mln->

The Russian question: destabilising conflicts and energy crises

From Poland’s point of view, further development of the EaP could face several serious challenges. First of all, the initiative owes its wide interest across the EU to the conflict in Georgia and the Ukraine gas crisis, and it will be difficult to maintain interest at such a high level. Furthermore, EaP countries caught up with their own internal problems will not automatically present themselves as eager partners (e.g. destabilisation resulting from Ukrainian presidential elections in January 2010, the continuing constitutional uncertainty in Moldova after two elections in 2009, the economic crisis).

In the EU, there are already a number of regional initiatives favoured by various groups focused on the division of funds from the EU budget¹³, making it hard to foresee to what extent the EU member states initially interested in the Partnership will engage themselves in its activities. Considering the scope for high economic activity in the EaP countries, German¹⁴ and British support for the initiative would be of paramount importance. Poland had high expectations as regards Sweden.

However, the latter did not adopt the Eastern Partnership as its priority during its Presidency of the European Council, which caused disappointment among Polish and Czech experts. At the same time, the Swedish Presidency is actively supporting the European Commission’s daily work on implementation of the EaP, and Sweden is undertaking efforts to launch under the framework of the EaP a project on energy efficiency and ecology in Ukraine - with the possibility of extension to other EaP countries.

¹³ For instance, the Danube Forum promoted by Austria, Black Sea Synergy, or the Union for the Mediterranean.

¹⁴ However, Germany also aims at the diversification of energy supplies, which transpired through the endorsement of the gas agreement with Turkmenistan, or its support for the Nabucco project. That is why there are real chances for co-operation.

Although the Eastern Partnership raised great expectations among both the EU member states and the partner countries, it did not signal an overarching reform of the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). It seems that the EaP is more an extension of the ENP. It highlights a number of key areas for the process of integration, such as visa policy, energy and trade, as well as the endorsement of co-operation agreements, but these are difficult, long-term goals.

Consequently, many Polish officials and experts fear that the EaP will remain merely an "empty shell", and they advise that the ENP's Eastern dimension should be strengthened to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of current programmes in the Eastern ENP countries and the availability of aid instruments, whose functioning is far more advanced and highly effective in Southern ENP countries. These instruments include loan mechanisms of the European Investment Bank (EIB)¹⁵, or FEMIP (Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership)¹⁶ implemented in the Southern ENP countries. To date, Eastern ENP countries have had at their disposal few instruments allowing for the implementation of, and investment in, infrastructural projects.¹⁷

One Neighbourhood Policy or East-South divorce?

As experts say, Poland will be faced with a dilemma as to whether in the long run the Partnership should or should not comprise a separate policy towards the EU's Eastern neighbours (completely excluded from the ENP's framework). However, considering the future budget negotiations, it might be easier to raise more budget funds by creating a coalition

of EU member states interested in retaining a high budget for the whole of the ENP, such as Spain or Italy with their interest in the Southern ENP countries.

Another problem will be the development of multilateral co-operation, which constitutes a new form of co-operation introduced by the Partnership.¹⁸ The Eastern ENP countries lack a sense of joint political interests. Furthermore, co-operation is hindered by various regional conflicts afflicting specific countries and the unpredictable reactions of Russia. Moscow treats such proposals of co-operation between the EU and the Eastern European countries lying between the EU and Russia as an interference in its area of influence and some of its responses further destabilise the region. However, it is impossible to conduct any serious negotiations in the region - on issues such as migration, for instance - without Moscow's involvement.

From the standpoint of Polish NGOs, a true challenge will be to engage civil society organisations from EaP countries in the process of formulating the political priorities of the EaP (so far, it has been achieved at the level of national governments and the European Commission) as well as to enhance their potential for receiving funds from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The establishment of the EaP Civil Society Forum might be a step forward towards the creation of a social consultation mechanism. To attain this, the Forum should pursue three kinds of activities¹⁹: monitoring of the implementation of programmes, including issuing term reports on this subject (watchdog organisations); conducting analyses and formulating recommendations, which would be incorporated into the Activity Plans (think-

¹⁵ Southern ENP countries receive more than twice as many EIB loans as the Eastern countries.

¹⁶ The instrument envisages granting loans for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises; it has earned favourable reviews in Morocco.

¹⁷ The only similar programme is NIF – Neighbourhood Investment Facility - with a budget amounting to € 700 million allocated for investments in energy, environment, transport, and social infrastructure.

¹⁸ In June 2009, the first meetings of the platforms were held, which set up a framework on the administrative level. Simultaneously, European Commission consultations were initiated with all the interested parties concerning the selection of the thematic panels. In addition, flagship initiatives were launched, which are to provide visibility for the latter. Currently, there are no concrete arrangements as far as the allocation of funds for multilateral co-operation.

¹⁹ Opinions of the Institute of Public Affairs on the EaP Civil Society Forum, 30 July 2009

tanks)²⁰; implementation within the framework of the subsidiarity principle that would consist in commissioning the NGOs with tasks from the areas included in the concept of the EaP. An illustration of the latter can be the realisation of the voluntary work programme.

However, Czech experts fear that the NGOs will not have sufficient administrative capacity. In order to foster similar activities, a special Fund should be created to support the participation of NGOs in the work of the Forum, whereas necessary financial resources should be drawn from the funds allocated for the EaP.

As far as Polish NGOs are concerned, special consideration needs to be given to the inclusion of Belarus in the framework of co-operation. However, it will present a serious challenge for the EaP, bearing in mind the difficulty in assessing Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko's readiness to introduce any changes or the considerable centralisation of the country that hinders the allocation of any funds.

Moreover, according to some experts, co-operation with Belarus in many areas is impossible altogether, as the country has not signed a bilateral agreement with the EU (thus, it cannot be a beneficiary of the funds coming from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - ENPI), or a visa facilitation agreement, nor it is a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which largely hampers the development of trade relations. Nevertheless, the EaP envisages a flexible form of co-operation consisting in creating a dialogue platform for lower and middle social groups, which can present a chance for them to enter into a dialogue.²¹

²⁰ Ibid; for instance, the priority in the Forum's activity within the framework of the task force Democracy, good governance, and stability should be its participation in implementation of the EU policy framework for democracy building in EU external relations (initially termed "European Consensus on Democracy"). Participating organisations and the Forum should then monitor the application of the principles set out within the framework in regard to the Eastern Partnership countries.

²¹ *Policy recommendations for Eastern Partnership Summit*, p. 36, available at: <http://www.pasos.org/www-pasosmembers-org/news/civil-society-workshop-recommendations-presented-to-eastern-partnership-summit>

Different neighbours, but common priorities

Poland and the Czech Republic demonstrate a varying degree of interest for EU Eastern policy issues, which can be a source of discrepancies between their standpoints towards further development of the EaP. For Poland, Eastern policy has since the 1990s constituted an integral part of foreign affairs because of Poland's direct neighbourhood, extensive trade relations, historical issues, and energy policy. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, treats Eastern policy as a key priority, which gained additional importance after 2004. However, for the Czechs it is not such a strategic issue. Prague has a long tradition of supporting democratic processes in Eastern Europe, and is notably interested in establishing co-operation in the trade and energy sectors.²²

Both Poland and the Czech Republic lack a uniform strategy in their Eastern policy. In Poland, there is the rivalry in the area of Eastern policy between the government and the opposition parties and the President²³, whereas in the Czech Republic the differences transpire through the attitudes of specific political parties towards Russia.²⁴ Many Czech politicians, from across the party political spectrum, tend to be cautious about Russia. If the Social Democrats (ČSSD) win the 2010 parliamentary elections, there could be a weakening in support for the EaP.

In terms of further promotion of the EaP, the Czech Republic is perceived by Poland as its ally in the region, but not as a strategic partner, as are Germany and Sweden, for instance. So far, during the meetings of the Visegrad Group

²² E. Tulmets, *Preparing the EU Presidency: the Czech Contribution to the Project of "Eastern Partnership"*, 2009.

²³ See: M. Wojciechowski, Polish Eastern Policy or a squash and a squeeze, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,4816968.html>, 8 January 2008

²⁴ Both main parties - the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and ČSSD - tend to keep careful relations with Russia. However, the conservative party's position consists more in a tightening of relations with the EaP countries, as the party is anxious about Russian domination in the region. By contrast, the Social Democrats give priority to keeping good relations with Russia and not interfering in its perceived sphere of influence in the EU's Eastern Neighbours.

and like-minded countries²⁵, the Czech Republic has clearly expressed its support for the general priorities of the EaP, and it is likely that both countries are willing to enter into co-operation within the framework of the EaP.

There are different areas of joint interests within the framework of some of the EaP's multilateral platforms: "Democracy, good governance, and stability", "Energy security", "People-to-people contacts".

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE, AND STABILITY

The Poles and the Czechs are engaged in democracy assistance activities in Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova.²⁶ Considering their involvement in common areas, it would be useful to develop co-operation between their international development aid departments. However, so far no substantial co-operation in this respect has been established between the government administrations from the two countries. Only in the area of human rights has it been possible to witness several joint initiatives. However, bearing in mind the insufficient administrative potential of the development aid departments in both countries, it seems that the establishment of similar co-operation could be a difficult task.

Both countries are willing to support the development at the political level of the "EU policy framework for democracy building in EU external relations", as well as to support the reform of EU international development aid. From the beginning of 2009, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has held a series of meetings on EU relations with Belarus, Russia, and Azerbaijan. The Czech MFA has prepared a non-paper that presents current EU instruments functioning in the area of promotion of human rights and sets out the case for greater co-ordination of these instruments. The MFA has

²⁵ i.e. the Visegrad Group, Scandinavian countries, Germany, the UK, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, and Baltic states.

²⁶ J. Kucharczyk, J. Lovitt, *Democracy's New Champions. European Democracy Assistance after EU Enlargement*, PASOS, Prague, 2008

conducted a number of activities in EU member states, with a view to gaining support for the policy framework for democracy building, so that the core formulation of the framework can be completed during the Swedish Presidency of the European Council ready for implementation during the Spanish and Belgian EU Presidencies in 2010.

The Polish and Czech experience of EU accession is of great value here, as it allows for the creation of consortia and the participation in joint twinning projects with Eastern ENP countries.²⁷ Such a multilateral approach would appear to be much more effective, as it would give Eastern beneficiaries an opportunity to compare different practices. To date, however, the Polish administration has not been strongly engaged in twinning co-operation projects as aid-providers, as this remains a relatively new field of activity. The twinning projects in Poland are co-ordinated by the Department for Institution-Building Programmes at the Office of the Committee for European Integration, which is planning to develop twinning projects as an aid instrument for the EaP and to conduct activities with the aim of attracting foreign partners.²⁸

Many common areas of activity can be found in NGOs' development activities, such as local government reform, regional development, promotion of human rights, and civic activism in Belarus.

ENERGY SECURITY

Considering the dependence on gas supplies from Russia, it is in the self-interest of both Poland and the Czech Republic to diversify their sources of energy and to enter into co-

²⁷ For instance, Poland has made attempts at establishing a consortium with Dutch institutions. Offers to create a twinning consortium in Eastern ENP countries flow from the Baltic states and Austria. <http://www.ukie.gov.pl/www/twinning.nsf/dzialy?open&dzial=5>

²⁸ Information on aid activities within the framework of twinning co-operation co-ordinated by the Office of the Committee for European Integration and addressed to the countries included in the programmes financed by the European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and Transition Facility, European Committee of the Council of Ministers Warsaw, 21 July 2009

operation with EaP countries.²⁹ If the Visegrad Group countries have managed to arrive at a consensus in terms of the climate package, there is hope that it will be possible to hold effective negotiations in energy sector. Another crucial issue is the support for the Nabucco project at the EU level – for Prague it ranked second in importance (after the EaP) in the priorities of the Czech Presidency of the European Council. The Czech Republic is also engaged in other attempts at the diversification of energy sources (extensive contacts with Azerbaijan).

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS

As the Czech Republic is not a direct neighbour of the EaP countries, the extent of its interest in the development of people-to-people contacts within the EaP framework is not as great as in the case of Poland. However, taking into account the considerable number of immigrants from Ukraine (according to unofficial estimates: 200,000-300,000, compared with around 80,000 legally employed Ukrainians), migration issues are not insignificant for the Czech government. Similarly, the monitoring of activities related to the facilitation and future liberalisation of EU visa policy in Poland and the Czech Republic is an important area, the more so as the regulations of agreements for simplifying visa procedures are enforced at the national level to a varying degree.³⁰

Bibliography

Ananicz Sz., *Partnerstwo Wschodnie*, „Biuro Analiz Sejmowych”, nr 17(64), 26 September 2009
 Cianciara A., *Eastern Partnership – opening a new chapter of Polish Eastern policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy?*, „Analizy i Opinie”, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, no. 4, June 2008
 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council “Eastern Partnership”, COM(2008) 823, 3.12.2008

²⁹ In 2008, the Czech Republic imported about 73.6% of its gas from Russia (source: Czech Statistical Office and Czech Ministry of Trade and Industry), while Poland imported 68.75% in 2008, <http://www.pgnig.pl/pgnig/sd/oim/import/?r,main,afterRedirect=true>

³⁰ *Changes in Visa Policies of the EU Member States. New Monitoring Report*, Stefan Batory Foundation, May 2009

Council of the European Union, *Eastern Partnership Multilateral Platforms. General Guidelines and Rules of Procedure*. Brussels, 5 June 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/platforms/rules_procedure_en.pdf

Council of the European Union, Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, Prague, 7 May 2009
 Fuksiewicz A., Łada A., *The Czech Presidency in the Council of EU – Poland's perspective*. Research report, July 2009

“Information on the state of work on the EaP”, Warsaw 28 October 2009, presented by Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to NGOs

Kucharczyk J., Lovitt J., *Democracy's New Champions. European Democracy Assistance after EU Enlargement*, PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society), Prague, 2008

Łapczyński M., *The European Union's Eastern Partnership: Chances and Perspectives*, “Caucasian Review of International Affairs”, vol. 3(2), Spring 2009

Reakcje na szczyt inauguracyjny Partnerstwa Wschodniego. „Tydzień na Wschodzie. Biuletyn Analityczny OSW”, 2009, nr 18(93)

Tulmets E., *Preparing the EU Presidency: the Czech Contribution to the Project of "Eastern Partnership"*, 2009

Wojna B., Gniazdowski M., *Partnerstwo wschodnie - raport otwarcia*, PISM, Warszawa, May 2009

Wojciechowski M., *Polish Eastern Policy or a squash and a squeeze*, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,4816968.html>, 8 January 2008

8 January 2008

Sikorski: przekonujemy do utworzenia teki komisarza ds. Partnerstwa Wschodniego, źródło PAP, available at <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/wiadomosci/artykuly/354969>

T. Bielecki, J. Pawlicki, „Tak zagraliśmy w Brukseli”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31 October 2009

Interviews held in June-July 2009 with the Polish and Czech experts, government officials and representatives of NGOs (15 interviews)

Notes made during the conference: Eastern Partnership: Towards Civil Society Forum, 5-6 May 2009

Opinions of the Institute of Public Affairs on the EaP Civil Society Forum, 30 July 2009

Policy recommendations for Eastern Partnership Summit, available at: <http://www.pasos.org/www-pasosmembers-org/news/civil-society-workshop-recommendations-presented-to-eastern-partnership-summit>
<http://prezydencjaue.gov.pl/en/the-presidency-in-the-media/interviews-with-the-minister-dowgielewicz/70-dowgielewicz-polska-prezydencja-bdzie-kosztowaa-330-mln>

<http://www.ukie.gov.pl/www/twinning.nsf/dzialy?open&dzial=5>

This policy brief was written as part of the project, **Eastern Partnership - Polish and Czech perspectives**, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic, in the framework of the Czech-Polish Forum.



Policy Association for an Open Society



INSTYTUT SPRAW PUBLICZNYCH
THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Institute of Public Affairs (ISP) is an independent, non-partisan public policy think-tank. ISP was established in 1995 to support modernisation reforms and to provide a forum for informed debate on social and political issues. It conducts research as well as societal analysis and presents policy recommendations.

ISP aims to:

- implement projects significant for the public domain
- initiate public debates
- identify potential threats to the social fabric and anticipate future problems
- offer new ideas for policies aimed at solving existing and future problems
- act as a bridge between academia, the world of politics, the media and NGOs.

Institute of Public Affairs (ISP)
ul. Szpitalna 5 lok. 22
00-031 Warszawa
Poland
Tel: +48 22 55 64 260
Fax: +48 22 55 64 262
E-mail: isp@isp.org.pl
www.isp.org.pl

PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society) promotes and protects open society values, including democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for and protection of human rights, and economic and social development, by supporting entities that individually and jointly foster public participation in public policy issues at the European Union level, in other European structures, and in the wider neighbourhood of Europe and Central Asia.

PASOS
Těšnov 3
110 00 Praha 1
Czech Republic
Tel/fax: +420 2223 13644
Email: info@pasos.org
www.pasos.org

PASOS is a not-for-profit organisation registered on 16 September 2004 with the Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic
Registered office: Prokopova 197/9, 130 00 Praha 3, Czech Republic, DIC: CZ26675404