

WORK PROGRAMME – PLATFORM 2 (2018-2019)



The Brussels Summit adopted the **revised Eastern Partnership multilateral architecture** to contribute to the goals of the Eastern Partnership, particularly by supporting the **implementation of the "20 Deliverables for 2020"** as endorsed by the **2017 Eastern Partnership Summit Declaration**. The revised architecture will take into account the provisions of the EU **Global Strategy** and of the reviewed **European Neighbourhood Policy**, as well as the key global policy goals set by the **Sustainable Development Goals** of the UN 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the European Consensus on Development. Ongoing initiatives will be taken into account, such as the GREEN Action Programme, which supports the improvement of environmental policies in all Eastern Partnership countries. The UNECE (United Nation Economic Commission for Europe) facilitates greater economic integration and sustainable development.

The revised architecture aims to refine the process of consulting, steering and enabling policy implementation in order to jointly and effectively work towards reaching the "20 Deliverables for 2020". The revised architecture facilitates closer inter-Platform/Panel cooperation, enhanced engagement with relevant stakeholders and strategic, result-oriented activities. The priorities of the Eastern Partnership regional and bilateral multiannual programming documents will also be reflected in order to improve the **link between policy dialogue and financial assistance**.

Overall objectives and role of the Platforms

The Eastern Partnership Platforms correspond to the four key priorities for cooperation:

- Economic development and market opportunities;
- Strengthening Institutions and good governance;
- Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change;
- Mobility and people-to-people contacts.

The Platforms are tasked with **ensuring and monitoring progress** of the implementation of the "20 Deliverables for 2020", while **exploring synergies and cross-fertilisation** across the architecture to effectively support comprehensive reforms. In this context, while Panels advance the work at technical level under each of the "20 Deliverables", the Platforms steer and monitor them, notably with a view of reporting to the Foreign Affairs Ministerial, with the active engagement of the Senior

Officials Meetings. Each platform will approve a **yearly report** on the basis of inputs from the Panels, including political messages to feed high-level political discussions such as sectoral Ministerial meetings, Informal Partnership Dialogues and, ultimately, the Foreign Affairs Ministerial.

This Work Programme translates the objectives of the revised architecture and the "20 Deliverables for 2020" document into **concrete steps for delivering results**. The work of the Platform and the Panels will be in line with the objectives pursued through the cross-cutting deliverables on civil society, gender equality and strategic communication. Expert working groups will provide relevant input to the panels and platforms as appropriate, including on horizontal topics such as statistics.

Communication will be mainstreamed in all the activities of the platform, panels and expert working groups to ensure results focus on delivering tangible benefits to the lives of citizens in the region. All communication should also be in the framework of the priority area of cooperation to ensure a comprehensive communication approach.

The Platform will strive to ensure **ownership, engagement and exchanges** with relevant stakeholders in Partner Countries and EU Member States at all levels: Ministers, representatives of the national Parliaments through EURONEST, local and regional authorities through CORLEAP, civil society organisations through the Civil Society Forum, International Financial Institutions, business representatives as well as experts and specialised organisations when relevant.

PLATFORM 2 – Economic development and market opportunities

Core objectives

This Work Programme translates the objectives of the "20 Deliverables for 2020" into **concrete steps for delivery**. In particular, the core objectives of Platform 2 reflect the following deliverables:

- Create a favourable **regulatory and economic environment** for SMEs including through **structural reforms**;
- Address dysfunctionalities in the financial sector and **gaps in access to finance**;
- Support the **creation of new job opportunities** at the local and regional level and promoting equal opportunities for men and women;
- **Enhance trade** among Partner Countries and between them and the EU, including through progress on the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas and identification of trade facilitating measures;
- Foster the **harmonisation of Partner Countries' digital markets**.

Within the core objectives of the four Platforms, the **Work Programme can be reviewed and adapted**, as appropriate, on the occasion of future Platform meetings.

Main goals and actions

In 2018 and 2019 the work of Platform 2 will mainly focus on the following key deliverables:

- **Deliverable 4:** The Platform will discuss and exchange experiences with regard to prioritisation of (structural) reforms and progress in the business and investment climate, including how to ensure equal opportunities for female and male entrepreneurs, also in the framework of the External Investment Plan (EIP).
- **Deliverable 8:** The Platform will provide steering on how to enhance and diversify intra-regional trade and trade between EU and Partner Countries, including identification of sectors of priorities for regulatory approximation facilitating trade and further reforms in trade-related areas, with possible EU assistance or investments (topics could include technical support to partner countries related to entering into European, international value chains).
- **Deliverable 7:** Inter alia, the Platform will monitor progress in reducing international roaming tariffs among Eastern Partner Countries and, possibly, launching negotiations amongst Partners and the EU on the same topic. It will also monitor spectrum coordination among Eastern Partner Countries and with the EU, notably at 700 MHz. The Platform will also monitor progress towards easier and cheaper Internet access in Eastern Partner Countries, notably for rural areas, through the development and implementation of national broadband strategies and roll out of broadband infrastructure.

In order to ensure **cross-sectoriality** among the deliverables under the Mobility and people-to-people sector, notably when it comes to the implementation of the Youth Package, and across the four Eastern Partnership key priorities, Platform 2 will also **explore synergies** with the other Platforms whenever needed or useful, namely when dealing with cross-sectorial topics.

Sectoral Ministerial meetings and **Informal Partnership Dialogues** may be recommended, when Ministerial level intervention would help to strengthen the implementation of the objectives pursued.

Panel on Structural reforms, Financial sector architecture, Agriculture and SMEs

The Panel will contribute to the implementation of **Deliverables 4 (improved business environment), 5 (improved access to finance and financial infrastructure) and 6 (improved regional and local economic development)**¹, leading the technical discussion on **SMEs, regulatory environment, access to finance and new job opportunities**. The Panel will monitor the achievements of the objectives agreed in the "20 Deliverables for 2020" and report to the Platform accordingly.

To effectively facilitate this process, in 2018 and 2019 the Panel should meet at least once a year. The relevant actors from Partner Countries, the European Commission, Member States and Implementing partners should be invited to contribute to the implementation of the different programmes and initiatives taken in the frame of the Eastern Partnership.

Objectives and Indicative Work Plan to reach the 2020 targets

In 2018 the Panel will focus on the following goals and activities:

- **Deliverable 4 (business environment):**
 - Identify areas for further improvement across 2018-2019 on the regulatory framework, the operational environment and support to SMEs (ie: design, monitoring and SME action plan and Investment strategies, strengthening the role of private sector and civil society organizations, including gender equality impact assessment and equal opportunities for female and male entrepreneurs). At the next panel, the OECD will present the new project "EU4Business: *From Policies to Action*" under which support will be provided to each Partner Country, the operational environment and support to SMEs (as compared to 2015, the year when the last SBA was produced).

- **Deliverable 5 (access to finance):**
 - Inform Partner Countries on EU4business support to SMEs (focus on related access to finance deliverables for both men and women);
 - Discuss measures to facilitate collateral based lending (ie: Collateral registry) sharing experience with member states
 - Discuss measures to improve the protection of creditors rights
 - Discuss ways to improve the regulatory framework for the development of non-banking financing and instruments to facilitate investments (i.e. leasing, factoring) and instruments to increase export (i.e. export guarantee mechanisms, insurance schemes), as well as equity financing, as well as how to introduce a gender equality impact analysis as conditionality to funding instruments.
 - Discuss how to ensure that men and women have equal access to funding, and how to promote female entrepreneurs

- **Deliverable 6 (Improved regional and local economic development – LED)**
 - Exchange on Local authorities plans for LED, with a particular focus on development of tourism
 - Presentation of EaP countries smart specialisation strategy and Clusters platform
 - Update participants on progress made under the Mayors for Economic Growth
 - Sharing experience on relevant EU&EaP projects related to the diversification of economic opportunities in the rural areas
 - Monitor the development towards implementation of agricultural development strategies.

2019

- **Deliverables 4 (improved business environment)**
 - Update on Partner Countries progress towards the adoption/implementation of SME strategy/SME Strategy Action Plan 2018-2020
 - Update on Partner Countries investment strategy
 - Update on the implementation of the Structural reform facility. Specific topics to be discussed could include taxation/privatisation/rule of law/labour market reforms/pensions

- **Deliverables 5 (Improved access to finance and financial infrastructure)**
 - Discuss Partner Countries capital market reforms + discussion on how to best support its implementation
- **Deliverables 6 (Improved regional development)**
 - Presentation of Agricultural development strategies by 3 Partner Countries /exchange of best practices with EU MS

Panel on Trade and Trade-Related Regulatory Cooperation ("Trade Panel")

The Panel will contribute to the implementation of **Deliverable 8**, leading the technical discussion on different trade aspects and notably how to **support trade among Partner Countries and between them and the EU**, by focusing on regulatory aspects and non-tariffs measures.

The Panel on Trade and Trade-Related Regulatory Cooperation is a forum for experts from Partner Countries and Member States' ministries and governmental institutions and agencies involved in the different trade-related subjects. Other stakeholders from industry and professional organisations in the Partner Countries can take part upon agreement by the said partner, provided that they are identified by the Government and attend as part of the Partner Country Delegation. The meetings of the Panel may be convened at least twice a year in Brussels, in one of the Member States or Partner Countries. Apart from the panel meetings, dedicated workshops and seminars may be organized under coordination of TAIEX with the involvement of Member States' experts and officials.

The Concept Paper adopted by the Trade Panel on 12 June 2017 specifies that one of the main objectives of the Panel is the "*effective and timely implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) part of the Association Agreements (AAs)*". In this regard, some dedicated meetings or workshops may also be organized for the DCFTA Partners.

In order to give a political stimulus and guidance in enhancement of the DCFTA implementation and economic integration between the EU and the AA/DCFTA countries, a Ministerial Meeting on Trade will be launched in September 2018.

Objectives and Indicative Work Plan to reach the 2020 targets

2018

- Workshop on modalities of creation of an EaP Trade Helpdesk
- Trade Panel (18th) on the Reform of Systems of Technical Regulations.
- Seminar "*Towards the Common Transit Convention*" (27-28 September 2018, Ukraine).
- Workshop "*EU best practices on customs protection of health, safety and the environment*" (18-21 September, Poland).
- Commercial Attachés training on trade promotion (provided TAIEX financing is available).

2019

- Trade Panel: Raising awareness on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures in trade with the EU and within the EaP region.

- Trade Panel (19th) on the Reform of Systems of Technical Regulations.
- Workshop on enhancing IPR enforcement by customs.
- Tentative: Geographical Indications: EU system of protection of agricultural GIs.

Panel on Harmonisation of Digital Markets

The Panel on **Harmonisation of Digital Markets (HDM Panel)** will contribute to the implementation of **Deliverable 7** taking into account the gender perspective, leading the technical discussion on how to help Partner Countries **eliminating obstacles and barriers for pan-European online services** for citizens, public administrations and businesses.

At political level, the work of this Panel is reflected at the adopted **EaP Ministerial declarations** on the digital economy of [June 2015](#) and [October 2017](#). The **EU4Digital** initiative launched in October 2016 aims to channel support to the development of the digital economy in the Eastern Partnership. Activities under the respective [technical assistance programme](#) to be launched in 2018, reflect closely Deliverable 7.

To effectively facilitate this process, the HDM Panel in the period 2018-2019 will focus on the following **goals** (*goals in italics will be the focus in 2018, while the rest will be the focus in 2019*):

1. Electronic communications rules and infrastructure

- *harmonised roaming pricing and reduced roaming tariffs among the Partner Countries by at least 10% - roaming discussions with the EU² launched; and*
- *roll-out of national broadband strategies by all EaP partners, in line with similar EU strategies;*
- independent NRA for electronic communications in place in at least five Partner Countries;
- coordinated national spectrum strategies among the Partner Countries and with the EU.

2. Trust & Security in the digital economy

- *adoption (if not in place) by EaP partners, of the Trust Services part of the [eIDAS Regulation](#), in full compliance with relevant EU acquis, notably the principles related to citizens' rights, data protection, security and confidentiality and the [General Data Protection Regulation](#).*
- pilots in place, for interoperable cross-border eSignature and regional framework for cross-border eServices for businesses, where appropriate, among EaP partners and with the EU
- in all EaP partner countries, well-developed and implemented national cybersecurity strategies, fully operational national CSIRTs/CERTs in place with established cooperation links to CSIRTs/CERTs of EU Member States, and enhanced public-private and international cooperation in this area.
- Combating copyright connected crimes, including crimes connected to use of illegal software, committed via the Internet and telecommunications, detection of criminal assets received from a criminal activity ;
- Focus on consumers: including data security, electronic payments, equal access to online services and goods, and cross-border services.

3. eTrade (including eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics / Digital Transport Corridors, possibly in cooperation with the Trade Panel)

² Roaming discussions with the EU could start in spring 2018 at the earliest, after the first market reactions to the EU's Roam-Like-At-Home (RLAH).

- *harmonised legislation for eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics/Digital Transport Corridors among EaP partners and with the EU, implemented where applicable;*
- import-export processes re-engineered for eTrade, in all EaP partner countries;
- pilots in place for cross-border eTrade among EaP partners and with the EU; and
- pilot in place for a Digital Transport Corridor between the Baltic and the Black Sea, to be extended for all EaP partner countries.

4. Digital Skills

- *national digital skills strategies formulated and implemented by all EaP partners, in line with similar EU strategies and*
- *national coalitions for digital jobs established by all EaP partners, based on the EU's digital skills & jobs coalition.*
- To set up an e-Competence Framework in EaP partner countries. This would provide a reference for 40 competences applied in the IT sector, using a common language for competences, skills, knowledge and proficiency levels that can be understood across Europe. An e-Competence Framework will help to develop the system of standards under the European e-Competence Framework umbrella. This would enable the identification of skills and competences that may be required to successfully perform duties and fulfil responsibilities related to the IT workplace.

5. ICT innovation and startup ecosystems

- *well-structured ICT research, innovation & startup ecosystems in place for all EaP partners with the involvement of the civil society sector;*
- *established connections among EaP partners' ecosystems and with similar EU ecosystems;*
- for all EaP partners, national research and education data networks (NRENS) integrated with the pan-European data network [GÉANT](#), [eduroam](#) deployed and integration towards GÉANT services stimulated.

6. eHealth

- *harmonised legislation for eHealth among the EaP partners and with the EU; and*
- pilot in place for cross-border eHealth services among EaP partners and with the EU, taking into account the specifications under the [eHealth Digital Service Infrastructure \(eHDSI\)](#).

To achieve the above, the following **activities** are planned **in 2018** under the HDM Panel:

- 10 thematic network meetings (2 per network for 5 networks) + 10 meetings for the telecom network (including its 3 expert working groups on roaming, spectrum and benchmarking/broadband).
- 4th HDM Panel to meet in October 2018, with a particular focus on the results achieved in 2018 and the progress of the EU4Digital programme. This HDM Panel will also prepare the ground for the digital aspects of the **EaP Connectivity Ministerial Meeting** under the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU (November 2018, tbc).

Similarly, the following **activities** are planned **in 2019** under the HDM Panel:

- 10 thematic network meetings (2 per network for 5 networks) + 10 meetings for the telecom network (including its 3 expert working groups on roaming, spectrum and benchmarking/broadband).
- 5th HDM Panel to meet in September or October 2019, with a particular focus on the results achieved in 2019 and the progress of the EU4Digital programme. This Panel will also prepare the ground for the **3rd EaP Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy** and the 2019 Eastern Partnership Summit.