

CONCLUSIONS

of the Meeting of the European Affairs Committees of the V4 Parliaments with the participation of representatives of the Georgian European Integration Committee

Gdańsk, 8-10 September 2013

Representatives of the European Affairs Committees of the V4 Parliaments:

With regard to the Eastern Partnership

- recall the main goal of the Eastern Partnership, which is to bring the Eastern European countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) closer to the European Union through political association, economic integration and increased mobility, thus reinforcing the stability and prosperity on the European continent. The next stage of the process should be the perspective of membership of these countries in the EU;
- note that the Eastern Partnership has proved to be an efficient tool helping the Eastern partners to reform their states in order to achieve deep and lasting democracy;
- emphasise the need to ensure adequate funding of the Eastern Partnership under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, taking into account the “more for more” principle, which will also be applied within the framework of the new European Neighbourhood Instrument;
- express their support for the ambitious plan of signing an association agreement with Ukraine, including an agreement on a deep and comprehensive free trade area, during the November summit of the Eastern Partnership in Vilnius. They also emphasise their support for initialling analogous agreements with Armenia, Georgia and Moldova at the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius. They express their support for intensifying negotiations on the association agreement with Azerbaijan;
- welcome with appreciation the progress of the visa liberalisation process and express their hope for a prompt introduction of a visa-free regime with Moldova and then, consistently, with other Partnership countries;
- emphasise the need for further development of the Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus;
- encourage the European Commission and the European External Action Service to take ambitious actions for the achievement of the Eastern Partnership goals and to further develop the programmes related to people-to-people contacts and youth exchange. They particularly emphasise the need for opening the “*Erasmus +*” and “*Creative Europe*” programmes for participants from the Eastern Partnership states.

With regard to the project of creating the EU-US free trade area

- welcome with appreciation the initiative of preparing the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership** (TTIP). Such agreement may contribute to increased trade between the EU Member States and the United States;
- expect that once the European Union and the United States find a way to unify technical and regulatory standards which restrict access to their respective markets, a process will start to adapt the production of other participants of the international trade system to the same standards;
- believe that signing an agreement in the context of the world crisis will provide a significant pro-growth stimulus and may contribute to improving the competitiveness of the transatlantic area and help create new jobs;
- encourage EU entrepreneurs to join the work of the European Commission related to preparing that agreement by participating in the consultations aimed at defining the priorities in such areas as: exchange of goods, services and investment, public procurement, regulations, protection of intellectual property rights etc.

With regard to the regional policy in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020

Bearing in mind the consequences of the current economic and financial crisis as well as the political consensus that enabled the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020:

- believe that budget cuts should not be used as an excuse for limiting the EU's existing regional policy, which has ensured a significant stream of investment to Member States' regions and is an important tool for anti-crisis measures;
- underline the need for a better use of EU funds in order to achieve social, economic and territorial cohesion of European regions and achieve the objectives of intelligent, sustainable and socially inclusive development;
- indicate the need for greater support for the regional policy in less developed states and regions.

With regard to the 2014 elections to the European Parliament

Bearing in mind the growing influence of the European Parliament on the EU legislation and thereby on the lives of its citizens and recognising the importance of the upcoming EP elections:

- express their support for all measures aimed at increasing citizens' involvement in the elections to the European Parliament and increasing voter turnout. Therefore they postulate that throughout the election campaign EU citizens should be informed, as broadly as possible, of the powers and role of EU institutions, in particular the European Parliament;
- underline a necessity to promote the European citizens' initiative as a tool of citizens' active participation in the EU decision making process and an important step towards European civil society.