

European Neighbourhood Policy

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 such countries to the south and the east by offering 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

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.

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. Further Action Plans were agreed with Egypt and Lebanon in 2007. However, EU relations with Georgia were complicated by the Georgia-Russia war in August 2008.

Negotiations on Action Plans have not yet been opened with the EU's other neighbours – Algeria, Belarus, Libya and Syria – because *Association Agreements*, which are the first steps to ENP partnership, have not yet been signed.

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. It was clearly stated by France and Germany 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 *Union for the Mediterranean* launched in 2008 and in May 2009 an *Eastern Partnership* was launched to add an "Eastern dimension" to the ENP.

How does 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 *Barcelona Process* before they can join ENP. 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' on the partner country detailing where and how the EU can deepen relationships with them. Action Plans are then drawn up which 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. They 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. 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.

Facts and Figures

- The ENPI budget for 2007-2013 is €12bn.
- The ENPI has replaced two more general programmes of assistance, called TACIS (for eastern neighbours) and MEDA (for Mediterranean neighbours).

Quotes

"[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

Association Agreement: a treaty promising tighter cooperation between the EU and an external nation in various economic, social, and political fields. Can also take the form of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

Barcelona Process: Partnership agreement between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours to improve stability, free trade and cultural understanding.

Links

- http://ec.europa.eu/comm/world/enp/welcome_en.htm
- http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2009/com09_188_en.pdf