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**NOTE**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit (Brussels, 24 November 2017)

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Delegations find attached in the Annex the Joint Declaration of the Brussels Eastern Partnership Summit, as agreed by the Summit participants on 24 November 2017 in Brussels.

## **Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit**

**Brussels, 24 November 2017**

The Heads of State or Government and the representatives of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, the representatives of the European Union and the Heads of State or Government and representatives of its Member States have met in Brussels on 24 November 2017. The President of the European Parliament and representatives of the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities of the Eastern Partnership and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly were also present at the Summit.

1. The participants of the Summit reconfirm the high importance they attach to the Eastern Partnership as a specific dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy. They reaffirm their shared commitment to this strategic and ambitious Partnership, based on common values, mutual interests and understanding, shared ownership and responsibility, differentiation, mutual accountability, which brings the Eastern European partner countries closer to the European Union. Sustained and effective reform progress is key to the continued success of the Eastern Partnership.

2. The Summit participants recommit themselves to strengthening democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as principles and norms of international law, which are at the heart of the Eastern Partnership. The European Union remains committed in its support to the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of all its partners. Full commitment, respect for and adherence to the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 OSCE Charter of Paris are fundamental to our shared vision for a peaceful and undivided Europe. The Summit participants reconfirm elements and principles embodied in past Eastern Partnership Summit Declarations and underline their firm intention to carry forward the commitments taken at previous Summits and in bilateral agreements.
3. In this context, they underline that consolidating and promoting shared values and principles they have committed to is a key priority and contributes to developing strengthened relations between the EU and partners. Bonds forged through the Eastern Partnership make the European Union and partner countries stronger together, better able to deal with common challenges. The Summit participants agree that stronger cooperation and forward looking and comprehensive political dialogue are key to addressing common challenges and achieving common goals.
4. The participants highlight the importance of strengthening state, economic and societal resilience both in the EU and the partner countries, and the role of the Eastern Partnership in this respect in the European Union's neighbourhood as also outlined in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy and the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

5. The Eastern Partnership supports delivery on the key global policy goals set by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming at well governed, more prosperous and responsible societies, and by the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The Summit participants recognise that the adverse impact of climate change is among the greatest challenges of our time which need consolidated efforts by all stakeholders. They confirm the importance of vibrant civil society and gender equality to release the full economic and social potential of their societies, improving economic development and strengthening social cohesion.
6. The Summit participants remain deeply concerned about the continued violations of principles of international law in many parts of the region. The Summit participants call for renewed efforts to promote the peaceful settlement of unresolved conflicts in the region on the basis of the principles and norms of international law. The resolution of conflicts, building trust and good neighbourly relations are essential to economic and social development and cooperation. The Summit participants welcome efforts and the EU's strengthened role in conflict resolution and confidence building in the framework or in support of existing agreed negotiating formats and processes, including through field presence, when appropriate.
7. The participants stress that the Eastern Partnership aims at building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation and is not directed against anyone. Where linkages with other partners require broader involvement and would contribute to the objectives of particular activities and the general objectives of the Eastern Partnership, cooperation on a case-by-case basis may be open to third countries. They reaffirm the sovereign right of each partner to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union.

8. The Summit participants welcome the achievements of the Eastern Partnership to date and the strengthened differentiation in bilateral relations between the EU and each of the partner countries. The scope and depth of cooperation are determined by the EU's and partners' ambitions and needs, as well as the pace and quality of reforms.
9. The Summit participants commend the full entry into force of the Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas with Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and most recently with Ukraine following the December 2016 decision by the EU Heads of State or Government.
10. In this context, the Summit participants acknowledge the European aspirations and European choice of the partners concerned, as stated in the Association Agreements. The agreements provide for accelerating political association and economic integration with the European Union. The Summit participants welcome the EU's support to their implementation. In this context, while preserving the inclusivity of the EaP, it is timely to engage the AA/DCFTA partners in joint discussions on the progress, opportunities and challenges concerning the association-related reforms, as requested by these partners, and with the aim of facilitating full implementation of the AA/DCFTAs.
11. The Summit participants welcome the signing of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Armenia in the margins of the Summit. The participants welcome good progress in the ongoing negotiations between the European Union and Azerbaijan for a new framework agreement. They appreciate that the EU's critical engagement with Belarus has become more comprehensive, including within the EU-Belarus Coordination Group, the Human Rights Dialogue and the Dialogue on Trade.

12. The Summit participants welcome the EU's continued support to the Eastern Partnership through a full and targeted use of the European Neighbourhood Instrument, including cross-border cooperation programmes, and other available financial instruments. EU financial support to its partners will be conditioned by concrete reform steps. The EU's incentive-based approach ("more-for-more") will continue to benefit those partners most engaged in reforms. The External Investment Plan provides new funding opportunities, in particular through the establishment of the European Fund for Sustainable Development, expected to efficiently mobilise significant amounts of investment.
13. The participants look forward to further increasing the dynamism and efficiency of our broadened and deepened Eastern Partnership cooperation, with a focus on concrete benefits to citizens. They recall the importance of strengthening public awareness of EU programmes contributing to this goal.
14. The participants of the Summit welcome the 20 Deliverables for 2020 delivering tangible results in a transparent and inclusive manner as well as strengthening resilience [*as presented in Annex I*]. They look forward to intensifying cooperation in the revised multilateral structure of the Eastern Partnership [*as presented in Annex II*], which will better support the political objectives pursued in the Partnership, including cooperation among the partners. They will develop a more integrated, participatory, cross-sectoral, results-oriented approach to this cooperation. Participants underline the role of Ministerial meetings in providing political guidance to engagement across a variety of sectors.

15. The Summit participants stress that good governance at all levels is key to people's confidence in their governments. Implementation of reforms in public administration and the judiciary, as well as the fight against corruption are at the basis of all other policies in this regard and essential for strengthening resilience. Participants agree that fostering human security, which also depends on the development of effective, accountable, transparent and democratic institutions, will reduce societal vulnerabilities. Cooperation and EU support in security sector reform, implementation of integrated border management, disrupting organised crime, human trafficking and smuggling, addressing irregular migration, tackling hybrid threats, countering terrorism and violent extremism, including through inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, preventing radicalisation, enhancing cybersecurity and fighting cybercrime, strengthening disaster prevention, response and crisis management will improve partner countries' ability to withstand the pressures they face. The Summit participants agreed on the importance of effective cooperation between interested partner countries and relevant EU bodies in tackling the abovementioned challenges. The Summit participants highlight the importance of enhancing, where appropriate, security dialogue and the cooperation in the area of CSDP, and welcome in this regard the partners' valuable contribution to EU missions and operations.

16. The Summit participants consider that economic and social development and support to transformation processes are at the heart of the joint pursuit of stability and resilience in the European neighbourhood. Elaborating sound economic policy and regulatory frameworks, including through leveraging efforts of the European Union and International Financial Institutions, will help create a conducive environment for the development of competitive, green, digitalised and innovation-driven economies, and for attracting investment, creating jobs, promoting inclusive sustainable growth and increased trade with the EU and among partner countries, also in view of enhancing partners' efforts towards the full use of existing Free Trade Areas. In this regard, they welcome the results of the 4<sup>th</sup> Eastern Partnership Business Forum in October 2017 in Tallinn. Furthering small and medium-sized enterprises, inter alia by facilitating their access to local-currency lending, as well as supporting increased access to high-speed broadband and progressing towards reduced roaming tariffs among the partner countries and possibly, at a later stage, with the EU will be of particular importance. In this regard, the Summit participants agree to cooperate in the area of Harmonisation of Digital Markets, in order to extend the benefits of the Digital Single Market to the partner countries.

17. Given the importance of connectivity, the participants share the view that better and safer transport links provide new opportunities for development and enable closer communication and exchanges between the European Union and the partner countries and among the partners themselves. Building upon the positive impact of Common Aviation Area Agreements with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, the Summit participants recall the importance of concluding the Common Aviation Area Agreement with Ukraine at the earliest possible date, as well as express support for a swift completion of negotiations of such agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan. They attach importance to inter-modality and interoperability of transport links, to improved connections with the TEN-T network across all transport modes and welcome the signing of High Level Understandings between the EU and partner countries defining the indicative maps on the core networks. The Summit participants recognise the importance of secure, sustainable, reliable and affordable energy for all and note the importance of security of supply and diversification of energy sources, suppliers and routes and highlight the need to act in the spirit of solidarity and inclusiveness to this end. Active cooperation of the partner countries in establishing of the European Energy Union is welcome. They are committed to bolstering energy security through interconnections and the sustainable use of energy resources, including enhanced energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, reduce dependency and bolster resilience. The participants also stress that highest international standards of nuclear safety and environmental protection must be duly respected.

The Summit participants emphasize their commitment to transition towards greener, more efficient and sustainable economies and to enhanced climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, as well as to addressing environmental challenges. Timely implementation of multilateral agreements and comprehensive reforms in these areas remain key.

18. People-to-people contacts, including through education, youth, cultural and scientific exchanges, and mobility bring societies closer together. The Summit participants welcome the effective implementation of the visa free regimes for the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. They look forward to strengthen cooperation and further progress in the area of mobility, in a secure and well-managed environment and to consider in due course the opening of visa liberalisation dialogue with Armenia, provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place, including the effective implementation of visa facilitation and readmission agreements between the Parties. The participants look forward to stronger engagement with all partners in modernising education, research and innovation systems, and improving their quality performance and competitiveness, while ensuring respect for rights already exercised of persons belonging to national minorities as enshrined in UN and Council of Europe Conventions and related protocols, non-discrimination of persons belonging to minorities and respect for diversity and fully taking into account the expertise of Council of Europe bodies when reforming these systems. Particular focus will be on supporting and empowering the young generation, as emphasised by the 3<sup>rd</sup> EaP Youth Forum in June 2017 in Warsaw, particularly, in terms of developing their skills, civic engagement and solidarity, furthering academic mobility and fostering their employability and their entrepreneurial spirit through a comprehensive youth policy framework and the youth package presented by the EU.

19. The Summit participants underline the important role that a well-functioning media environment and the freedom of speech play in a democratic, resilient and prosperous society. They recognise the need for enhanced support to independent media, media professionalism, as well as media literacy across the Eastern Partnership. They also agree on the need to further strengthen strategic communication efforts, and work to promote visibility of cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, as well as raise public awareness of and expose disinformation. In this regard, they welcome the contribution of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Partnership Media Conference in September 2017 in Kyiv.
20. The Summit participants reaffirm the importance for the Eastern Partnership of inclusive engagement of all parts of society. They are committed to strengthening equality between men and women, and promote empowerment of women, as provided for by the EU Gender Action Plan. Engagement with civil society, including through the EaP Civil Society Forum, and broadened outreach and targeted support to grassroots civil society organisations and social partners, remains an integral part of this Partnership as highlighted by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Conference in October 2017 in Tallinn. They welcome the role played by local and regional authorities through the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the EaP (CORLEAP) in advancing the objectives of the Partnership at the level of governance that is closest to the people. The Summit participants encourage closer inter-parliamentary cooperation, dialogue and promotion of exchanges within the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly, acknowledging in this context the establishment by its Bureau of the "Association Agreements ad hoc Working Group".
21. The Summit participants look forward to the next Eastern Partnership Summit meeting foreseen for 2019, where they intend to review the implementation of the Eastern Partnership deliverables and provide guidance for further strengthening the Eastern Partnership cooperation.

## Annex I – 20 Deliverables for 2020

Tangible results for our citizens are at the centre of our engagement within the Eastern Partnership. Under the four priorities agreed at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga in 2015, 20 key areas with targets for 2020 were identified. Strengthening our common resilience has guided the choice of the concrete deliverables.

The 20 Deliverables for 2020 are conceived as a working tool designed in an inclusive manner with all stakeholders. A streamlined architecture for the multilateral cooperation within the Eastern Partnership will closely and regularly monitor the implementation of the agreed deliverables in a results-oriented, comprehensive and systematic manner, ensuring common ownership and joint commitment and complementarity with bilateral priorities.

### Cross-cutting Deliverables

1. A vibrant civil society is crucial for the democratic fabric of the society, for transparent public governance, for private sector development, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, environmental protection, social innovation, mobility and people to people contacts. Civil society is an indispensable partner for the government as driver of reform and promoter of accountability. Strengthened technical expertise and management capacities of the civil society organisations, including social partners, will increase the value of the policy dialogue and results-oriented decision-making in the partner countries.

2. Gender equality and non-discrimination will allow the partner countries to take full advantage of the economic and social potential within their societies. Full outreach to the societies within the partner countries, in line with the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and anti-discrimination principles, will be furthered. The EU will support enactment of the relevant legislation and setting up and strengthening of effective equality bodies. The Women in Business programme will boost economic prospects for women entrepreneurs.
3. Strengthened, clearer and tailor-made strategic communication, including through the activities of Stratcom EAST, will lead to better understanding of the European Union among the citizens across the Eastern neighbourhood, as well as a better understanding of partner countries and the Eastern Partnership among the EU citizens. Support to media plurality and their independence in partner countries will continue to improve accountability, as well as resilience against disinformation.

#### Economic development and market opportunities

4. The growth potential of the partner countries' Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) will be unlocked through the EU4Business programme, appropriate national support programmes as well as improving the environment for functioning of the SMEs in the partner countries. Institutionalisation of public-private dialogue, support to client-oriented business support organisations and setting up of a new regional economic diplomacy network for increased trade and investment promotion in the Eastern neighbourhood will further strengthen the potential for sustainable economic growth.

5. Gaps in access to finance and financial infrastructure will be addressed to effectively achieve sustainable economic development and transformation. Deepening and broadening of capital markets will be supported, including through pilot programmes for capital market reforms. Efficient credit registries and alternative sources of financing to facilitate investment and to increase export will be supported. These reforms will encourage the increase of lending in local currency in close cooperation with International Financing Institutions.
6. New job opportunities at the local and regional levels will be supported by implementing EU programmes aimed at diversifying the economic activity and reducing disparities, especially among young citizens. The new Mayors for Economic Growth initiative will help mobilise local authorities for the implementation of smart local economic development strategies. Implementation of regional development projects, including in agriculture, will further assist towards these ends.
7. The Harmonisation of Digital Markets among the partner countries and with the EU will be fostered in the framework of the EU4Digital initiative, to eliminate existing obstacles and barriers of pan-European online services for citizens, public administrations and businesses. In this context, cooperation will focus on supporting the partner countries in strengthening the independence of national telecom regulators, harmonising spectrum allocation and roaming pricing, implementing national strategies for broadband development, cybersecurity, digital innovation, interoperable eHealth services and digital skills and piloting cross-border e-Signatures, electronic trade and Digital Transport Corridors.

8. Trade between the EU and partner countries, as well as among partner countries, will be supported, including through implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas for the three partners concerned Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In a differentiated way, the EU will continue to jointly discuss with each of the partner countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus, attractive and realistic options to strengthen mutual trade and encourage investment to reflect common interests, the reformed investment policy as regards investment protection, as well as international trade rules and trade-related international standards, including in the area of intellectual property, and contribute to the modernisation and diversification of economies.

#### Strengthening institutions and good governance

9. Rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms will be enhanced by supporting the establishment and further development of sustainable structures to prevent and fight against corruption, strengthen transparency and fight against money laundering. Effective systems of declaration of assets and of conflicts of interest with easily searchable databases, steps towards implementation of applicable international recommendations on political party funding, independence of anti-corruption bodies, development of legal framework and mechanisms for recovery and management of assets and effective tools for financial investigations will be pursued in this context.

10. Implementation of key reforms in line with European standards on independence, impartiality, efficiency and accountability of the judiciary, including setting up of relevant electronic tools, for example, for the allocation of cases following objective pre-established criteria, will be of key importance. Track record of transparent and merit-based recruitment and promotion of judges, reported disciplinary cases, improved access to justice, comprehensive and effective training of the judiciary, substantial reduction of backlog of civil and criminal cases and improved enforcement of judgements, as measured against the agreed set of indicators, will contribute to public trust in the State institutions.
11. Implementation of Public Administration Reforms in line with international principles to establish a professional, depoliticised, accountable and ethical public administration will be of key importance. National level strategies in line with international principles, improved civil service legislation, public access to information, accessible and service-oriented administrations, reinforced budget oversight and improved institutional framework for official statistics will demonstrate progress in this area. The possibility of a job-shadowing scheme for civil servants will be explored.
12. Stronger cooperation in the area of security and disaster risk management will support partners to be better prepared to respond to crises and disasters. Through support, including for capacity building for the purpose of fighting organised crime, partners will be more resilient to hybrid threats, including cyber security and mitigation of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear risks or of criminal, accidental or natural origin. Strengthening of security dialogue and practical CSDP cooperation, including enhancement of training opportunities and capacity building in the Common Security and Defence Policy/Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSDP/CFSP) area will support the contributions by the partner countries to the European civilian and military missions and operations.

## Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change

13. Progress in extending the core Trans-European Transport (TEN-T) network, including road, rail, ports and airports and inland waterways, will be actively supported following an indicative long-term investment action plan to complete the TEN-T network by 2030. Implementation of the required links on the extended core network and removing bottlenecks in the logistic chain including through enhancing efficiency of the existing transport networks will facilitate easier transport communication, thereby supporting economic exchanges. Sustainable and increased transport flows of goods will be facilitated through a greater efficiency of border crossing procedures and by reducing administrative, technical and other barriers. Improvement of road safety and steps forward on the Common Aviation Area Agreements will further strengthen transport interconnectivity.
14. Security of energy supply will be increased through enhanced gas and electricity interconnectivity among the partner countries and between them and the EU. The EU4Energy initiative will support a higher degree of efficiency and transparency of the energy markets. Continued support will be provided to the ongoing cooperation within the Energy Community, which will assist the Eastern partners in meeting their relevant commitments. In this context, modernising the Ukrainian gas transmission system and storages, making the strategic Southern Gas Corridor operational and its further extension towards Central Asia, implementing the gas interconnection Ungheni- Chişinău and Hermanowice-Bilche Volytsia, strengthening of electricity interconnection between Georgia and Armenia, as well as putting in place the conditions for the potential integration of the power systems of Ukraine and Moldova with the European grid will demonstrate joint commitment and progress in this field.

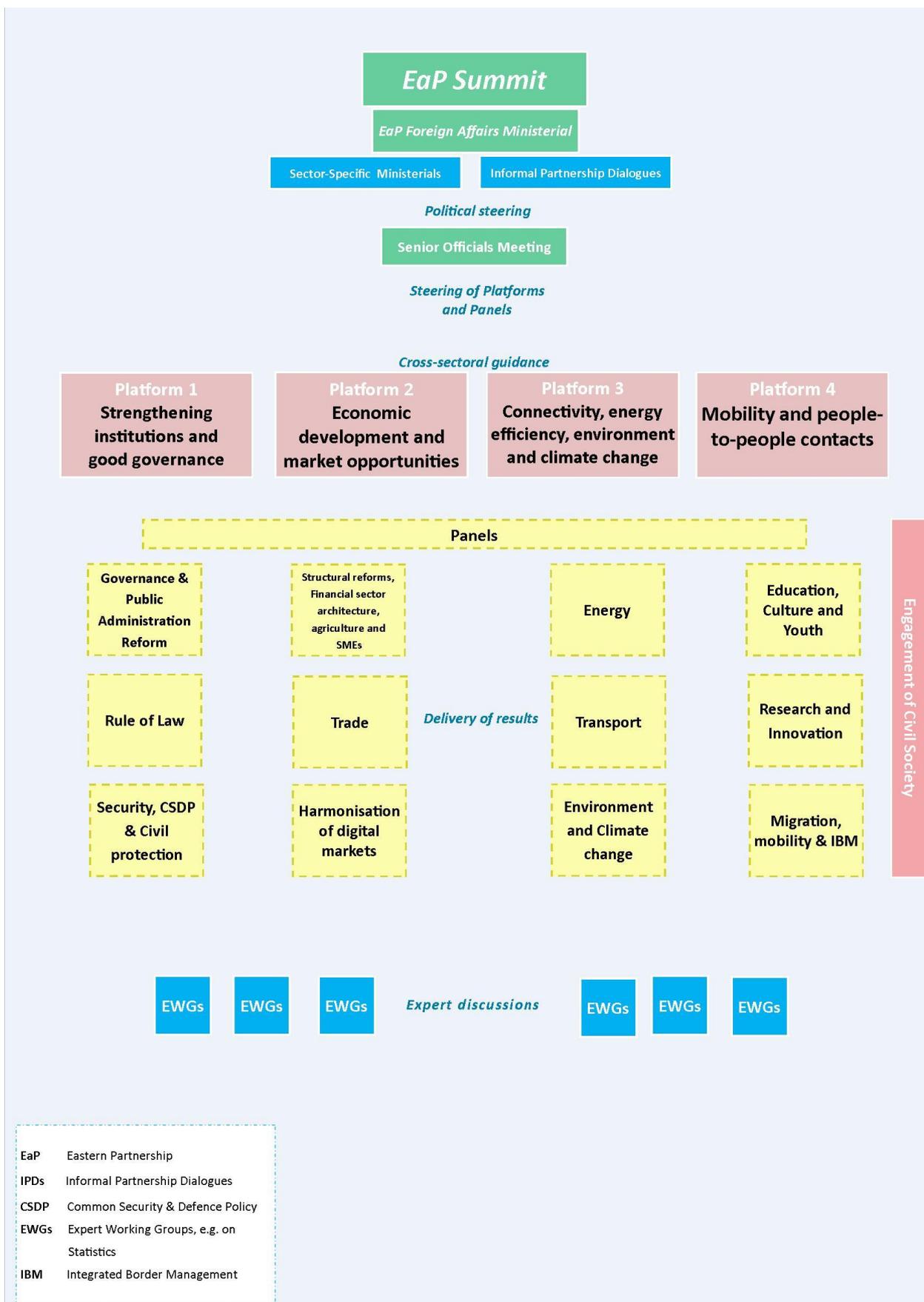
15. Decisive steps will be taken to pursue climate resilient, low carbon growth pathways, to improve energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. These steps will include implementing Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans through the Covenant of Mayors programme, supporting SMEs for sustainable efficiency, ensuring synergies between EU4Business, EU4Energy and EU4Innovation, unlocking finance for green investments, supporting the preparation of national greenhouse gas reduction strategies, as well as the establishment of national emissions monitoring, reporting and verification and further efforts in developing national adaptation policies.
  
16. Environmental protection, mitigation and adaptation to climate change will be enhanced by improving water resources management and trans-boundary cooperation, mainstreaming environmental and climate-related goals into sectoral policies, developing sound environmental governance and enhancing environmental awareness. Support to a transition to a greener and more circular economy will be ensured. Development of river basin management plans, identification of environmental risks for the Black Sea, development of legislation for strategic environmental assessments and impact assessments, improved access to environmental data and promotion of sustainable exploitation of marine living resources will be among the key steps in this area.

## Mobility and people-to-people contacts

17. Progress on mobility will be promoted through the monitoring of the continuous fulfilment of the visa liberalisation benchmarks by Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, by considering in due course, if conditions allow, the opening of a Visa Liberalisation Dialogue with Armenia and Azerbaijan respectively, provided that conditions for a well-managed and secure mobility are in place, including the effective implementation of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements between the Parties, and furthermore through the concluding of the Visa Facilitation Agreement and Readmission Agreement with Belarus. Support will continue to be provided to the implementation of the existing Mobility Partnerships i.a. with a view to improved migration management in partner countries. Implementing Integrated Border Management through a modernised network of border crossing points among the partner countries and between them and the EU Member States will facilitate mobility, while increasing security, and contribute to enhanced trade flows.
  
18. Investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability will be substantially strengthened, notably with a reinforced "Youth Package" presented by the EU under the EU4Youth initiative, which will include a new mobility scheme for young people and targeted actions through youth engagement roadmaps with a particular focus on leadership, mobility and quality of formal and non-formal education. Young people and youth workers will profit from increased opportunities of mobility under the Erasmus+ programme. The participation of partner countries to Erasmus+, Creative Europe, COSME and Horizon 2020 programs opens up new mobility opportunities for universities, administrations, businesses, professionals, cultural and audio-visual operators, young people students and researchers and contributes to developing cultural and creative industries. Reinforced cooperation in EU programmes will be supported where relevant and applicable.

19. An Eastern Partnership European School will be established, taking into consideration the activities of EU Member States, to provide high quality education to pupils from partner countries, increase their educational and employment opportunities, promote cooperation, multi-cultural understanding, tolerance, fundamental values, a better understanding of the European Union and its engagement in the region, as well as enhance language skills. A network of partner countries' universities will focus on excellence in teaching.
20. Integration of EaP and EU research and innovation systems will be promoted through a new EU4 Innovation initiative, aiming to enhance employment and career prospects of researchers, funding research and innovation on a competitive basis and fostering research-industry partnerships. Engagement will aim at full access of relevant partner countries to all Horizon 2020 funding schemes for individual researchers. Reforms of national public research and innovation systems will improve performance and competitiveness. Integration in the pan-European GEANT network that interconnects all National Research and Education Networks across Europe will further reduce digital divide.

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To ensure the efficiency of the new streamlined architecture of the Eastern Partnership and its coherence of action, under the strategic direction set by the Summit and the political steer from the ministerial meetings, the Platforms are now re-structured as cross-sectoral fora in line with the four key areas of cooperation agreed at the EaP Summit in Riga in 2015. They will serve as an interface between the Panels (where in-depth discussions will take place) and the Senior Officials Meetings (which will provide overall guidance, capture synergies and monitor the overall process). Platforms will give policy steers to the work of the Panels and report back to the Senior Officials Meetings. This EaP architecture will be operationalised through an inclusive and results-oriented process. EU and partner countries will agree a work plan and methodology focused on delivery, particularly on the 20 deliverables for 2020. The civil society, including where relevant social partners and the business community, will be fully involved in the renewed process and in realising these deliverables.

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