

## Introduction

The European Union shares land or sea borders with many nations and, as it continues to expand, has gained new neighbours including developing countries and countries with unstable governments. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) provides the framework for the EU to work with 16 of its closest neighbours to the south and the east: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. The ENP offers support and financial assistance in exchange for the undertaking of reforms in line with European values. The hope is that these reforms may then lead to closer political and economic integration between the neighbouring state and the EU.

## History

The European Neighbourhood Policy was created as a result of the 2004 enlargement of the EU, when the accession of Cyprus, Malta and the countries of central and eastern Europe greatly changed the nature of the EU's borders. It aimed to build on existing agreements between the EU and many neighbouring states by creating Action Plans, to help ensure that reforms were put in place efficiently. The Action Plans set out priorities for 3-5 years, and after this time, further documents are negotiated and adopted.

In 2004, negotiations began on creating Action Plans for Israel, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, Ukraine and the countries of the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan). All the individual Action Plans were subsequently agreed and implemented in either 2005 or, in the case of the South Caucasus countries, 2006. Egypt and Lebanon agreed further Action Plans in 2007.

Negotiations on Action Plans have not been fully 'activated' with the EU's other neighbours - Algeria, Belarus, Libya and Syria – because Association Agreements, the first step to ENP partnership, have not yet been signed. The EU agreed to sign an Association Agreement with Syria in 2009, but Syria's signature is still pending (the EU Parliament and all member states must then also confirm the Agreement). Whilst Algeria signed an Association Agreement with the EU in 2002, it has not yet negotiated an Action Plan.

The EU held its first conference with 16 of its neighbouring territories in September 2007, although indecision remains as to how closely it should work with these nations. France and Germany clearly stated that inclusion in the ENP is not a first step towards eventual membership of the EU.

Further developments in the ENP include: an Africa-EU Joint Strategy (which covers five of the ENP countries) launched in 2007; the Barcelona Process (1995) paved the way for the Union for the Mediterranean to be launched in 2008 with 16 partners across the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East; and an Eastern Partnership was launched in May 2009 with members including: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

## How does the ENP work?

Before a country can begin negotiations to join the European Neighbourhood Policy, it must have completed an Association Agreement or a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU. Nations that share a Mediterranean Sea border with the EU also need to be participants in the Union for the Mediterranean (Barcelona Process) before they can join the ENP. The ENP is not extended to countries that are engaged in the EU enlargement process, such as Turkey.

The next stage of the ENP process is the creation of a 'Country Report', detailing where and how the EU can deepen relationships with the partner country. Action Plans are then drawn up to provide a detailed map for reform and cooperation. These plans aim to improve political dialogue between the EU and the partner nation in many areas, including trade, market reform, justice and home affairs. The plans also seek to include neighbouring countries in European initiatives in areas such as transport or energy regulation. Both the EU and representatives of the partner nation must approve these action plans before they can be implemented.

Part of the ENP involves the EU providing financial assistance to partner nations to support, and act as an incentive for, reform. These funds are distributed through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which provide external aid tailored to each country's Action Plan. There are also additional funds for the promotion of democracy and human rights.

In a separate arrangement, Russia has a 'strategic partnership' with the EU, having signed an Association Agreement in 1994. Despite disruption in early 2008 when Lithuania vetoed negotiations, this has led to greater cooperation between the EU and Russia in areas of trade, justice and home affairs, external security and research. And, in 2010, the EU and Russia launched a new 'Partnership for Modernisation' to increase cooperation on the rule of law; foreign investment; and creating a greener economy.

## Facts and Figures

- ❖ The ENPI budget for 2007-13 is €12 billion.
- ❖ The ENPI has replaced two more general programmes of assistance, called TACIS (for eastern neighbours) and MEDA (for Mediterranean neighbours).

*"[ENP] is about helping our neighbours towards their own prosperity, security and stability, not by imposing reforms, but by supporting and encouraging reformers."*

Benita Ferrero-Walder, EU Commissioner for ENP, 2006

*"European Neighbourhood Policy is not a policy aimed at EU enlargement... [it is] aimed at developing closer relations between the European Union and its new neighbours to the East and South, making them benefit as much as possible from their proximity to the EU.."*

Javier Solana, High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, 2005

### Technical Terms

- ❖ **Action Plan:** negotiated with individual countries, the plans offer incentives (e.g. integration into EU networks) in return for progress on relevant reforms (e.g. political, economic, social).
- ❖ **Union for the Mediterranean:** Partnership agreement between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours to improve stability, free trade and cultural understanding. Formerly known as the Barcelona Process, before its re-launch in 2008.
- ❖ **Association Agreement:** a treaty promising tighter cooperation between the EU and an external nation in various economic, social, and political fields. Agreements can also take the form of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.
- ❖ **Eastern Partnership:** launched in May 2009 to add an 'eastern dimension' to the ENP.

### Links

- ❖ <http://www.iss.europa.eu/index.php?id=185&L=0>