

# EU cooperation with its Eastern Neighbours

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The European Commission has just proposed a new Eastern Partnership to enhance its relationship with: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. An opportunity to review the existing cooperation.

The relationship between the European Union and the countries situated at its Eastern border has undergone significant changes over the last years. Successive enlargements have brought greater geographic proximity with our Eastern neighbours, while reforms supported by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) have brought these countries politically and economically closer to the EU.

In the framework of the ENP, the EU and each partner agree on reform objectives across a wide range of fields such as sustainable economic development (energy, environment, transport), poverty reduction, regulatory reform and administrative capacity building, nuclear safety, border and migration control and promotion of democracy. The EU provides financial and technical assistance to support the implementation of these objectives.

The bulk of ENP funds supports activities and projects in each country. A smaller proportion is used to finance regional programmes, which bring the EU and its Partner Countries around the same table to discuss policies and carry out concrete actions at regional level.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF COUNTRY COOPERATION

### **Working for regional security and economic development**

Since 2005, the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) contributes to the delivery of good quality border and customs services to the citizens and companies of Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union. Together with border guard and customs services of Moldova and Ukraine, the Mission facilitates people-to-people contacts, legitimate trade and security.

### **Supporting consumer rights in the Ukraine**

The Consumer Society and Citizen Networks project is an initiative with the aim to increase civil society's role in sound economic governance in Ukraine according to the European standards. Since 2006, the project promotes access of citizens to information on product safety, consumer rights protection and dissemination of results of independent testing. It also supports wide public discussion of challenges facing the consumer society in Ukraine.

### **Supporting conflict-affected populations in Georgia**

Not only after, but already long before the recent clash between Georgia and Russia, the European Commission (EC) actively supported various economic rehabilitation and confidence-building activities for the benefit of the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian zones of conflict as an important measure to build greater trust between the conflict-affected populations. The EC-funded projects aim at improving living conditions of the population affected by the conflict, whilst creating conditions for the return of internally displaced persons, as well as facilitating progress in a constructive dialogue between opposing social groups.

## THE INOGATE REGIONAL PROGRAMME

Almost every day we hear and read about issues related to energy security and dependency, increasing energy prices or the environmental consequences of the use of oil and gas. Not surprisingly, energy has become one of the cornerstone subjects in our cooperation with the countries in the East. This is where the INOGATE programme comes in.

INOGATE was initially set up to promote the regional integration of pipeline systems and to facilitate the transport of oil and gas within the former Soviet region and towards the export markets of Europe. However, over the past four years, the programme's scope was expanded to respond to the Partner Countries' desire for a more comprehensive cooperation framework, also covering electricity, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The EU and its Partner Countries now work together toward achieving four major objectives:

- convergence of energy markets through the harmonisation of legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks
- enhancement of energy security by addressing the issues of energy exports/imports, supply diversification, energy transit and energy demand
- support to sustainable energy development, including the development of energy efficiency, renewable energy and demand side management
- attraction of investment towards energy projects of common and regional interest

When it comes to the strategic questions related to transport of oil and gas, naturally many countries are concerned and a supra-national approach is key for success. Under INOGATE, the EC finances projects, for example, aiming at diversification of energy supply routes, safety and security of energy infrastructure and the harmonisation of technical oil, gas and electricity standards.

INOGATE also addresses energy security in a broader sense by supporting efforts to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and tackling environmental impacts of energy production and use. It stimulates the development of coordinated energy policies and promotes investments for increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy.

Moreover, the EC assists Partner Countries in making use of the financing opportunities that are offered in the framework of the Kyoto Protocol.