



**The Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership:
Perspectives from Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary**

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Table of Contents

- I. Introduction: Origins and Evolution of the European Neighbourhood Policy**
- II. From the ‘Mediterranean Union’ to the ‘Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean’**
 - 1. Europeanization of the French proposal
 - The French vision
 - Europeanization process – the role of Germany and European institutions
 - Commission’s proposal and the Declaration of the Paris Summit
 - 2. Reactions and Attitudes
 - Poland
 - Czech Republic
 - Hungary
- III. Polish-Swedish Initiative to Enhance the Eastern Dimension**
 - Contents of the initiative and its assessment in Poland
 - A European logic
 - Czech and Hungarian reactions
 - Commission’s proposal: Context, Contents and Assessment
- IV. Central-European Cooperation With Regard to the Evolving ENP**
 - Czech Presidency: Objectives and Achievements
 - Cooperation under the Czech, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies
- V. The Future of the Neighbourhood Policy in the Eyes of the New Member States**
 - Poland
 - Hungary
 - Czech Republic
- VI. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Chronology

7 February 2007: Nicolas Sarkozy launches Mediterranean Union proposal during his presidential campaign

6 May 2007: Election night victory speech

23 October 2007: Speech of President Sarkozy in Tangier, Morocco

5 December 2007: Angela Merkel's speech on the dangers of the French project

20 December 2007: Rome Declaration of France, Italy and Spain

16 January 2008: Statement by the Slovenian Presidency, delivered by Prime Minister Janez Jansa in the European Parliament

3 March 2008: Meeting between Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel

13-14 March 2008: European Council gives mandate to the European Commission

20 May 2008: Commission communication on 'Barcelona Process: Union for Mediterranean'

26-27 May 2008: GAERC and the presentation of the Polish-Swedish proposal

19-20 June 2008: European Council gives mandate to the Commission: Eastern Partnership proposal to be presented in March 2009

13 July 2008: Paris Summit on the Mediterranean

1 September 2008: Extraordinary European Council on the situation in Georgia: Eastern Partnership proposal to be published by December 2008

3 December 2008: Publication of the Commission communique on the Eastern Partnership

7 May 2009: Czech Presidency: Eastern Partnership Summit

January-June 2011: Hungarian Presidency

July-December 2011: Polish Presidency

Executive Summary:

- Sarkozy's initiative of Mediterranean Union stirred great concern among many of the new member states, notably in Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. The realization of the project in its initial shape could have resulted in the total marginalization of the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Yet at the same time, Sarkozy's proposal provided a crucial opportunity to lobby for enhanced EU cooperation with the eastern neighbourhood, which is at the core of foreign policy priorities of the new member states (NMS) discussed in this paper.
- The report looks at the Central-European positions, attitudes and reactions towards the Union for Mediterranean and Eastern Partnership. It also aims at outlining the Central-European perspectives on the future of the ENP and potential for regional cooperation with regard to the Eastern Partnership, notably with 2011 Hungarian and Polish EU Presidencies in mind.
- The Union for the Mediterranean is of importance to the new member states selected for this study mainly where it can be applied for the eastern agenda. Having said that, one should not take the apparent general consensus on the East for granted, and as such, this report also considers the divergence of interests and policy preferences between the three selected Central-European states, as well as their resulting degree of involvement in the eastern agenda.
- Since the UfM was proposed by France at the end of 2007, an important evolution in the Central European debate has taken place. Initially, the perception of UfM as a threat in terms of a financial trade-off to the detriment of the East as well as scepticism as to the added value of the whole project to the Mediterranean itself prevailed. Relatively quickly however, this initial perception was replaced by an understanding that the project provides a perfect opportunity for reinforcing the Eastern dimension of

the ENP. Nevertheless, the benefits of the consolidation of southern dimension have not been realized to date.

- For Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary the Eastern policy is a common , but preferences diverge as to the substance. Therefore, the real challenge was not the launch of the initiative, but the day-to-day management, as well as the extent and pace of implementation of specific projects. It is thus extremely important to coordinate positions within the Central Europe and the wider group of 'EaP friends' in order to be able to present common positions at the EU forum.
- Although initial attitudes towards institutionalization of the Eastern Partnership varied among Central-European states, final agreement was reached that the framework needed to be much more flexible than that used in the UfM case. This is due to the fact that EaP is not only about fostering regional cooperation, but it aims at preparing partners for accession in the long term, provided they are ready and willing to join. However, the flexible institutional framework should not negatively affect EU's capacity to act effectively. Therefore, it is essential to lobby for a structure within the Commission that will work exclusively on this Eastern dimension, possibly under the supervision of a high level coordinator for Eastern Partnership: there is room for close cooperation with the incoming Swedish Presidency in this respect.
- Additional financial resources have been already allocated for the Eastern Partnership. But negotiations on the post-2013 financial perspective will be crucial in order to ensure significant augmentation of EU budget resources dedicated to the East. With their presidencies in mind, both Hungary and Poland should prepare the ground for budgetary negotiations, while lobbying for increased spending, not only on Eastern partnership, but for the neighbourhood policy in general.
- The Eastern Partnership agenda is inevitably linked to the challenge of EU-Russia relations. Eastern partners constitute an arena of competing influences, both from EU and Russia. For the time being, Russia has important cards to play, both in economic and security terms. With the EaP project EU has made its own offer and the partners are responding, at least at the declaratory level. But in contrast to Russia, the EU has no stick to wave. Moreover, the carrot is not as tempting as some partners would like it to be, as the EaP promise is very far from the enlargement promise. Consequently, it is all the more important to make sure that the offer is filled with substance.

I. Introduction:

The French President, Nicolas Sarkozy's initiative of the Mediterranean Union aimed at re-invigorating cooperation with the Southern Mediterranean partners stirred great concerns among many of the new member states (NMS), notably in Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. The main concern was that the realization of the project in its initial shape could have resulted in the total marginalization of the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Yet at the same time, Sarkozy's proposal provided a crucial opportunity to lobby for enhanced EU cooperation with the eastern neighbourhood, which is at the core of foreign policy priorities of the NMS discussed in this paper.

The ENP has been a target of major criticism from the Central European states ever since it was created in the aftermath of the 2004 enlargement. The idea behind the policy was to support democratic transformation and economic development in the new immediate neighbourhood, while in principle excluding the prospect of further enlargement. The ENP aimed at integrating and consolidating EU actions towards its neighbouring countries. It was meant to become a crucial element of the EU's foreign policy, while securing its borders with a 'ring of friends'. The original proposal was tabled by the UK and Denmark in April 2002 in the form of the 'New Neighbours Initiative', which was originally directed exclusively towards the East to target Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Yet France and Spain immediately began intense pressure and lobbying to expand the project towards the Mediterranean region and thus integrate the Barcelona Process into the new framework.

A vivid debate followed and the future Central European member states actively participated in the discussion, although at that stage they could only have a voice and not yet a vote. Polish proposals towards the eastern policy were presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in

January 2003, and further developed in May of that same year. Poland advocated for the development of special relations with eastern neighbours within the framework of the ‘ring of friends’, covering both the East and the Mediterranean regions. In the Polish view, such differentiation would have contributed to greater efficiency and EU influence in the eastern region. The Polish non-paper addressed border management, fighting illegal immigration and organized crime, as well as perspectives for economic integration with the EU single market¹. The core of this plan was upheld in the Polish-Swedish proposal for an Eastern Partnership and finally implemented by the Commission in its December 2008 communication. This shows the continuity of Polish efforts to the benefit of eastern neighbours.

In the end, the final project of the so-called ‘Wider Europe’ focused more attention on the southern dimension. Following the signature of the Accession Treaty with the ten NMS on 16 April 2003, the Thessaloniki European Council (June 2003) announced the development of new policies towards the Wider Europe/New Neighbourhood, inviting the Council and the Commission to “put together the various elements of these policies”². The result of these efforts was a common policy framework for the two regions, with the promise that their (vast) differences would be addressed in the process of differentiation that was to be established according to the merits and capabilities of each country, as well as by the far more developed multilateral policy dimension operating within the already existing Barcelona Process.

The ENP Strategy Paper published by the Commission in May 2004 added the Southern Caucasus to the eastern dimension, while the Western Balkans and Turkey were excluded from the process given that they already enjoyed the status of candidate or ‘potential candidate’ countries. The policy outlined in the ENP proposal fuelled disappointment in Central Europe and particularly in Poland. It was then widely believed that, although participation in the ENP did not formally exclude future accession, it did *de facto* define the frontiers of Europe³.

Apart from the inadequate common framework, another bone of contention for Poland and other new Central-European EU members was the level of funding pledged for each ENP

¹ Wystąpienie ministra Adama D. Rotfelda na inauguracji I Konferencji Stypendystów Programu im. Lane’a Kirklanda (Polsko –Amerykańska Fundacja Wolności), 30 czerwca 2003, s. 5-6.

² Thessaloniki European Council 19-20 June 2003, *Presidency Conclusions*, p. 13, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/76279.pdf

³ Paweł Świeżak, ‘Europejska Polityka Sąsiedztwa – bilans funkcjonowania na przykładzie Ukrainy’, *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, I-II 2007, p. 122.

dimension. In their view, the Mediterranean region had been favoured in terms of financial resources earmarked by the EU, in comparison with the amount promised to the eastern neighbours⁴. This imbalance was perceived as deeply unfair and ineffective, with more funding being given to the ‘neighbours of Europe’ than to the ‘European neighbours’, despite the fact that the latter had the greater chance, at least theoretically, of EU membership in the long-run.

This report looks at the Central-European positions, attitudes and reactions towards the Union for Mediterranean and Eastern Partnership. It also aims at outlining the Central-European perspectives on the future of the ENP and potential for regional cooperation with regard to Eastern Partnership, notably with 2011 Hungarian and Polish EU Presidencies in mind. The starting point of the analysis is that it comes as no surprise that Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary define their interests within the ENP primarily with regard to the East. However, it is worth asking what kind of opportunities (if any) they identify in the initiative to re-dynamise cooperation with the Mediterranean. The main hypothesis is that the Union for the Mediterranean is of importance to the new member states selected for this study mainly where it can be utilized for the eastern agenda. Having said that, one should not take the apparent general consensus on the East for granted, and as such, this report also considers the divergence of interests and policy preferences between the three selected Central-European states, as well as their resulting degree of involvement in the eastern agenda. The final observations are found to be somewhat in contrast with the popular conviction of a solid and unified Central-European bloc.

Finally, the choice of the particular countries should be explained. Poland is the largest Central-European member state and the main initiator of the Eastern Partnership, having the greatest political ambitions in the region and being the most fervent advocate of the EU Eastern policy. The Czech Republic holds the EU Presidency for the first half of 2009, during which it will formally launch the initiative for the East. 2010 will see the Hungarian Presidency, immediately followed by the Polish one. All three countries belong to the avant-garde of political transformation in the region, having experience in regional cooperation and keen interest in promoting democratic and economic stability among their eastern neighbours.

⁴ Compare: Agnieszka K. Cianciara, “Does the Strengthened European Neighbourhood Policy Restore the Balance Between Southern and Eastern Partner Countries?”, in IPA *A&O*, No. 2, February 2008.

II. From the ‘Mediterranean Union’ to the ‘Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean’

1. Europeanization of the French proposal

The French vision

The French project, initially conceived as the ‘Mediterranean Union’, emerged in February 2007. Observing the failures of the Barcelona Process, Nicolas Sarkozy, then a mere presidential candidate, first introduced the idea of a new union gathering all the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. At the time, Sarkozy asserted that “Barcelona was good because the North helped the South, but... [it] was not a partnership between the people. Barcelona was a mistake because the North-South dialogue was just as it had been after decolonisation”⁵. Later, in the victory speech delivered on the election night of 6 May 2007, Sarkozy addressed ‘the people of the Mediterranean’ to tell them that “the time has come to build together a Mediterranean Union that will form a link between Europe and Africa (...) What was done for the union of Europe 60 years ago, we are going to do today for the union of the Mediterranean”⁶.

The development of this ambitious, yet highly controversial, vision was evident in Sarkozy’s speech during his official state visit to Morocco in October 2007. In Tangier, the French president repeated his calls for the construction of a Mediterranean Union, which was supposed to bring together France, selected European countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece, as well as the countries of the Southern Mediterranean. Following the example of European Coal and Steel Community, the Mediterranean Union would focus on concrete areas such as sustainable development, energy, transport and water supply⁷. Sarkozy also

⁵ <http://www.france24.com/en/20080711-upm-key-dates-france-mediterranean-union-summit>

⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6631125.stm>

⁷ http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/maroc_410/france-maroc_1185/visites_5538/discours-m.-nicolas-sarkozy-president-republique-tanger-23-octobre-2007_55551.html

pointed out that all non-Mediterranean countries would be invited to participate in the first summit as observers and that the European Commission should be fully associated with the new Union. In fact, the two Unions should work as partners, playing complementary roles and mutually reinforcing each other⁸.

Unsurprisingly, the proposal encountered major criticism from many European capitals. Southern Mediterranean countries were not particularly enthusiastic either and key EU partners, such as Spain, voiced important reservations as to this project's link to the existing Barcelona Process. Policy analysts have quite rightly pointed out that taking Sarkozy's words at face value would imply marginalising the EU's major policy investments in the region (Barcelona Process and European Neighbourhood Policy), while 'privatising' the essential initiative for this sphere of EU policy for a sub-set of member states"⁹. Most importantly, in December 2007, German Chancellor Angela Merkel rejected the idea that the initiative for the Mediterranean should be restricted to the EU southern states, arguing that: "a situation could be created where Germany would be drawn to Central and Eastern Europe and France to the Mediterranean. This would create tension that I would not like"¹⁰. This was a clear indication that Germany and other EU member states (notably Poland and Sweden) perceived the project as a threat not only to the Barcelona Process and the ENP, but also to the integrity of the EU itself. These concerns were partly addressed by the Rome Declaration of 20 December 2007, which assured complementarity between the new union and existing regional and bilateral forms of cooperation. It was affirmed that the project would not interfere with the stabilization and association processes or with the accession negotiations, the latter being of particular concern to Turkey. The distinction between coastal and non-coastal states was nevertheless upheld with the scheduling of a meeting of the coastal states in the run-up to the EU-Mediterranean summit¹¹. Some EU members would thus have a different status to others, which was clearly unacceptable from the point of view of EU unity and integrity.

⁸ Ibidem. The exact French wording was as follows: « J'invite tous les Etats qui ne sont pas riverains de la Méditerranée mais qui sont concernés par ce qui lui arrive à participer, en observateurs, à ce premier sommet et à contribuer à sa réussite (...) Je proposerai que la Commission européenne soit d'emblée pleinement associée à l'Union de la Méditerranée, qu'elle participe à tous ses travaux, de façon à ce que les rapports entre les deux Unions soient des rapports de partenariat et de complémentarité, de façon à ce que les deux Unions s'épaulent et se renforcent l'une l'autre et que, progressivement, elles se forgent un seul et même destin ».

⁹ Michael Emerson, 'Making sense of Sarkozy's Union for the Mediterranean', *CEPS Policy Brief*, No. 155, March 2008, p. 1.

¹⁰ Ibidem, s. 2.

¹¹ Appel de Rome pour l'Union de la Méditerranée de la France, l'Italie et l'Espagne : http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/afrique-du-nord-mediterranee_1062/appel-rome-pour-union-pour-mediterranee-france-italie-espagne-20.12.07_57998.html

The Europeanization process – the role of Germany and European institutions

The perception of the Barcelona Process as a project falling short of partners' expectations and the challenges of the today's world had been evident for quite some time among the majority of member states and EU institutions. The objective of the French initiative – namely, the political upgrading of relations with the Mediterranean – was not in itself the subject of controversy. However, it was feared that the method envisioned by France might potentially lead to fragmentation of the ENP and EU external relations in general. As such, the process had to be entirely brought back under the EU umbrella. In this respect, the Slovenian Presidency made it clear that processes such as the Barcelona Process and the Euromed must be strengthened. As Prime Minister Janez Jansa underlined, “we need intensive dialogue, and, time and again, new circumstances call for new forms of cooperation”. However, “what we do not need is duplication, or institutions competing with the EU institutions and covering a part of the EU and a part of the neighbourhood at the same time. The EU is a coherent whole and only as such can it be sufficiently effective in establishing peace, stability and progress in the neighbourhood and beyond”¹².

The need for more political impetus, coupled with the stable continuity of existing processes, has been reiterated by the Commission. Shortly after Sarkozy's speech in Tangier, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, declared that “ideas, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Union proposed by President Sarkozy, could add political momentum for regional cooperation and are welcome. They should build up on experience gathered and structures established by the existing regional policies like the Barcelona Process, Euromed and the ENP. The Commission should be fully associated and we are ready to cooperate”¹³.

Despite this, the ‘Europeanization’ of the French proposal was primarily achieved through informal exchange and diplomatic consultations between Germany and France, sealed with a

¹² Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia and the President of the European Council, Janez Janša, at the Plenary Session of the European Parliament, Brussels, 16.01.2008:

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/January/0116PVvEP.html

¹³ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Address to Euromed Ministerial Plenary Session, Euromed Ministerial, Lisbon 5-6 November 2007: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/07/682&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

meeting between Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy on 3 March, which paved the way for the consensus later reached at the Spring European Council. As a consequence, the French initiative was watered-down from its original plan. At that point however, both leaders insisted only on establishing a compromise that would not exclude anyone¹⁴. Merkel pledged her support for the initiative, while receiving in exchange Sarkozy's assurance that it would be a European Union project encompassing all 27 member states¹⁵. This understanding was to serve as a basis for further discussion at the 13-14 March European summit. The project was then renamed 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean' in order to emphasise the aspects of its continuity and EU framework-basis. EU institutions were set to play a major role as the Commission was invited to "present to the Council the necessary proposals for defining the modalities (...) with a view to the Summit which will take place in Paris on 13 July 2008"¹⁶. Finally, it was agreed that no additional EU financial contribution could be envisaged beyond what was already earmarked within the ENPI 2007-13.

Given that the conclusions reached by the Council remained rather general, not all the doubts and reservations expressed by Member States have been resolved. France was developing and promoting its vision of a 'union of projects', insisting on its added-value. This was to be a re-political force, a veritable partnership guided by the principle of equal footing (as evident in the idea of the co-presidency) and backed by new sources of financing, primarily from the private sector. It was established that the first projects should focus on the environment, particularly on urban waste, water supply and industrial emissions. Priority was also to be given to solar energy and maritime highways¹⁷. Some of these initial ideas were clearly reflected in the Commission's later proposal.

Commission's proposal and the Declaration of the Paris Summit

As a response to the invitation of the European Council, the Commission published a on 20 May 2008 on the 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean'. According to the Commission, the new project was supposed to build on the achievements, and drew lessons

¹⁴ <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3162142,00.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/germany-france-reach-agreement-mediterranean-union/article-170739>

¹⁶ Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 13-14 March 2008, s. 20.
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st07/st07652-re01.en08.pdf>

¹⁷ Forum de Paris consacré à l'Union pour la Méditerranée, discours du Secrétaire d'Etat chargé aux affaires européennes M. Jean-Pierre Jouyet lors de la séance de clôture, Paris, 30 mars 2008 : http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/europe_828/union-europeenne-monde_13399/union-mediterranee_17975/index.html

from the shortcomings and difficulties of the Barcelona Process launched back in 1995. The outlined its main objectives, institutional structure, sources of funding, as well as examples of priority projects to be realized in the framework of the initiative. The proposal was then endorsed by the European Council and consultations were launched with all Euro-Mediterranean partners with a view to preparing a joint declaration¹⁸, adopted in Paris on 13 July 2008. However, decisions regarding the overall management of the UfM were left to Foreign Ministers that met in Marseille in early November 2008.

In its the Commission referred to the Barcelona Declaration and its ‘three chapters of cooperation’ (Political Dialogue; Economic Cooperation and Free Trade; and Human, Social and Cultural Dialogue), which continued to constitute the backbone of Euro-Mediterranean relations. The 5-year Work Programme adopted by the 2005 Barcelona Summit (including the fourth chapter on cooperation on ‘Migration, Social Integration, Justice and Security’, introduced only at that stage) remained fully valid. According to the Commission, the added-value of the new framework was in its reinforced multilateral character. Focus on regional and trans-national projects should increase the potential for regional integration and cohesion. The UfM should complement EU bilateral relations with Mediterranean partners, which will continue under existing policy frameworks, notably the ENP¹⁹.

The Barcelona Process will be given a fresh impulse by: 1) upgrading the level of political relations; 2) enhancing co-ownership in multilateral relations; 3) increasing the visibility and scope of these relations through additional regional and sub-regional projects of relevance for the citizens of the region²⁰. Consequently, Mediterranean policy pursued by the EU ceased to be an EU policy associating non-EU partners, and has instead become a policy the EU shares with its non-EU Mediterranean partners. The attempt to share decision-making and management gives the UfM important political meaning, but at the same time constitutes one of its biggest challenges²¹.

¹⁸ Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council 19-20 June 2008, p 18:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.asp?id=432&lang=en&mode=g>

¹⁹ European Commission, Communication on ‘Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean’ COM(2008) 319 (Final), Brussels, 20.05.2008, p. 4.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 5.

²¹ Roberto Aliboni, Fouad M. Ammor, ‘Under the Shadow of ‘Barcelona’: from EMP to the Union for the Mediterranean’, EuroMeSCo Paper 77, January 2009.

Within the institutional structure the main political body of the UfM is a summit gathering all the participating states, where political declarations are adopted and a broad two-year work programme endorsed. The summit meetings should take place alternately in the EU and in Mediterranean partner countries and the host country should be selected by consensus²². Annual Foreign Affairs Ministerial meetings are to review progress in the implementation of the summit conclusions and prepare next summit meetings. Heads of State and Government established a co-presidency in order to improve the balance and the joint ownership of their cooperation. From the EU side, the co-presidency must be compatible with the provisions on external representation contained in the treaties (namely, a rotating presidency under the current legal state, and once the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, a permanent 2.5 year presidency thereafter). The structure is complemented by Senior Officials, Joint Permanent Committee and a Secretariat, granted with separate legal personality with autonomous status. The mandate is nevertheless of a technical nature, the political responsibility remaining with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Senior Officials. The final decision on the secretariat was taken in November 2008: the seat was to be in Barcelona and the five Deputy Secretaries General were to come from Greece, Italy, Malta, Israel and Palestinian Authority²³.

It has to be stressed that the process was marked by the Middle East conflict. Firstly, the question of involvement of the League of Arab States emerged, while Israel and some of the EU member states opposed the idea. In order to exert pressure, Jordan blocked a conference on water security until a solution was found in Marseille, allowing the League to participate as an observer in all the UfM decision-making levels, while giving the post of one Deputy Secretary General to Israel in return. However, after the eruption of the Gaza conflict in January 2009, all progress on establishment of the new institutional framework was suspended. Calls from the European Council (March 2009) to resume the implementation of projects and to accelerate work on the establishment of the secretariat have not been particularly successful to date.

The controversial issue of securing funding in addition to ENPI has found its potential resolution in the following proposals: private sector funding; money originating from bilateral

²² Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, Paris, 13 July 2008, p. 14:

http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-07_2008/PFUE-13.07.2008/declaration_commune_du_sommet_de_paris_pour_la_mediterranee

²³ Final Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean', Marseille 3-4 November 2008, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/index_en.htm

cooperation with EU Member States; contributions from Mediterranean partners and international financial institutions; FEMIP (Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership Facility), regional banks and other bilateral funds²⁴. However, the economic crisis significantly limit the funding capacities of the private sector, the added value of the UfM was put at a considerable risk.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Union for the Mediterranean also covers countries (mostly candidates or potential candidates for EU membership) that did not participate in the original Barcelona Process (such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Monaco and Montenegro). It would complement EU bilateral relations with partners, which continue under existing policy frameworks such as the Association Agreements or the European Neighbourhood Policy action plans. It would also work in line with the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. Most importantly, while complementing current activities directed at its regional dimension, the UfM was to operate independently from the EU enlargement policy, accession negotiations and the pre-accession process²⁵.

2. Reactions and attitudes

This analysis of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary's reactions and attitudes towards the UfM (and also towards Eastern Partnership) was developed on the basis of interviews with politicians, diplomats and policy analysts carried out in each country between May and July 2008, as well as in December 2008 and January 2009 (Poland and Czech Republic only). The research was further complemented by the examination of official documents, press articles and think-tanks' reports. Interviews in Poland²⁶ were conducted by the author herself, whereas in Hungary and the Czech Republic, the interviews were supervised by the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs (HIIA) and the Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS) respectively.

Poland

²⁴ Communication on 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean', op. cit., p. 8-9.

²⁵ Ibidem, s. 13.

²⁶ The interviews were conducted with high officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of the Committee for European Integration, MPs (members of the Sejm) and senior policy analysts from Centre of International Relations (Eugeniusz Smolar) and Polish Institute of International Affairs (Beata Wojna and Adam Eberhardt).

Before the UfM proposal being put on the table, Poland had only a marginal interest in the Mediterranean. Political, economic and social ties have been very weak, and Poland's trade with the region accounts for only 0.5% of its total national exchanges, which is roughly 7% of Polish trade with non-EU countries²⁷. Moreover, it is the geopolitical and regional reality that shapes Polish foreign policy priorities. For Poland, its eastern neighbours are as important as the Mediterranean region is for the southern members of the EU. Poland sees the Mediterranean through the perspective of its eastern neighbourhood and the possible threats that the new union could pose to its strategic interests in this area. Its attitudes have been strongly correlated with the attempts to promote EU policy towards the East.

Officially, Polish views on the reinforced Mediterranean partnership were moderate and balanced. Poland obviously accepted the EU policy towards the Mediterranean and recognized the various opportunities and challenges presented by the region to the EU as a whole. It also declared willingness to participate in the solutions undertaken by the EU. At the same time, Polish diplomats constantly reiterated the need to balance EU involvement in the South and in the East. In this context, the call that 'we should not forget about the Eastern neighbourhood' has become the Polish mantra. Consequently, Poland was perceived as an opponent of a deepened EU involvement in the South. 'We wanted more for the East, but we did not fully recognize the necessity of exchange' – Polish support and recognition might have been expressed, but when it came to actual negotiations, especially on financial issues: 'we were clearly against further involvement in the South'²⁸.

Interestingly, Sarkozy's proposal was never formally presented in diplomatic terms. Consequently, there was no opportunity in the initial phase for an official reaction from the Polish government, nor was the proposal ever discussed at any EU forum before the March 2008 European Council. The varying positions have therefore only been expressed and discussed informally²⁹. From the very beginning, the Polish government backed a more effective cooperation with the Southern Mediterranean. The negative Polish position was exclusively directed towards the initiative including the differentiation between EU members and certain new institutional structures. Thus Poland's reaction was very balanced, yet it was

²⁷ Beata Wojna, *Poland's perspective on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean*, Polish Institute of International Affairs, May 2008.

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ IPA interview with a Foreign Affairs Ministry official, Warsaw, 10 July 2008.

underlined that “we were very much concerned with equilibrium between the neighbouring regions and we did not wish to see decreased importance of the eastern dimension”³⁰.

The wider Polish discussion on the reinforced Mediterranean partnership has somehow contrasted the statements of government officials. Before the March 2008 European Council meeting a relatively limited media debate took place, where the following concerns were voiced: German opposition towards the initial proposal of Sarkozy and the modalities of the compromise reached, Uneasiness about the possible decrease of political and financial involvement in the East, 3) The French proposal being designed as an alternative to Turkish accession, Opportunities in terms of energy diversification. However, once Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk declared the reinforcement of the eastern dimension at the March European summit, the attention of both media and experts became fully focused on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) proposal.

In the context of this re-focus towards the East, there seemed to be a consensus among policy analysts that Polish decision-makers were initially rather reluctant to consider initiatives deemed of no direct concern to national core interests as defined by the Foreign Ministry. Consequently, it was not immediately realized that thanks to the UfM proposal and the associated strengthening of the southern dimension, interest in the ENP as a political formula had been growing throughout the EU. This in turn was highly beneficial for Polish interests in the East. It is worth underlining that the establishment of the UfM strengthened the differentiation between the ENP partners. This enabled a balancing of the Southern and Eastern Dimensions of the ENP and reinforced the tendency towards growing multilateral regional cooperation. It goes without saying that the Eastern Partnership benefited considerably from such a constellation³¹.

³⁰ IPA interview with an official from the Office of the Committee for European Integration, Warsaw, 8 July 2008.

³¹ Adam Szymański, Beata Wojna, ‘Unia dla Morza Śródziemnego – nowe forum współpracy regionalnej’, Biuletyn PISM, Polish Institute of International Affairs, 15 July 2008, s. 2.

*Czech Republic*³²

The Czech Republic had major reservations regarding the initial project put forward by the newly elected President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, in the autumn of 2007. Therefore, German opposition to the concept was in line with the Czech position on this issue. The Czech Republic very much welcomed the compromise reached by Germany and France in March 2008, which guaranteed the inclusion of all EU countries in the Union for the Mediterranean project. In fact, Czech reservations mainly stemmed from the fear that the UfM was ‘just a bone thrown to Turkey’, aimed at preventing Turkey’s accession to the EU. Another important matter of concern was the exclusivity of this ‘club’, as well as what many saw as the excessive attention being directed towards the South. The latter was particularly significant given that Czech foreign policy had traditionally always been focused on the East, for historical and geopolitical reasons.

The general perception of the UfM in its initial formulation phase was that scepticism. Significant doubts were voiced as to plausibility of the project, especially in comparison with the already existing Barcelona process. The Czech Republic had reservations about the establishment of new structures in general, and did not see much added-value in constructing yet another multilateral forum. However, the UfM was also seen as a good lesson in diplomatic bargaining and communication within EU structures. The creation of a new framework might not have had a valid practical meaning, but it could potentially help to achieve certain important strategic goals, including an enhanced focus on the EU’s eastern neighbours through projects such as the Eastern Partnership.

In other words, the UfM constituted an excellent negotiation tool, allowing to push forward the Eastern dimension of the ENP. As to developments within the UfM itself, the Czech strategy was to closely monitor the distribution of the EU budget on neighbourhood issues, in order to assure that any new projects in the Mediterranean area would not be implemented at the expense of the ENP’s Eastern dimension. In this context, the UfM was perceived as a threat with considerable potential to shift even more funds and investment towards the Mediterranean region.

³² Based on: Eva Rybkova, “New EU Member States’ Positions regarding the Union for the Mediterranean: Survey on the Czech Republic”, paper prepared on the basis of interviews for the purpose of the IPA project, PASOS, July 2008.

*Hungary*³³

In Budapest two main points were made. On one hand, as a member of the European Union, Hungary was obliged to support the UfM, a common European project since March 2008. On the other hand, the UfM ran the risk of diverting attention from the Eastern imension (especially from Ukraine and Moldova) and from the Balkans (Hungary's 'near-South'), which were considered among the country's most important foreign policy priorities.

Quite naturally, the Mediterranean has never been a priority on the Hungarian foreign policy agenda. In fact, traditionally and historically, the Mediterranean was viewed mostly in terms of the Balkans and, to a lesser degree, Italy and Ottoman Turkey. Hungary's relations with the Mediterranean region were developed primarily within the framework of the Socialist era foreign policy and its basic guidelines were set out accordingly, i.e. promotion of friendly relations with the brotherly Arab socialist states.

On the other hand, the Balkans has always been a sphere of direct interest for Hungary due to the historic heritage of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nowadays, sizeable ethnic Hungarian minorities live in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina; no Hungarian government can disregard responsibility for the well-being these. Ukraine, and to a lesser extent, Moldova, are of direct interest to Hungary partly for the same reasons, but also due to strategic interests related to security policy considerations, energy-gas supply security and political changes in the eastern neighbourhood. Therefore, while Hungary accepts that for some EU members the South is their main priority, the East is of much more importance and direct relevance to its own interests.

The Mediterranean entered the Hungarian foreign policy mind set as part of the European Union membership 'package', established as an obligatory task on the agenda, which must be pursued within the common framework. Hungary has participated in the Barcelona Process as a full member since 2004, but interest and awareness have always been very limited, both amongst the political elites and the general public and confined mostly to administration circles responsible for the relevant tasks and activities.

³³ Based on: Rózsa Erzsébet N., 'New EU Member States' Positions regarding the Union for the Mediterranean: the case of Hungary', paper prepared on the basis of interviews for the purpose of the IPA project, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, June 2008.

As to the UfM project, it was believed that, if Hungary supported other EU member states in issues they deemed important, it could subsequently gain their backing on matters of national priority, which were not necessarily of any concern to them. Consequently, the Eastern Dimension will be kept on the agenda as long as its proponents also support the Southern Dimension. Hungary was thus keen to maintain a balanced approach to both. Therefore, as the UfM was important to the French presidency, Hungary would pledge its support. At the same time, Hungary might have two important interests in the Mediterranean: the termination of its one-sided energy dependency and changes in migration policy. Yet, the general understanding was that these issues could be resolved through the existing frameworks.

As to content of the proposal, the UfM was seen as a ‘loose, project-based multilateral partnership’. In the discussion phase Hungary wished to minimise institutionalization as much as possible and altogether avoid the establishment of parallel structures. With regard to the co-presidency concept, and faced with the Arab rejection of Israel’s possible presidency, as well as the possible employment of Israeli staff at the secretariat, it was essential to ensure that all partner states could potentially fill this position. Hungary was also very much concerned with maintaining the fragile balance between the eastern and southern neighbourhoods in terms of funding.

III. Polish-Swedish Initiative to Enhance the Eastern Dimension

Contents of the proposal and its assessment in Poland

Should the Eastern Partnership be understood as a response or as a parallel initiative to the UfM? It certainly was an attempt to draw the EU's attention towards its eastern neighbours at a time when interest seemed more focused on the South. On the other hand, Poland has been constantly advocating for an eastern dimension of the ENP, ever since the policy for neighbours was discussed (non-paper, 2003). The UfM clearly provided a window of opportunity and created a momentum, where the EaP could be proposed and effectively approved by all the 27 EU member states.

Thus the Polish-Swedish proposal was tabled in May 2008, urging for a partnership that should seek to go beyond what was offered by the current ENP. It should combine the existing differentiation principle with new horizontal links between the neighbours and the EU. The main objective was to deepen bilateral cooperation, while promoting more profound integration of all the partners with the EU, with Ukraine setting the example. At the same time, a permanent formula for multilateral cooperation should be established³⁴. According to the document, this deepened bilateral cooperation would include: 1) a broader migration agenda that includes a roadmap towards a visa-free regime; 2) a deep free trade area; 3) enhanced EU support for sector reforms; 4) enhanced student and scholar exchange programmes; 5) a new generation of Action Plans within the ENP framework; and 6) successor agreements that reach beyond the present Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs).

On the other hand, the multilateral cooperation should focus on the following principles: 1) project-orientation; 2) flexible participation in the projects (on a voluntary basis, and depending on the interests of each country); 3) complementarity with the regional projects being developed under the Black Sea Synergy or Northern Dimension. The added-value of the initiative is its fostering of regional links between partner countries and enhancement of the

³⁴ Eastern Partnership: Polish-Swedish proposal, draft as of 23 May 2008: http://www.tepsa.eu/docs/draft_proposal_eastern_partnership.pdf

offer for Belarus, as well as the possibility it offers to extend certain projects to Russia if the latter is willing to get involved.

With regard to its financial framework, the initiative would draw on those resources already available through the ENPI and did not therefore represent an added burden on the EU budget. In addition, a trust fund, financed through contributions from willing EU member states, was proposed. As to the institutional structure, it should be as light-weight and goal-oriented as possible. It could involve the appointment of a special coordinator and the convening of ministerial meetings, including the EU troika, neighbouring countries and willing member states.

For Poland, this initiative was an attempt to encourage strategic thinking in the EU with regard to eastern matters. In the eyes of Polish decision-makers, the bureaucratic structure of the ENP often underestimated the political challenge of relations with EU neighbours. It was deemed essential that following the 2004 enlargement, the EU re-started political thinking about its neighbouring partners. In this respect, the proposed enhanced cooperation did not only include concrete projects, but also the active promotion of European values. A political initiative was needed in order to ensure that all the EU legal acts, procedures and project requirements do not make the partner countries lose sight of the values Europe cares for³⁵. Moreover, the Eastern Partnership was built on the recognition of the region's economic, political and social potential, particularly in the case of Ukraine. The principle of differentiation also took into consideration the differences between the countries in the region, including their varying degrees of political interest in deeper cooperation with the EU. Finally, horizontal links might foster the development of positive political dynamics in the future, comparable to that achieved by the Visegrad Group (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia) in the 1990's³⁶.

The initiative was relatively well received domestically, although criticism was voiced by the opposition and some international relations analysts. On the one hand, the project was

³⁵ Speech by Andrzej Kremer, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Europe heads towards the East: The role of Poland and Germany in shaping the eastern dimension of the EU", notes taken at the conference organized by the Centre for International Relations and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Warsaw, 30 June 2008.

³⁶ Speech by Mikołaj Dowgiewiczy, Secretary of State, Office of the Committee for European Integration, "Europe heads towards the East: The role of Poland and Germany in shaping the eastern dimension of the EU", notes taken at the conference organized by the Centre for International Relations and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Warsaw, 30 June 2008.

considered realistic. Yet on the other, it was also perceived as not creating any organizational added value³⁷ and as being insufficient to veritably change and upgrade relations with the East. In this context, the main weaknesses enumerated were as follows: 1) the partnership offered very little aside from a few promises in addition to the existing ENP formula; 2) it lacked a political declaration on the possibility of future EU accession once the necessary criteria have been met by partner countries; 3) it also lacked an institutional structure, parallel to the one conceived for the UfM; and finally, 4) putting Ukraine and Moldova into the same basket with Belarus seemed completely inadequate³⁸. A critical view from left-wing political opposition highlighted the lack of an explicit statement confirming that the project was not to act as an alternative to EU-Russia relations. In fact, the initiative should have made clear from the start that there was no rivalry between the two cooperation processes³⁹.

As to the institutionalization issue, it has to be underlined that the UfM's new institutions were important for all the 'neighbours of Europe', but such an institutionalized ENP was to be avoided in the eastern context, where neighbours aspire for accession. Given that Poland is very much concerned with the future integration of the Ukraine and Moldova, it opposed petrified and heavy structure of these relations. A reformulated 'imitation' of the French project could have created obstacles to future enlargement towards the East. In fact, Poland sees EaP as an instrument that could facilitate integration in the long run. Therefore, with the materialization of the UfM initiative, Poland faced the following dilemma: in order to draw attention to the East, a project had to be proposed, but it was supposed to involve as little institutionalization as possible. In this respect, the logic of the Eastern Partnership appeared to be quite different from that of the UfM. It is worth mentioning that the starting point for the UfM project was the great political will shared by some of the EU member states, which must now be translated into concrete projects. The Eastern Partnership, however, was governed by a reverse logic: here, it is the implementation of concrete projects that should in the future enable achieving the broader political aims, notably the enlargement.

³⁷ Paweł Zalewski, independent deputy, former President of the Foreign Affairs Commission in the Sejm, "Eastern neighbourhood of the EU: Polish and German (common?) perspective", notes taken at the expert debate at the Heinrich Boell Stiftung, Warsaw, 10 June 2008.

³⁸ Blog by Paweł Kowal, deputy of the main opposition party Law and Justice, Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Commission in the Sejm: http://pawel-kowal.salon24.pl/76809_index.html

³⁹ IPA interview with a Sejm deputy, Warsaw, 18 June 2008.

A European logic

The Eastern Partnership was constructed within a European framework from the very start. At the European Council in March 2008, the UfM was discussed and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk raised the issue of invigorating the EU policy towards the East in parallel with the proposed initiative for the southern neighbourhood. At the same time, France made an offer: if Poland backed the UfM, France in return would not object to the projects for the East⁴⁰.

Drawing on the experience of previous diplomatic failures, Poland was aware of the fact that the new initiative could not be tabled by one state. Conversely, in order to avoid both the extensive negotiations in the drafting phase and the impression of dividing Europe into two regional blocs, it should not be proposed by a large group of member states⁴¹. Wide consultations were held with EU partners interested in pushing forward the eastern agenda. In the end, the closest understanding was achieved with Stockholm, also due to Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt's eager personal involvement in eastern matters. Moreover, Sweden, generally seen as very effective in EU politics, was able to offer important advice as to the modalities of diplomatic action or even particular formulations in the draft itself. For example, Swedish partners suggested that Russia should be mentioned to show that the initiative is not directed against it.

Huge interest was also noted on the part of Germany. The eastern policy had been among the priorities mapped out by the German presidency in the first half of 2007; yet in the end, Germany focused more on Central Asia and the Black Sea Region, and the ENP+ initiative was never realized. In fact, the Eastern Partnership could be seen as a continuation of a discussion that dates back to the German presidency. In this sense, the Polish-Swedish initiative contributed to the long-term perspectives of an integrated EU foreign policy.

In the Presidency Conclusions of 20 June 2008, the European Council welcomed the proposal to develop the Eastern Dimension of the ENP, in both bilateral and multilateral formats:

⁴⁰ IPA interview with an official from the Office of the Committee for European Integration, Warsaw, 8 July 2008.

⁴¹ IPA interview with a Foreign Affairs Ministry official, Warsaw, 10 July 2008.

'The European Council agreed on the need to further promote regional cooperation among the EU eastern neighbours and between the EU and the region, as well as bilateral cooperation between the EU and each of these countries respectively, on the basis of differentiation and an individual approach, respecting the character of the ENP as a single and coherent policy framework. Furthermore, such cooperation should bring added-value and be complementary to the already existing and planned multilateral cooperation, in particular the Black Sea Synergy and the Northern Dimension'⁴².

The Commission was invited to proceed with plans and, in the spring of 2009, to present the Council with a proposal outlining the specific modalities of the Eastern Partnership, on the basis of relevant initiatives.

Czech and Hungarian reactions⁴³

In June 2008 the Eastern Partnership, aimed at promoting further regional cooperation among the EU's eastern neighbours, was agreed upon in parallel to the Union for the Mediterranean. In this sense, the UfM project provided the Czech Republic with an opportunity to advance its foreign policy priorities, as eastern partners are far more central to the Czech foreign policy spectrum. Thus the EU eastern policy was launched, while changing the perceptions of many EU Western member states, for which the East often boiled down to Russia.

Czech Republic obviously supported EaP, but according to Czech decision-makers, certain differences existed between Poland and the Czech Republic as to the framework of enhanced relations within partnership. Poland was perceived as wanting the EU to adopt a more institutionalized approach towards the East, more along the same lines as the UfM, whereas the Czech Republic lobbied for a more flexible and project-based framework. At the same time, Czech diplomacy was fully in line with Polish efforts to maintain a budgetary balance between the Southern and Eastern dimensions. The Czechs thus paid close attention to the distribution of EU funds, in order to ensure that new projects are not developed in the Mediterranean region at the expense of the Eastern dimension. The feeling was that the trade-off between the UfM and the EaP 'was all about money'. If the funding dilemma could be resolved, the UfM would no longer be considered a threat to the East.

⁴² Presidency Conclusions, European Council 19-20 June, op. cit.

⁴³ Based on: Rybkova (July 2008), op. cit.; Rozsa, op. cit.

In principle, Hungary supported the Eastern Partnership, yet always made it very clear that the Balkans were equally important. Initial Hungarian support for the Polish-Swedish proposal was only ‘soft’, due to the fact that Hungary and other Visegrad countries felt somewhat cast aside in the discussion and drafting of the proposal. Nevertheless, since the proposal met and promoted Hungary’s interests, the government was in favour of the initiative. As to the content, it was noted that the proposal seemed invented predominantly for Ukraine. It was envisioned as a loose form of cooperation without much institutionalisation. Lacking any substantial added-value, it was understood as merely a counter-balance to the Mediterranean project. In sum, the Eastern Dimension of the ENP, and the eastern neighbourhood in general, are of vital and direct political interest to Hungary: for security and energy policy reasons, as well as because of the considerable ethnic Hungarian minority communities established in the region.

Commission’s proposal: Context, contents and assessment

According to the June 2008 European Council conclusions, the Commission’s detailed proposal for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was to be presented in early 2009, in time for approval by the Heads of State and Government in March 2009. With the date for final endorsement having remained unchanged, the Extraordinary European Council convened on 1 September 2008 to debate the crisis in Georgia, invited the Commission to submit its proposals already in December 2008. Moreover, the Council stressed that it was more necessary than ever to support regional cooperation and to step up relations with eastern partners, particularly through the neighbourhood policy⁴⁴. The importance of the multilateral framework introduced by the Polish-Swedish proposal to the ENP’s Eastern dimension was thus enhanced. The EU also decided at this point to reinforce its relations with Georgia, including visa facilitation measures and possible establishment of a full and comprehensive free trade area as soon as the conditions are met. The subsequent October European Council called for an earlier presentation of the EaP proposal of by the Commission, which was published on 3 December 2008.

⁴⁴ Extraordinary European Council, Brussels, 1 September 2008, *Presidency Conclusions*, p. 3: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/102545.pdf

The conflict in Georgia, which constituted an unprecedented international situation, managed to finally direct the EU's attention and political will towards the East, and certainly strengthened the momentum created by the Polish-Swedish proposal. Nevertheless, the Commission was not fully unanimous and certain controversies emerged when the proposal reached the College. Discussion focused mainly on the level of additional funding. Moreover, Commissioners from the new member states opposed a statement on the parallel development of the EU-Russia partnership, which ended up being excluded from the final version of the communication⁴⁵. At the same time, EU leaders underlined that the successful implementation of the proposal depended on the partners' commitment. As president Barroso asserted: "only with strong political will and commitment on both sides will the Eastern Partnership achieve its objective of political association and economic integration"⁴⁶.

According to the proposal, the EU would lend strong support to partners in their efforts to come closer to the EU, providing all the necessary assistance with the reform process this entails, through a specific Eastern Dimension within the ENP. However, joint ownership is essential and both sides of the EaP have their respective responsibilities. The two axes – bilateral, and the more recent multilateral – will provide a new framework through which to address common challenges. The latter would comprise four policy platforms (on democracy, good governance and stability; economic integration and convergence with EU policies; energy security; and contacts between people), as well as a number of flagship initiatives to be funded through multi-donor support, IFIs and the private sector⁴⁷.

Firstly, the deeper bilateral engagement will cover:

- New contractual relations in the form of Association Agreements (AAs), thus replacing the current Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs), to be negotiated by those who are "willing and able to take on the resulting far-reaching commitments".
- Gradual integration in the EU economy by means of deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTAs) – covering all trade, including energy – once partners

⁴⁵ 'W KE wciąż brak zgody co do pieniędzy na Wschodnie Partnerstwo', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 02.12.2008.

⁴⁶ "The Eastern Partnership – an ambitious new chapter in the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours", press release, Brussels, 3 December 2008, IP/08/1858:
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1858&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

⁴⁷ Communication from the Commission, 'Eastern Partnership', Brussels, 3 December 2008, COM(2008) 823/4, p. 2-3.

have joined the WTO. A long-term goal would be the creation of a network of bilateral agreements among the partners, possibly leading to the creation of a Neighbourhood Economic Community.

- Mobility and security pacts: in terms of mobility, the offer foresees visa facilitation, a waiving of visa fees for all citizens, as well as a coordinated plan to improve Member State consular coverage. In the longer-term, visa-free travel and targeted openings of the EU labour market could be envisaged, the latter depending on the results of the Commission's study quantifying costs and benefits for the EU and its partners. As for security measures, proposals include fighting illegal migration, upgrading the asylum systems to EU standards, setting up integrated border management structures aligned with the EU *acquis*, enhancing the capacity of police and the judiciary, especially in the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as sharing operational information with Europol and Eurojust.
- EaP aims at strengthening energy security amongst the EU and its partners, notably through 'energy interdependence' provisions outlined in the AAs; the swift completion of negotiations on Ukraine's and Moldova's membership in the Energy Community; conclusion of the memoranda of understanding on energy issues with Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia; enhanced support for the full integration of Ukraine's energy market with that of the EU, together with enhanced political engagement with Azerbaijan (the only EaP hydrocarbon exporting partner to the EU), based on Azerbaijan's gradual convergence with the EU energy market.
- Promotion of economic and social development through regional development programmes and extending ENPI-funded cross-border co-operation⁴⁸.

Secondly, the new framework for multilateral cooperation will provide a forum to share information and experience on partners' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation, giving the EU an additional instrument to accompany these processes. It will facilitate the development of common positions and joint activities, as well as foster links among the partners themselves, becoming a natural platform for discussion on further developments of the EaP.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 4-8.

In terms of an operational structure, the Commission proposed to organize the multilateral framework on four levels, namely: 1) meetings of EaP Heads of State and Government every 2 years; 2) annual spring meetings for Foreign Affairs Ministers attached to GAERC; 3) meetings on the four thematic platforms (chaired and prepared by the Commission) at least twice a year, consisting of senior officials that would then report back at the annual ministerial meetings, 4) panels supporting the work of the platforms⁴⁹.

Moreover, the so-called ‘flagship initiatives’ are to increase the visibility of and focus on the multilateral framework. With this in mind, the Commission proposed: 1) an Integrated Border Management Programme; 2) a SME Facility; 3) the promotion of regional electricity markets, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources; 4) the development of the Southern energy corridor; 5) cooperation on prevention of, preparation for, and response to natural and man-made disasters⁵⁰.

Last but not least, the Commission proposed increased spending on the bilateral dimension, together with new financial resources to kick-start the multilateral initiatives. The current ENPI envelope would be supplemented with €350 million of fresh funds in addition to the already planned resources for 2010-13. The ENPI Regional Programme East will be refocused to sustain the EaP’s multilateral dimension. Funds made available within the 2009 envelope can be used to launch urgent initiatives and approximately €250 million under the current ENPI envelope can be re-channelled for the period 2010-13. This combination of fresh and reprogrammed funds will bring the total amount of resources devoted to these new initiatives up to €600 million⁵¹.

The EU commitment was confirmed by the declaration attached to European Council Conclusions (March 2009). On this issue the Prague declaration of 7 May 2009 stipulated that ‘beyond the Community grant assistance and national co-financing, the implementation of the Eastern Partnership will require additional financial resources and they therefore call on other donors, the international financial institutions and the private sector to provide additional financing in support of reforms, the flagship initiatives and projects’⁵².

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 12.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 14.

⁵² Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, 7 May 2009, Prague, p. 8-9; <http://www.eu2009.cz/event/1/3553>

How did Poland, the initiator of the Eastern Partnership, assess the Commission's proposal? Polish diplomatic sources turned out to be very positive about both the preparation phase and the final draft of the proposal. Intense bilateral and multilateral consultations were held by the Commission with Poland and Sweden, as well as with other member states and partner countries. A Polish-Swedish non-paper was presented at the beginning of October 2008, the quasi-totality of which was accepted by the Commission. However, some criticism was voiced concerning the lack of a special EU coordinator specifically responsible for the EaP, although the Commission has proposed to review its internal structures to ensure the necessary coordination for the implementation⁵³. Also, the additional funding fell short of Polish expectations, as the initial proposals had been more ambitious. Nevertheless, it constituted a reasonable compromise and had been achieved without opening any further negotiations between all 27 member states.

Further criticism was expressed by some policy analysts, who argued that one of the proposal's major shortcomings was the fact that it did not call for strong institutions in the framework of the future AAs. Moreover, it did not specify the modalities of partners' involvement in the CFSP and ESDP (for example, in terms of participation in the EU crisis management missions). Finally, the proposal should have included an invitation for partners' solicitation of observer status within the EU decision-making process in selected areas⁵⁴. Given that partners are supposed to become integrated into the single market and common trade policy in the long run, their sense of ownership as regards the project could be substantially increased by the prospect of such observer status. This could be of particular importance to Ukraine, who resents the lack of (potential) membership perspective most of all.

⁵³ Communication from the Commission, 'Eastern...', op. cit., p. 9.

⁵⁴ Maria Sadowska, Paweł Świeboda, "Eastern Partnership – good start, hard labour to come", *demosEuropa*, 9 December 2008:
http://www.demoseuropa.eu/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=7&page_id=794

IV. Central-European Cooperation With Regard to the Evolving ENP

The selected Central European NMSs are often viewed as one entity, particularly with regard to their positions towards the European Neighbourhood Policy or Russia. As was outlined in the previous section of this paper, this it is not always the case. They all agreed that strengthening of the Southern Dimension of the ENP is important as long as it also allows for parallel reinforcement of the Eastern Dimension. However, closer examination of the Eastern policy respectively developed by Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, reveals certain differences as to the priorities, assumptions and strategies pursued in this policy area. Not only are there varying interests present, but also possibilities for close cooperation and coalitions within the EU forum are not self-evident. The chances for regional cooperation with regard to the evolving ENP, particularly its Eastern Dimension, are explored below. Germany's involvement is also briefly touched upon in this context.

The Polish perspective is that all members of the Visegrad grouping would like to continue cooperation within this framework, although opinions on its relevance and role vary significantly. On the one hand, Visegrad should not be completely unappreciated, as is often the case in general public debate in Poland. Active consultations and views' exchange do take place, but Visegrad does not and will probably not constitute a lobbying group on European issues. In fact, important differences persist between the countries, notably with respect to Russia and Ukraine: the Czech Republic tends to run more in line with the Polish position, while Hungary and Slovakia represent a more moderate approach and are inclined to show more understanding of Russian concerns in the region.

As to the reinforced Eastern dimension of the ENP, the group has been repeatedly discussing a possible strategy and intensive consultations took place within the '7' group (Visegrad 4 plus Baltic 3). Although all partners seemed to be in favour of the initiative, at least in principle, no common document was drafted. One explanation was that Czech Republic was hoping to proceed with the Eastern agenda during their presidency as from January 2009. The Polish-Swedish proposal was drawing on Central-European consultations conducted under the Czech presidency of Visegrad group, but the partners were not directly involved in the drafting phase. Informally, certain discontent was voiced in Prague and Bratislava. Indeed, the Polish-Swedish proposal should probably have been discussed more with the Czechs,

especially in view of their approaching EU Presidency and coordination had been lacking in this respect. Poland obviously had hoped that the Czech Presidency would follow-up on the project, but such an assumption was received as a sign of neglect towards a smaller partner. In the meantime, Czechs proceeded with a non-paper on strengthening the Eastern Dimension in April 2009 (COEST working group). In the end, the Czech Republic welcomed the Polish-Swedish proposal, assuring that the Eastern Partnership would be given due attention during its EU presidency.

From the point of view of the Polish government, Germany stood to become a very important partner in efforts to promote the eastern agenda at the EU level. Moreover, the EU policy towards its eastern neighbours could constitute the much-needed driving force of Polish-German relations⁵⁵. However, close cooperation with Germany on relations with eastern neighbours is seen as problematic by the domestic political opposition in Poland. It is recognized that the Polish and German foreign policy agendas have some common elements, notably increased involvement in the East. However, significant differences between Poland and Germany persist with regard to Russia, and also in terms of the German attitude towards the Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. The privileged position sought by German business in the Russian market, at the expense of other EU partners, is seen as a breach of European solidarity, with the most eminent example being the North Stream pipeline⁵⁶. German business interests in Russia obviously influence German policy towards those eastern countries hoping to free themselves from the former Soviet zone of influence. Such a policy does not go in line with Polish efforts to promote European integration and the NATO security system in the region. From this perspective, Germany's pursuit of an exclusive privileged partnership with Russia is seen as endangering the position of countries such as Ukraine or Georgia, as well as their aspirations regarding the West.

Indeed, Polish and German preferences are not similar. Germany has important economic interests in Russia and wishes to keep the balance between EU relations with EaP countries and EU-relations with Russia. But this approach is shared also in Central-Europe, notably by Hungary and Slovakia. In addition, Germany is against EaP being labelled a waiting room on the way towards accession. Nevertheless, Germany is in favour of reinforcing the ENP and balancing the southern and eastern dimension. Moreover, it has declared the biggest national

⁵⁵ Speech by Andrzej Kremer, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Speech by Paweł Zalewski, *op. cit.*

contribution within the newly established Neighbourhood Investment Facility among all the EU member states.

Czech Presidency: Objectives and achievements

The Czech Presidency outlined three main priorities for its term in office: economy, energy, and ‘European Union in the world’. As part of the third priority, the Presidency was to pay special attention to the Eastern Dimension of the ENP – the Eastern Partnership. It is worth noting that the perspective of the EU Presidency had played a crucial role in formulating the Czech approach towards the East and the EaP itself⁵⁷. Other key areas of action included transatlantic ties, EU-Russia relations, and the enlargement process, especially in the Western Balkans. These three main priorities were obviously interrelated, as the EaP might possibly offer new opportunities in terms of energy security and diversification. Indeed, a crucial line of action within the energy field involves stabilising relations with the main foreign suppliers of energy sources, more specifically, clarifying Russia’s role and developing strong relations with new suppliers. Special importance was to be attributed to suppliers from the Caspian region and to the construction of relevant transport routes⁵⁸.

The Presidency expressed full support for the deepening of the ENP, and was determined to push strongly for the introduction of the EaP, with the aim of achieving balance between the individual geographical partnerships of the EU. An important responsibility of the Czech Presidency was the organisation of the opening summit on the Eastern Partnership at the level of the heads of state and government of the EU Member States and the six Eastern European partnership countries (Prague, 7 May 2009). As Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Vondra said: “We firmly believe that balance is needed in the EU’s relationship with its neighbours: in 2008 we’ve had a “Mediterranean spring”; the spring of 2009 could be dedicated to the East”⁵⁹. The EaP summit was followed by a related event on the issues of energy sources and energy transport diversification – Southern Corridor Summit on 8 May.

⁵⁷ Eva Rybkova, ‘Eastern Partnership from the perspective of Czech Presidency – current developments and views’, paper prepared on the basis of interviews for the purpose of the IPA project, PASOS, February 2009.

⁵⁸ Work Programme of the Czech Presidency, ‘Europe without Barriers’, 1 January-31 June 2009, p. vii, <http://www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/news/the-czech-presidency-presents-its-priorities-and-work-programme-4810>

⁵⁹ Remarks by Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs of the Czech Republic Alexandr Vondra, DGAP, Czech-German Discussion Forum on the Czech Presidency, Berlin, 2 December 2008, available on www.vlada.cz

Czech diplomats saw EaP not in terms of an alternative to enlargement, but rather as a preparatory platform for possible future accession, which was in line with the Polish approach. The Czechs also underlined that the EaP did not seek to redistribute the financial resources of the ENP – a matter of concern for France that did not wish to see its own Mediterranean project marginalized.

To what extent was the Czech Presidency successful, especially with regard to the ENP agenda? First of all, the expectations of EU partners were not particularly high, especially in comparison with the outgoing French presidency. Scepticism was fuelled by the Czech internal conflicts and divergences, between the centrist Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek and the controversial and eurosceptic president Vaclav Klaus. In terms of the Eastern agenda, Klaus, a fervent opponent of the Lisbon Treaty and climate change agenda, was remembered for explicitly blaming Georgia for having provoked the violence while the government officially condemned the Russian aggression in August 2008.

Moreover, as French experience has shown with the Georgia crisis, unexpected events, of both an international and domestic nature, have a potential of turning a presidency into a repetitive crisis management exercise. Once the Czech started, they immediately had the Gaza crisis and the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute on the table. With the Gaza crisis, the limited leverage of Czech diplomacy put the Presidency in a disadvantageous position compared to the drive of President Sarkozy, who launched a parallel mission to the Middle East and seemed to be doing better, by engaging other actors such as Egypt⁶⁰. At the same time, Karel Schwarzenberg was the only EU Foreign Affairs Minister, who condemned rocket attacks from Gaza and openly defended Israel's right to self-defence. This also must have influenced the Czech room for manoeuvre as to the mediation between both sides. On the gas issue the Czech presidency adopted a very timid approach at first, declaring disengagement unless gas supplies to the EU are affected, which was soon the case with Central-European member states severely hit. Later on, when calls for immediate dispute setting became firmer, the Presidency still continued to decline active mediation, while insisting that the conflict should be resolved bilaterally by Ukraine and Russia.

⁶⁰ David Kral, 'What can be expected from Czech EU Presidency?', commentary no 2/ 12 January 2009, http://www.europeum.org/disp_article.php?aid=899&cid=3&nolang=0&page=1&type=0&lang=en

The Czech Presidency officially launched the Eastern Partnership and organized the Southern Corridor Summit. The latter, involving Turkey and ENP countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Egypt) expressed official political support for the long-standing project of alternative energy transit route from Caspian region. However, the overall delivery of the Presidency was negatively influenced by the fall of Topolánek government and the appointment of a new, ‘technical’ one a day after the two summits. The temporary character of the new executive, as well as the growing influence of the eurosceptic president Klaus, have politically brought the Czech Presidency to an end, almost two months before the official handover to the Swedes. As a senior Czech diplomat remarked: ‘after the [EaP] summit the plan of the Czech Presidency is to relax’. The work on the substantive content of the EaP was thus given to the Swedish Presidency.

Cooperation under the Czech, Hungarian and Polish Presidencies

The Polish Foreign Ministry believed that working relations with the Czechs were very good and the Czech Presidency prepared a very successful launch of the new initiative for the East. The Polish-Swedish non-paper from October 2008 was fully consulted with and supported by the Czech Republic. Poland hoped to play a key role in promoting and implementing the Eastern Partnership especially since Czech and Swedish Presidencies were not expected to dedicate a substantial chunk of their agenda to just one policy area⁶¹. As to the future presidencies, there is certainly room for close cooperation with Hungary, although this presidency would definitely be much more focused on the Balkans rather than on the Eastern Dimension. The Spanish Presidency was naturally expected to focus on the Mediterranean, yet its general involvement in the Eastern Partnership is believed to be secured by the support of the new member states for the establishment of the UfM Secretariat in Barcelona.

As regards the broader potential for cooperation, the general understanding in Poland is that other Central European states attach more importance to the Balkan region and enlargement prospects in that direction. This is particularly true in the case of Hungary. Within Visegrad, Poland is far more East-oriented than the other partners. But Visegrad is only one of the coalitions that could possibly work for the benefit of the ENP’s Eastern Dimension, along with Baltic and Scandinavian States, Germany, or Bulgaria and Romania. The constitution of

⁶¹ IPA interview with a Foreign Affairs Ministry official, Warsaw, 18 December 2008.

a '7' group comprising the Visegrad and Baltic states is crucial in this respect, as all these countries are already perceived as a coalition by the western partners.

Poland assumed the presidency of the Visegrad Group in July 2008 and announced its willingness to transform the V4 into a Central European 'regional brand' in the EU. It was underlined that the group's experiences of democratic transformation represent an invaluable capital that should be channelled towards the benefit of the active ENP, with particular focus on the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans. The programme of the Polish Presidency was to be closely correlated with that of the Czech Presidency of the EU and focused on the ENP⁶².

The Czech Republic was rather sceptical about cooperation between the Visegrad countries. However, the official declaration from April 2008 promoting cooperation with eastern neighbours, and especially with Ukraine, was definitely viewed as a common V4 reaction to the UfM project⁶³. At the same time, the V4 agreement on the Eastern Dimension was of a rather declarative nature. Whether there is going to be true cooperation on concrete EaP projects, is another issue altogether. Differences between partners mainly stem from the fact that contrary to Poland, the Czech Republic advocated a more flexible, project-based approach in the management of divergences within the V4, notably concerning relations with Russia⁶⁴. Yet in more general terms, the Eastern dimension of ENP is a priority shared by the entire Visegrad Group. From the Hungarian point of view, the possibility of Visegrad cooperation on the design and implementation of the Eastern Partnership was not excluded, but it was noted that even without a formal structure, the V4 countries would coordinate on this issue⁶⁵.

⁶² 'Polska przejęła przewodnictwo w Grupie Wyszehradzkiej', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 09.07.2008: www.gazeta.pl

⁶³ Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group Countries, 23 April 2008, Czech Republic, available on: www.visegradgroup.eu

⁶⁴ Rybkova (February 2009), op. cit.

⁶⁵ Rózsa, op. cit.

V. The Future of the Neighbourhood Policy in the Eyes of the New Member States

As discussed above, the three countries have varying perceptions on the ENP, with more evident differences with regard to the eastern, rather than to the southern dimension. Poland is very much concerned with integrating its neighbours within the European structures. The Czech Republic is generally less determined in pursuing these aspirations, although it is interested in enhanced cooperation with Ukraine and the degree of commitment also depends on the political colours of the government in power. And finally, for Hungary, the Eastern dimension is primarily seen in terms of economic interests, especially as regards Ukraine and energy relations with Russia. Hungarian minorities (mainly Western Ukraine) are also deemed important. The diverse interests of these three countries translate into varying levels of involvement in the East, and consequently, slightly different attitudes towards the UfM. In Central Europe, the latter will always be seen through the eastern policy perspective. Also, any interest amongst these countries in the Mediterranean region is mainly directed towards the Balkans, with Hungary, and to some extent the Czech Republic, being more involved in this dimension than Poland.

Poland

A formal separation of the Southern and Eastern dimensions is deemed neither possible nor desirable. Such a move would entail complex negotiations, which could see certain member states attempting to weaken the Eastern dimension, notably in the name of better relations with Russia. In fact, the European Commission is the East's most effective ally, helping to prevent inter-state trading that could have a detrimental effect on the fragile balance between the South and the East. The ENP must therefore remain the primary common framework. It is worth remembering that diversification is its main assumption, building on the bilateral and individualized relations between the EU and each partner. A formal division of the ENP into two or more regional dimensions does not seem to promise great benefits; while one sole framework promotes a more equal investment on the part of every EU member state. Yet this recent creation of two distinctive projects within the ENP framework might in the future result in a *de facto* separation.

It is note-worthy that the role and weight of both the UfM and the Eastern Partnership depend on the stakeholders themselves. In this context, the main impediment to the success of the Eastern Partnership is the simple fact that partner countries might be reluctant to do their 'homework'. For instance, with the possibility of fervent political conflict looming over its upcoming presidential elections, Ukraine may fall short of expectations and thus damage the authority of Poland, which has been its most devoted advocate in the EU. Thus not only is the pressure on EU member states necessary in order to make them aware of the importance of investments in the East, but also the partner countries have to prove, rather than just declare, their dedication to stronger integration with Europe.

Increased EU focus on the Southern or Eastern Dimensions of the ENP also depends on an effective coalition between those EU member states willing to promote each region. It is worth highlighting that very good coordination exists between the southern members of the EU. France, Spain, Portugal and Italy organize frequent bilateral and multilateral meetings, having thus established a useful informal mechanism of coordination within the EU. Any initiatives agreed on within this forum are then presented at the EU level. This internal coordination works well given their common interests. The EaP initiative has so far benefited from the powerful external factor that the Georgia crisis represented, but in order to sustain this momentum, an efficient coalition within the EU seems indispensable. It is open to question whether such a coordination mechanism could effectively function in the long-run between Central European states, including Germany.

The southern EU member states' eastern policy focuses on Russia and relations are very good. Italy, for example, has developed important energy relations within this framework and its trade exchange with Russia is second only to Germany's (among EU member states). This grants the South a certain amount of influence over matters of the Eastern Dimension; whereas new member states dispose of no such instruments of influence over the South. The problem here is both their lack of defined interests in the South and general anxiety with regard to the perceived trade-off between the South and East.

These new member states view the allocation of funding within the ENP framework to the East and the South respectively as problematic. Poland constantly reiterates that almost 70% of funds go to the southern neighbours, whereas the eastern partners only receive 30%. Several variables must be taken into consideration when seeking to explain this perceived

imbalance, especially the number of states and inhabitants in each region, as well as the absorption capacity of each state⁶⁶. Yet the funds ear-marked for regional cooperation in the East have, in fact, been limited in comparison to those granted the South. The EaP initiative will ensure a substantial increase in the former, but the real difference with regard to the general funding balance can only be made during the negotiations on the post-2013 financial perspective.

Hungary⁶⁷

“We cannot see that the UfM would give any plus; it is the Barcelona Process dusted and given a new coat. The UfM is a successful communication tool of Sarkozy, which we are ready to support if it makes no harm”. For Hungary, the ‘old-new’ debate of the mid-1990s seemed to have resurfaced. At the time, the Central European applicant countries stood as rivals to the South in terms of political attention, funds and resources. Now, the East *versus* the South debate is back, with the only difference being that the scope of what is termed ‘the East’ has shifted even further east. From the Hungarian point of view, the balance between East and South is precarious and anxiety persists as to the South diverting attention and resources.

The reinforced ENP is important for Hungary because of the opportunities it potentially creates as to the energy diversification, a central issue in the country’s foreign policy. Hungary believes in maintaining the regional cooperation across the Mediterranean mainly in order to ensure that the energy needs of every European country are met. On the other hand, a shift in attention towards the South could easily overlook the clear risk to Europe posed by Russia’s energy expansion. Therefore, Hungary is much more interested in the development of the Eastern policy in the framework of the ENP.

Czech Republic⁶⁸

In contrast to its former stance, the Czech Republic is currently much more aware of the importance of promoting its partners in the East. The Czech Republic thus warmly welcomed

⁶⁶ For details see: Agnieszka K. Cianciara, *Does the Strengthened European Neighbourhood Policy Restore the Balance Between Southern and Eastern Partner Countries?* (“A&O”, No. 2, February 2008, www.isp.org.pl).

⁶⁷ Rózsa, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Rybkova, op. cit.

the EU's increased focus on the region and was more than willing to pursue the eastern agenda during its presidency.

From the Czech perspective, the ENP's initial formula had not been functional at all. The widespread view was that it was not possible to bring together the eastern and Mediterranean countries' varying goals and instruments under the same umbrella; yet formal separation does not seem feasible under the current political circumstances. The establishment of both the UfM and the Eastern Partnership should however be seen as a positive development, since it provides two separate frameworks to address the diversity of needs present amongst the ENP partner countries. In fact, Czech politicians and diplomats had always seen the ENP in terms of these two separate dimensions and further regionalization was considered natural.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Eastern neighbourhood dominates the foreign policy priorities of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. Enhanced cooperation with the Mediterranean region is therefore evaluated mainly in the context of threats and opportunities it could pose to the East. However, since the UfM was proposed by France at the end of 2007, an important evolution in the Central European debate has taken place. Initially, the perception of UfM as a threat in terms of a financial trade-off to the detriment of the East and scepticism as to the added value of the whole project to the Mediterranean itself prevailed. Relatively soon afterwards, this was replaced by an understanding that the project provides a perfect opportunity for reinforcing the Eastern dimension of the ENP. Nevertheless, the benefits of the consolidation of southern dimension are not realized yet.
 - Central-European states in general and Poland, the biggest regional player, in particular, should become increasingly interested in EU policy towards the Mediterranean in itself. Firstly, increased Polish involvement in the Mediterranean region could result in greater influence the ENP as a whole. Secondly, the European energy agenda, which is a central concern in the region excessively dependent on Russia, might significantly benefit from cooperation with the Mediterranean. Finally, transnational issues such as immigration or environmental challenges, which do not yet seem to affect Central Europe, only grow in importance for the whole EU in the future.
- Central-European cooperation on regional issues is usually taken for granted by the Central-European countries themselves, as well as by their Western partners. In reality, however, interests and the degree of political commitment often vary significantly, which is more visible in the case of Eastern Partnership than in relation to the Union for Mediterranean. Eastern policy is a common goal, but preferences diverge as to the substance. Therefore, the real challenge was not the launch of the initiative, but the day-to-day managing, as well as the extent and pace of implementation of specific projects.
 - It is thus extremely important to coordinate positions within the Central Europe group and the wider group of 'EaP friends' in order to be able to present

common positions at the EU forum. This will be particularly important, as many EU states, notably France and Germany, have already expressed serious concerns about visa liberalisation for partners, which is considered an EaP priority in Central Europe.

- Although initial attitudes towards institutionalization of the Eastern Partnership varied among Central-European states, final agreement was reached recognizing that the framework needed to be much more flexible than in the UfM case. This is due to the fact that EaP is not only about fostering regional cooperation, but it aims at preparing partners for accession in the long term, provided they are ready and willing to join.
 - However, the flexible institutional framework should not negatively affect EU capacity to act effectively. Therefore, it is essential to lobby for a structure within the Commission that will work exclusively on the Eastern dimension, possibly under the supervision of a high level coordinator for Eastern Partnership. There is room for close cooperation with the incoming Swedish Presidency in this respect.

- Additional financial resources have been already allocated to the Eastern Partnership. They might be sufficient to kick-start the initiative, but far more will be needed to increase the chances of the successful implementation of this ambitious project. The negotiations on the post-2013 financial perspective will be crucial in order to ensure significant augmentation of EU budget resources dedicated to the East.
 - With their presidencies in mind, both Hungary and Poland should prepare ground for budgetary negotiations, while lobbying for increased spending, not only on the Eastern partnership, but for the neighbourhood policy in general. When it comes to the EU budget the main division line will be between the net payers and the ENP supporters, and the south-east division will be of secondary order.

- The Eastern Partnership agenda is inevitably linked to the challenge of EU-Russia relations. While Poland, in principle, rejects the idea of Russia having influence on EU relations with Eastern neighbours, Hungary, Germany and many other EU member states are more willing to take Russian concerns into account and develop relations in parallel. Indeed, Eastern partners constitute an arena of competing influences, both

from EU and Russia. For the time being, Russia has important cards to play, both in economic and security terms. With the EaP project EU has made its own offer and the partners are responding, at least at the declaratory level. But contrary to Russia, the EU has no stick to wave. Moreover, the carrot is not as tempting as some partners would like it to be, as the EaP promise is very far from the enlargement promise.

- For all these reasons, it is all the more important to make sure that the offer is filled with substance. With the Hungarian Presidency to be more focused on enlargement towards the Balkans, it should be the task of Polish Presidency to conduct a review, and draw on previous experiences, while proposing necessary changes, improvements and new impulses.

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