



International Project
co-financed by the European
Commission, EuropeAid

Fostering mutual understanding
and co-operation of the EU with Belarus,
Moldova, Russia and Ukraine 2008 - 2012

**BRIDGE RECOMMENDATIONS
TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES
AND TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF UKRAINE, MOLDOVA,
BELARUS AND RUSSIA FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF
COOPERATION**

Adopted at the BRIDGE concluding conference held on 25-26 May 2012 in Maribor,
Slovenia

BRIDGE PROJECT CONSORTIUM:

Coordinating Institution:

- ISCOMET – Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, Maribor, Slovenia

Partner Organisations:

- Association for Ethnic and Regional Studies – ASER, Chisinau, Moldova
- Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova – ASEM, Chisinau, Moldova
- Belarusian Trade-Economic University of Consumer Cooperation (BTEU), Gomel, Belarus
- Odessa National University "I.I.Mechnikov", Odessa, Ukraine
- Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Europe, Research Centre of Vishegrad Group Countries, Moscow, Russia
- Moscow State Institute of International Relations – MGIMO, Moscow, Russia
- Higher School of Economics – National Research University, Moscow, Russia
- Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration- RPANEPА, P.A. Stolypin Volga Region Academy of Public Administration, Saratov, Russia
- University Babeş-Bolyai, Faculty of European Studies, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- University of Trieste, Faculty of Political Sciences, Trieste, Italy
- European University Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder, Germany
- University of Maribor, Faculty of Law, Maribor, Slovenia
- ECERS – European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies at University of Maribor, Slovenia



This document has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of ISCOMET Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies, Maribor, Slovenia and its partner organisations and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

CONTENTS

BRIDGE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EU COOPERATION WITH BELARUS, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE IN THE COTEXT OF THE 2014-2020 FINANCIAL PERIOD	4
Appendix I - CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EU - UKRAINE COOPERATION	14
Appendix II - CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EU - MOLDOVA COOPERATION	27
Appendix III - CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE EU - BELARUS RELATIONS	38
Appendix IV - CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EU - RUSSIA COOPERATION	41
CONTACTS	62

BRIDGE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EU COOPERATION WITH BELARUS, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA AND UKRAINE IN THE COTEXT OF THE 2014-2020 FINANCIAL PERIOD

The Recommendations – the common concerning the further development of EU cooperation with all four Partner countries – and specific recommending particular thing for each of them separately - are the result of the 4 years activities within the BRIDGE project. We have organized more than 30 workshops, round tables, seminars and other discussions concerning different aspects of EU - Partner countries cooperation, and a Summer University. The topics span from politics, economy, local democracy, cross-border co-operation, migration and asylum issues, education, culture and science to democracy, human rights and protection of ethnic and religious minorities with special attention to the preparation of the new financial period 2014 - 2020.

Through BRIDGE activities we have managed to create a huge BRIDGE family composed by more than 1300 members of civil society organizations and institutions, leaders of ethnic and religious minorities, academics and students, civil servants, legal practitioners, politicians, and journalists. For the Project's audience, for instance in Belarus, has BRIDGE become a synonym for the country's relations with the EU (more about BRIDGE see on www.project-bridge.eu)

The participants of BRIDGE activities have proposed that the competent EU bodies provide the civil society organization and institutions with the possibilities to continue similar projects as BRIDGE in order to give the opportunity to the BRIDGE stakeholders from Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine to continue their endeavours for improving the cooperation with EU, the better understanding between people and cultures and the development opportunities of their countries as well.

The BRIDGE activities have been realised in political circumstances that may challenge if not even decelerate the further improvement of mutual understanding and cooperation in Europe. They could be currently identified both on the side of the EU and its Member states and in the BRIDGE Partner countries as well. The economic, social, financial and hence political difficulties, including the raise of

extremist groups and movements, with which are the EU member confronted are not at all a favourable factor for the further development of the EU relations with its Eastern Europe neighbourhood. On the other side the leaders in Belarus, Ukraine and partly also in Moldova (not to speak about the specific stand of Russia) are less eager to “integrate” with the EU than were the Central Europeans. Furthermore, the ‘pro- European’ constituencies in some East European societies are limited. There are not enough people to make the case for closer ties to Europe, or to pressure governments to undertake huge administrative, economic and also political reforms in order to facilitate “integration” with the EU without the membership perspective.

In these global political circumstances have had the BRIDGE Project actions a special mission – to help building bridges between the EU and Partner countries, which should be symbolically constructed on the principle of “unity in diversity”, removing political, psychological and material obstacles by taking into account the common and specific interests of each country as well as problems and challenges, which EU and Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine are going to face in the near future, both regarding their overwhelming development and the relations with each other as well.

The achievements of the EU neighbourhood policy are well known. Since 2008 has the EU developed a diversified scheme for its relations with the BRIDGE Partner countries and a number of programs for the improvement of cooperation with them have been realised. The BRIDGE Project participants have thus concentrated its efforts, first of all, on elaborating ideas and proposals for the future. On the basis of extensive BRIDGE Analyses of relations of EU with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia and a great number of simultaneous recommendations concerning particular issues, which were on BRIDGE agenda (see: [www.project - bridge.eu](http://www.project-bridge.eu)) we have come to some “BRIDGE conclusions of general character” that could, together with the “BRIDGE recommendations concerning particular issues” and the BRIDGE “Conclusions, proposals and recommendations for the further development of EU cooperation” with each of the Partner country contribute to the elaboration of further development of the EU cooperation with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia, also in the frame of the new financial period 2014-2020.

BRIDGE conclusions of general character

1. The so far endeavours for elaborating a new political and legal frame for cooperation have had limited results. For instance, the Associations Agreements and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) that constitutes a part of these agreements were initiated with Ukraine and the negotiations with Moldova have been reportedly progressing in positive way. This procedure could take years and could be even more complex due to the political and economic situation in some of the EU countries. The same refers to the negotiations for the new treaty with Russia. This means that the EU relations with these countries will be not for an unpredictable time regulated by legally binding instruments.

2. The EU has been unable to answer the question regarding the membership prospects of Eastern European countries or to determine clearly the goal which an integration not involving membership should seek. This gave rise to a policy of evasion, where the key strategic issues were either not mentioned or formulated in a very complicated and vague manner. The lack of membership prospects entailed both a significant reduction of financial support and an inability to make full use of the conditionality mechanisms. This made EU policy incomprehensible to both member and partner states, and also undoubtedly had a demotivating effect on both parties. The fear of the Eastern neighbours' membership aspirations also resulted in the de-Europeanization of the policy towards Eastern Europe. Clear statements as to whether the countries from this region were part of the old continent and references to the idea of a united Europe were avoided in EU documents. In this manner the EU deprived itself of an important element potentially capable of generating political will in the integration process.

3. While seeking to draw Eastern European countries closer to it, the EU was at the same time taking a defensive approach in an attempt to prevent opening itself up to the neighbour countries. It is worth noting that the EU was resisting precisely those areas where a move towards the EU was seen as especially beneficial by most partner states (for example, the introduction of a visa-free regime, access to the agricultural market, etc.).

4. The EU has been trying to compensate for a deficiency of genuine integration with its Eastern neighbours by making progress in procedural and institutional areas. This

new institutional solutions are obviously necessary for the implementation of the ENP goals in the East. However, the risk is that these instruments will become an objective per se and instead of supporting integration they will be merely imitating the process. To make imitations of the changes is the easiest way of “reforming” for authorities in some Partner countries. EU and partners might be than satisfied with the situation when one part calls for reforms and the other reports about their realization. The understanding of aims and ways of reforming is obviously different in EU and Partner countries.

5. Whereas accession to human rights and fundamental freedoms conventions and protocols moved forward, their implementation raises concerns. Serious problems persist in many countries as regards the respect for freedom of expression, particularly in the media, freedom of association and freedom of assembly, the space for civil society actors and human rights defenders remains unduly limited, the death penalty still exists in Belarus, in some countries neither the legislative framework for elections nor their conduct comply with international standards. However some otherwise fully justified actions of the EU concerning democracy, political freedoms, the rule of law and human rights in particular Eastern Europe countries might be diverted by European conservative political circles in some kind of crusade against them, especially if they will be not inserted adequately in the concept of political stability and security in Europe and into realisation of the goals of the EU neighbourhood policies as a whole in particular. Obviously democracy and the rule of law could not be imported from abroad, especially if the relevant regime treats such activities as interference in the internal affairs of one independent country.

6. The reform of public administration remains one of the significant unmet challenges for Partner countries. More has been achieved in the economic sphere, notably trade and regulatory approximation, than in the area of democratic governance. All Partner countries have, for instance, completed ratification of the 2005 UN Convention against corruption, but corruption perception indicators shows an overall change for the worse over the period. Judicial independence, effectiveness and impartiality are still in most countries a matter of concern.

7. The existing Free Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, the announced creation of the common economic space within the Euro-Asian Economic Community, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other forms of Euro-Asian cooperation represent significant challenges and opportunities for the further

development of the EU as a world power. The EU and its members are thus recommended to monitor carefully these facts and to elaborate as soon as possible a strategy of collaboration of the EU with these forms of international cooperation in its Eastern neighbourhood.

8. Some events that happened in the international politics could create obstacles on the road of European unification. Indicative were, for instance, news that the defence ministers of Belarus and Russia met in the Belarusian capital of Minsk on April 18 and underlined the need for the two countries to strengthen military cooperation in response to the qualitative intensification of NATO deployments and operations on and near their borders. Further, Russia has on 23 May 2012 launched the first transcontinental ballistic missile which “can pass thorough the defence systems of NATO”. This test was realised some days after the NATO decision in Chicago was adopted that it will activate the first phase of the anti-ballistic shield in Europe. We do hope that these facts are not the harbingers of the neo-cold war in Europe in which circumstances will be the EU neighbourhood policy without any purpose. It will be a historical fault if will Europe become (again) the hostage of world politics and balance of power.

BRIDGE recommendations concerning particular issues

1. Legal and political basis for cooperation:

- It will be commendable that the EU without delay begin the process of ratification of the Association Agreement with Ukraine, conclude in due time the negotiations with Moldova and negotiations for the new legal instrument with Russia.
- Negotiations for similar instruments regarding Belarus have not been, because of the known reasons, even initiated. We thus reiterate our proposal that the EU and Belarus initiate a dialogue - on all levels - in order to discuss the critical observations of the EU and other international organizations concerning the human rights and democracy in Belarus. The new EU “European dialogue on modernization” with the civil society and political opposition should provide an opportunity for all civil society organizations

concerned to express their views on the necessary reforms for the modernization of Belarus.

2. Economy and trade:

- In is necessary to advance the role of trade and economic integration, aimed at broadening stability and prosperity in partner countries and with this aim accelerate among other the adoption of DCFTA, which are a part of Association agreements.

3. Democracy, human rights, elimination of discrimination:

- It is necessary to assure stronger joint commitments of the EU and partners to elements indispensable to democratisation (first of all fair elections, good governance, freedom of expression and association, judicial independence, and the fight against corruption).
- In order to provide a legal basis for fighting discrimination it will be commendable that the BRIDGE partner countries adopt adequate legislation in accordance with European norms on discrimination, and ensure effective remedies for the victims of discrimination.
- The EU is invited to provide more funds for various projects, programmes and concrete actions in Eastern European countries, aimed at fighting discriminatory stereotypes and prejudices in their societies.

4. Enhancement of civil society:

- Civil society organizations and institutions should be more actively involved in the cooperation and dialogue and in the process of elaboration of all agreements between the EU and the respective Partner country. They should be included in adequate ways in the EU-Partner country preparation, supervision and implementation of activities and projects, especially in the fields where members of civil society organizations have outstanding expertise and experiences.
- At the regional level it is essential for the EU to support the contacts of civil society organizations with local authorities, aimed at developing local programs of self-organization of civil society and to encouraging the work of consultative groups of local authorities.
- The EU should support the efforts of Partner countries to build a transparent model of governance in which the civil society organizations and institutions would have an important role.

- The EU should ensure that the funds provided are allocated to concrete NGO or private companies rather than to Ministries and other governmental institutions.
- The EU should provide the post-project monitoring of relevant civil society organizations and institutions.

5. Education, science and culture:

- It is thus necessary to take into account first of all the development needs of PC educational beneficiaries in the co-operation between the EU countries and Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine in the fields of education, culture and science. The cooperation in these fields is of paramount importance for the factual participation of these countries in European integration processes regardless the fact that these countries will be for indefinite time outside the formal structure of the Union. This cooperation includes young people from PC and EU countries who are in the first place the bearers of the future Common European Space.
- There is an imperative need to insert in the new instruments for the development of the cooperation of the EU with Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine more incentives for the progressive integration of education, science and culture in the Common European Space.
- The higher education institutions in the Partner countries have to make efforts to implement – in line with the principle of respecting diversity – the Bologna and other relevant standards and guidelines without waiting the immediate breakthrough in their home countries with internal reforms. The education possibilities should be opened to all target groups, giving them opportunities for enrolment.

6. Local democracy. In the BRIDGE activities the necessity was stressed to:

- ensure the inclusion of interests of local and regional communities, as the genuine expression of democracy in these countries, in the on-going negotiations of the EU with Partner countries;
- ensure in the financial period 2014-2020 substantial means for supporting the local and regional communities in Partner countries in developing economic, environmental, infrastructural and similar projects, aimed at achieving sustainable development and improving the life of the population;

- elaborate ways and means for providing training of people involved in different bodies of local and regional democracy (through TAIEX and similar programmes) on democratic and efficient functioning of local and regional self-government;
- provide local and regional communities with legal possibilities to take part independently in cross-border cooperation.

7. Cross - border co-operation. In the BRIDGE activities the proposals were put forward to:

- elaborate further the cross-border cooperation in the future ENP and Eastern Partnership programmes as an important tool for the achievement of the aims of these policies and especially for creating an area of stability, peace, sustainable development and overwhelming social and economic progress on the EU external borders;
- increase – in accordance with the above mentioned assessment - the share of the financial means subscribed to cross-border and territorial cooperation in the next financing period 2014 – 2020;
- continue with the endeavours for diminishing the negative consequences of the Schengen border regime management and of the existing visa system, which is a serious obstacle for the people to people programmes and for the development of cross-border cooperation in particular;
- avoid the fragmentation of the EU CBC policy and the influence of historical reminiscences on the managing and execution of the programmes;
- ensure the equal position of regional and local communities from the ENP and EP partner countries respectively in the managing and decision making in the Euro-regions along the EU external border;
- explore in accordance with para. 16 of the preamble of Regulation EC No. 1082/2006 the ways and means for including the territorial entities from Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine in the revision of the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation – EGTC;
- improve a system of the EU spatial planning in order to include the border regions of Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine;
- include in the instruments of cross-border cooperation elements which will develop the ethnic identity of national minorities living on both sides of the border and thus mitigating their problems, eliminating the historical

reminiscences and creating an atmosphere of friendship among neighbouring nations;

- include in the EU Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monnet, Marie Curie, Leonardo da Vinci and research programs priorities that are important for researching issues related to the development of cross-border cooperation and to educating and training people in this regard;
- create and support the joint business info networks and institutions of innovation economy, which would serve for exchange of information, realisation of common business ideas and transfer of knowledge;
- support the creation of cross-border networks and associations of local and regional authorities and NGOs as well of the EU and EP countries and Russia;
- foster harmonization of legislation of the EU member and Partner countries concerning the realisation of ENPI CBC;
- adopt adequate measures and invest efforts for developing peaceful resolution of disputes what is a pre-condition for successful development of cross-border cooperation;
- consider and accelerate procedures for accession to the 3rd Protocol to the Madrid Convention of 2009 on establishment of European Cooperation Groupings (ECGs).

8. Visa regimes and migration. Proposals were elaborated to:

- facilitate the present procedures for obtaining visa by providing adequate consular facilities in Partner countries, simplifying the set of documents required for visa application, accepting the documents in English and not to demand their translation into languages of the EU states and by elaborate the enhanced visa regime for people involved in the Euro regions.
- enhance the visa liberalization process focusing on security of documents (adoption of adequate legal framework that would establish clear and transparent procedures of personalization, production, storage and delivery of ICAO-compliant identity documents; introduction of biometric technologies into identity documents on the basis of strict adherence to the EU standards of personal data protection; creation and maintenance of the functioning system for international information exchange (primarily with the EU Member States) concerning the stolen, lost and forged identity documents).

- foster training programmes and the transfer of know-how in countries of origin of migrants to limit as much as possible the damages of brain drain processes;
- further promote the negotiation of new mobility partnerships with third countries, focusing mainly on the sustainable development of the countries themselves;
- create a European labour market's database both managing supply and demand of skilled and unskilled workers;
- create a network of universities dealing with scientific migration and exchange of researchers with the creation of a database which should provide for all exchange and research opportunities manage the quota system also at the EU level and not only at a national/regional one.

9. New financial perspective 2014-2020:

- It would be commendable to increase in the new financial perspective 2014 – 2020 the amount spent in regions where the EU has a strong interest in stability, prosperity and political reform, and especially in the neighbourhood.
- The EU should increase the spending for foreign policy from the present 6 per cent at least to 10 per cent of the EU budget.
- It will be important to ensure coherence between the European funds (in particular ENPI, ERDF and EDF) and coordination with other sources of funding, international donors, and public and private funding that can be raised in the neighbourhood countries.

The participants of the BRIDGE concluding conference request the BRIDGE Coordinator, Prof.Dr. Silvo Devetak, to distribute these Recommendations to the European Union and its member states and to the governments of Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine.

Adopted in Maribor, Slovenia on 26 May 2012

CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE COOPERATION BETWEEN UKRAINE AND EU

1. Conclusions: For over twenty years, Ukraine is trying to get closer to membership in the European Union, which should be a sign of the Ukraine's return to Europe, recognition of its European identity and becoming an integral part of a new system of European relations. However, for the successful promotion of the Ukrainian state in the EU should have a systemic transformation of the political system and national economy, as well as to conduct reforms in all spheres of public life. Cooperation with the united Europe favoured comprehensive practical tools, consistent and effective use of which is seen as a base of stable development and implementation of European standards in order to improve the quality of life in Ukraine and bringing it closer to the level of other European countries. Among the most important tools is the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Action Plan Ukraine-EU, Eastern Partnership, Association Agenda, as well as a number of programs of technical assistance from the EU.

However, political instability, slow implementation of structural reforms in Ukraine, as well as strong pressure from external factors, especially from the Russia's side, had a negative influence on the effective promotion of Ukraine's integration with the EU. Several times the EU-Ukraine relations were on the verge of freezing because of serious internal problems with the adherence of fundamental principles of democratic development - human rights, freedom of speech, the effectiveness of reforms. On the other hand, Kiev is also criticized the approach from Brussels about the prospects and methods of integration of Ukraine into the European Union.

It is known that Ukraine refuses to act as passive executor of the EU requirements and offers its own conditions to promote relationship. In 2010 the EU often sent messages why the forms and instruments of convergence offered by Brussels are important for Ukraine and could give it significant advantages, hence it could have an interest for their implementation. Kyiv, for its part, stressed that it will determine the pace and methods of integration to the EU by itself. The parties put forward different requirements: the EU wants Ukraine to make the commitment and timing of reforms,

Ukraine - the obligations of EU support as a prerequisite for their implementation and evidence of readiness to move to larger forms of convergence in the near future. Sometimes this leads to a political dissonance and conceptual uncertainties that partly offset by the political will of the parties to move forward as well as by awareness of the fact that there is no other realistic alternative.

As for the internal development of Ukraine, the level of bilateral dialogue has not only remained the focal point of its agenda, but also became the object of increased attention from European institutions. On the one hand it is quite logical and justified because of internal change - a key condition for integration to the EU. On the other - the inconsistency and ambiguity of internal political processes in Ukraine sometimes leads to the review of the previously formed and steady-stated basic European values and their implementation in Ukraine.

Among various aspects of the internal development of Ukraine the most important in its dialogue with the EU are the three groups of issues:

- firstly, the question of the proper quality of governance related to capacity of the political system in general and the functioning of the Ukrainian administrative system in particular,
- secondly, the regulation of practical priority areas of public life, especially the economy and energy, and
- thirdly, the issue of guaranteeing basic democratic rights and freedoms.

Before the present administration's time the EU officials have made the main focus on the issues of first and second groups. Europeans have believed that the implementation of reforms in Ukraine is hampered by an acute political competition within the main powers, caused by insufficient balance between the constitutional mechanism of separation of powers and the weakness of the administrative system.

With the formation of a new government and a pro-governmental parliamentary majority the primary obstacles to reform were allegedly removed. That is why Brussels begins to stimulate new Ukrainian leadership to the implementation of urgent reforms in the most problematic levels of regulation of the economy, noting along with the need to further improve the constitutional order, but without making primary focus on this. Return to the Constitution of 1996, changing the electoral law and the specificity of elections to local authorities along with other exciting displays in public authorities led to a further update on the first and third groups. However, this

does not mean that they have become the determining factor, able to set the overall dynamics of the relationship.

The EU sees the primary task to establish effective and transparent rules regulating economic processes in Ukraine in accordance with EU norms and standards and the establishment of an effective administrative system, while factors related to the immediate political situation in the country and guarantee democratic freedoms considered important, but additional in the process to produce general line in relations with Ukraine. The Ukrainian government is trying to develop their tactics in dealing with the European institutions in accordance with this hierarchy of priorities, which is selective and superficial Europeanization: the presentation of large-scale initiatives to reform in areas that are priorities for the EU (often without immediate implementation), which could neutralize controversial status in other areas of relations.

In response, Brussels is trying to influence the Ukrainian authorities on the one hand, putting pressure towards speeding up the pace and scope of systemic reforms in the country and on the other - giving in its opinion serious incentives by additional funds, the possibility of obtaining new loans or the prospects of transition to a higher level of interaction. But at the same the EU policy towards Ukraine is hardly consistent: at this stage, the EU has few levers and incentives to encourage the Ukrainian authorities to such a reform. Moreover, the EU Member States - and the EU institutions - have difficulties for developing such mechanisms that will increase the motivation of Eastern Europe to conduct internal reforms and at the same time meet their own pragmatic interests of the community members.

Therefore, dialogue on internal development, which, by design, has become the driving force of "soft integration" of the Eastern European states, primarily Ukraine, to the European integration association do not correspond to that function yet through the logic of their political bargaining. At the level of stimulation of internal reforms there is a need to recognize that order and directions of the reforms outlined as in the basic documents of cooperation between Ukraine - EU in recent years (Action Plan under the ENP, Association Agenda) and in the documents in the current dialogue ("matrix Füle") have not become nationwide program of modernization of the country, as some European leaders had hoped. Sometimes this situation is associated with a lack of sufficiently effective incentives from the European Union, but its main root is

caused by the nature of domestic political processes in Ukraine and especially management decisions of the Ukrainian state.

Today, relations between Ukraine and the EU are once again in a very difficult situation, as the Commissar S. Füle has mentioned – “at the crucial point” through the trials of former political leaders, which were seen in Europe as a struggle with the opposition. At the same time, the parties are not ready to abandon cooperation and stress out its importance for all participants. Particular attention is paid now to the future signing of a fundamentally new document between Ukraine and the EU - Association Agreement, which, according to the expectations of the parties, should be the most effective instrument of the EU influence on the internal transformation of Ukraine. On the other hand, this document will become a real strategy of cooperation only if the Ukrainian government uses it as a priority national program of action.

In this context, we should pay attention to the fact that the specificity of political life in Ukraine leads to dominance of internal level factors in decision-making, among which European integration appears quite arbitrary. The EU is not an influential member in the internal debate in Ukraine has no self-evident role in the positioning of media space and is not an active actor of the economic system. Moreover, the scope and activities, which Brussels emphasize, not always meet the priority of Ukrainian reforms. Under these conditions, any external impetuses remain in the background and have not the desired transformative effect. There are two ways for ameliorating this situation: first, transforming the EU into an active actor in Ukrainian domestic politics, and secondly, changing the nature and specifics of Ukrainian politics as such.

2. General recommendations: Ukraine faces a number of important tasks in relations with the European Union in the near future:

- On bilateral level - finally fix the basic parameters of political relationship, offer their own vision of the nature, components and specific content of political association with the EU, identify areas and ways and tools to strengthen their own involvement in European integration processes and decision-making on priority issues; develop their own ideas about how to develop relations with the EU - Ukraine after the Association Agreement.
- At the level of domestic support - develop the necessary set of means to get the EU support to internal reforms in Ukraine, strengthen the importance of

European integration as a factor in the adoption of internal decisions, review the tactics of “selective Europeanization” toward systemic implementation of necessary reforms and convergence of European integration community.

- On the geopolitical level - to promote and build on existing and new formats of political dialogue, effective mechanisms to coordinate political strategies for issues of common interest; as close as possible to join the process of elaboration of the new instruments of the European Neighbourhood Policy, to encourage the EU to establish effective instruments for regulation common European processes with attraction of all leading actors.
- The European perspective of Ukraine is linked to the necessity to build European mentality and decent level of life within the country. This process is as important as the aim in itself and will contribute to the development of a clear European strategy. The real realization of European values and standards in Ukraine are more important than the formal framework of relationship with the EU.

Taking into consideration all mentioned challenges and the importance to promote Ukraine to the EU, primarily to the public, the EU and Ukraine have to continue a constructive dialogue based on the in continuation elaborated recommendations of BRIDGE experts.

2.1. Particular recommendations to Ukrainian authorities.

Political dimension:

- to create a European perspective of Ukraine through building a European mentality and a decent level of life in the country;
- to develop especially through mass media the image of Ukraine as an integral part of Europe and its European identity;
- to work out and implement the National program of the implementation of the (future) Association Agreement, and to adopt in particular the system of monitoring of its implementation;
- to elaborate a clear European strategy and to enhance the legislative basis of the European integration;
- to establish a more efficient mechanism of European integration with the creation of the system involving the coordination body and respective departments of the central agencies of executive power;

- to put into effect successful structural reforms of state-building at all levels and spheres;
- to expand the links with the states of Central and Eastern Europe in exchanging the European integration experiences and monitoring the process of reforms;

2.2. Recommendations for improving the situation in Ukraine on different fields, what will have a positive impact on the cooperation between EU and Ukraine.

Democracy, freedoms, human rights and security:

- to improve the existent courses and introduce new programs of civic education on all levels of education with the aim to educate children as citizens who are aware that democracy is a corner stone of stable and prosperous societies and of their human rights and freedoms as well;
- to adopt in the field of public order and security a comprehensive strategy to fight organized crime, a law on anticorruption legislation and a law on establishment of a single and independent anti-corruption agency;
- to adopt a national strategy for the prevention and fighting of money laundering and financing of terrorism;
- to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, to ratify relevant UN and Council of Europe instruments in the fight against discrimination;
- to strengthen human rights' enforcement mechanisms, to work for a greater accountability of state bodies in implementing the human rights' protection mechanisms and state-building;
- to ensure effective implementation and application of legislation, to provide an efficient constitutional control over the human rights' mechanisms;
- to ensure the effective implementation of ECHR decisions.

Enhancing of civil society:

- to build up a transparent model of governance ensuring then role of civil society organizations and institutions;
- to support the Ukrainian non-governmental organizations in developing contacts with local authorities in the context of European integration policy:

Protection of ethnic and religious minorities:

- to promote further an overarching and tolerant national identity with the emphasis on inclusive approach to citizenship;

- to provide for a necessary institutionalization of relationship between the central authorities and minorities in Ukraine, to create an institutional channel of communication between both (in place of abolished State committee of nationalities);
- to enhance minorities' self-governance and participation in public life;
- to develop specific educational programs concerning the history, culture, languages of minorities on all levels of educational system;
- to support the Ukrainian non-governmental organizations working in the field of minorities' protection;
- not use language as a political instrument of division within the societies and between the states;

Local democracy and cross-border cooperation:

- to create appropriate conditions for solving socioeconomic differences by regional development in Ukraine, the decentralization of administrative and fiscal relations, and by improving the regional economic structure;
- to enhance legislative basis for the functioning of efficient local and regional self-government, to clear-cut competencies and responsibilities, and to ensure adequate instruments and financial resources for achieving of these goals;
- to propagate the benefits of local democracy and self-government for the amelioration of living conditions of population, to raise public awareness on this issue by adopting adequate policies and instruments for their realisation, and to ensure the support of activities of civil society organizations and institutions within the local self-government;
- to avoid the extreme politicisation of the local self-government functioning and decision making in particular;
- to ensure the democratic and transparent execution of local self-government among other through the functioning of assemblies, councils and by direct participation of people in referenda, public hearings and similar forms of democratic engagement;
- to increase the regional component of the EU-Ukraine cooperation, stimulating self-organization of the population;
- to provide local and regional communities with legal possibilities to take part independently in cross-border cooperation and to ensure that local and

regional communities can without obstacles use the EU funds for realisation of projects that are important for the life of population;

- to provide adequate and transparent financing of cross-border cooperation and inter-regional cooperation;
- to adopt adequate programmes for training of people who are involved in the functioning of local communities with the aim of improving their knowledge, skills and capacity concerning exercising competences, effective organisation and decision making in one democratic local community;
- to adhere to the European instruments on regional and local authorities and on their international cooperation, and to implement all undertaken international obligations of Ukraine in the context of harmonization of political and public administration.

Education:

- to ensure the creation of the single educational space with the EU by strengthening the potential of the Ukrainian educational establishments, and by increasing the demands for the preparation of the high-level specialists;
- to continue to implement Bologna standards in education in cooperation with the universities from the EU states
- to promote programs of student and academic exchange between Ukraine and the EU through TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus projects, etc. in order to increase students mobility on a reciprocal basis between the Ukrainian and European universities.
- to continue to develop projects in the field of standardization of credit-modular system and the system of issuing joint degrees between the Ukrainian and European universities
- to promote effective dialogue between civil society, student self-governance structures, universities and Ministry of Education on the issue of development of legislative basis for higher education. Ministry of Education should be encouraged to engage civil society into this process.
- to encourage more active involvement of postgraduate students to the scientific and research exchange programs to overcome the situation when academic ranks are assigned on the basis of meeting formal conditions; to create conditions when scientists can realize their own research and obtain practical research skills.

Migration:

- to adopt policy measures for implementing the existing programme of State Border Development till 2015, including a legal framework for the cooperation of Border Guard Service with other agencies involved in border management;
- to establish a mechanism for the monitoring of migration flows and defining a regularly updated migration profile.

Visa liberalization:

- to enhance the visa liberalization process focusing on security of documents (adoption of adequate legal framework that would establish clear and transparent procedures of personalization, production, storage and delivery of ICAO-compliant identity documents; introduction of biometric technologies into identity documents on the basis of strict adherence to the EU standards of personal data protection; creation and maintenance of the functioning system for international information exchange, primarily with the EU Member States, concerning the stolen, lost and forged identity documents);
- to encourage the civil society to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalization.

Transnistria problem:

- to offer to the EU and Moldova new approach to the Transnistria settlement through enhancing social, economic and other contacts and carrying into practice joint programmes and projects of parties involved in the conflict;
- to offer to the EU to set up a joint Ukrainian-Moldavian-European peace-building mission or to consider other forms of international non-military peace-building mission at the conflict territory for cooperation on soft security issues (transport and transit security, energy security, migration, illegal trade).

3. Recommendations to the EU institutions.**Political dimensions:**

- the EU should not freeze contacts with Ukraine under the pretext of the anti-democratic practice of Ukrainian political leadership.

Enhancing civil society:

- to develop an appropriate forms of dialogue also with civil society and promote their active role in the European integration of Ukraine;
- to consider the following proposals to enhance the civil society of Ukraine:

- to facilitate the transparent allocation of the technical aid and its smooth distribution;
 - to ensure that the funds provided are allocated to concrete NGO or private companies rather than to Ministries and other governmental institutions;
 - to let the partner-countries develop the list of priorities by themselves;
 - to provide for post-project monitoring;
 - to make this cooperation more well-structured and functional.
- to assist the efforts of Ukraine to build a transparent model of governance, providing also the relevant programs and projects for the civil society bodies in order to influence state agents to contribute to the popularization of European ideas;
 - to facilitate the access of civil society to European programs and to take into consideration the priorities of local organizations in the implementation of regional projects;
 - to support the Ukrainian non-governmental organizations and associations to develop cooperation with the NGOs in the EU member-states and contacts with local authorities in these countries, in the context of European integration policy;
 - to support the non-governmental organizations and associations in the EU member-states to sustain a permanent dialogue with the representatives of civil society in Ukraine.

Regions and local communities:

- to increase the regional component of the EU-Ukraine cooperation and to encourage the role of regions in the European integration of Ukraine;
- to include the needs of local and regional communities in Ukraine as the genuine expression of democracy in these countries into the revised ENP and Eastern Partnership programs in particular, to elaborate adequate instruments for its realisation and to provide in the financial period 2014-2020 substantial means for the achievement of these goals;
- to elaborate the opportunities – similar to those emanating from the functioning of European structural funds - for local and regional communities for developing economic, environmental, infrastructural and similar projects, aimed at achieving sustainable development and improving the life of the population;

- to ensure the equal position of regional and local communities from the ENP and EP partner countries respectively in the managing and decision making in the Euro regions along the EU external border and to adopt adequate measures and invest efforts for enforcing peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with the potential of existing EU-rules on mediation in disputes, which is a pre-condition for successful development of cross-border cooperation;
- to elaborate ways and means for providing training of people involved in different bodies of local and regional democracy (through TAIEX and similar programmes) on democratic and efficient functioning of local and regional self-government;
- to support contacts of civil society organizations with local authorities, the development of local programs of self-organization of civil society and the encouragement of the work of consultative groups of local authorities.

Cross-border cooperation and border management:

- to improve the mechanisms for transparent and accountable functioning of the existing structure aimed at developing cross-border cooperation along the EU external frontiers and to provide adequate financial sources for efficient realisation of this cooperation;
- to include in the instruments of cross-border cooperation elements which will develop the ethnic identity of national minorities living on both sides of the border and thus mitigating their problems, eliminating the historical reminiscences and creating an atmosphere of friendship among neighbouring nations;
- to support the creation of cross-border networks and associations of local and regional authorities and NGOs as well of the EU and EP countries.

National minorities:

- to put greater emphasis on the issue of minorities' protection in the framework of EU-Ukraine cooperation;
- to support the non-governmental organizations and associations in the EU member-states to sustain a permanent dialogue with the representatives of national minorities in Ukraine.

Visa regime:

- to continue, before the adoption of final solutions, the endeavours for diminishing the negative consequences of the Schengen border regime management and of the existing visa system, which is a serious obstacle for the people to people programmes and for the development of cross-border cooperation in particular;
- to undertake the real facilitation of visa regime especially by providing Ukraine with more consular representations, simplifying the set of documents required for visa application, accepting the documents in English and not to demand their translation into languages of the EU states, and by elaborating an enhanced visa regime for members of the Euroregions;
- to ensure the internal harmonization of the Visa Code in practice by making the necessary legislative changes and additional regulations in order to overcome the lack of necessary regulatory norms which concern the use of multiple and long term Schengen visas;
- to encourage the activity of civil society organizations in EU member-states to attract attention to the deficiencies of the Visa Code.

Education, science, culture:

- to include in the EU Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monnet, Marie Curie, Leonardo da Vinci and research programs priorities that are important for education and training of people and for researching issues related to the development of ENP and EP respectively and CBC in particular;
- to increase the amount of project work with Ukrainian classical universities and independent non-governmental organizations working in the field of science and education;
- to broaden the use of ECTS system and credit accumulation practice to summer/winter schools and other specific types of academic activity without the demand to undergo full accreditation process for academic program as it is required now, the same as for Bachelor or Master program.

Business and transfer of knowledge:

- to create and support the joint business info networks and institutions of innovation economy, which would serve for exchange of information, realisation of common business ideas and transfer of knowledge;
- to promote the activities of independent associations of small and medium enterprises in terms of opportunities to use existing legal mechanisms in

Ukraine to adhere to the practice of antimonopoly and European standards of fair competition, consumer protection;

- to facilitate regular dialogue of European business associations with Ukrainian independent expert and business groups to explain the available opportunities for investment and doing business in Ukraine.

Migration:

- the European Commission should cooperate with independent experts on the migration issues in order to review the understanding of migration challenges from Ukraine.

Transnistria conflict:

- to strengthen the provisions on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in the instruments and programs of cooperation between the EU, Ukraine and Moldova, particularly in areas of strengthening economic ties between Moldova and Transnistria, implementing joint economic, social and humanitarian projects, infrastructure and communication systems;
- to give guarantees to the public and the leadership of Transnistria as for the respect of their interests and rights, especially in the context of anti-Romanian sentiments on the left Dniester bank;
- to encourage Romania to conclude the demarcation of state border with Moldova;
- to support the gradual internationalization of the peace-building forces in Transnistria.

CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF EU - REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA COOPERATION

On the basis of the Bridge Country *Analysis* as well as the four-year term experience of the project, we conclude that the Republic of Moldova is already in the process of integration into the European Union with accordance to the initial logic of the European Union formation, i.e. economic and socio-cultural integration proceeds political one, and political acts facilitate the process. Such a reasonable and natural logic contributes to the consolidation of both the European Union and the Republic of Moldova.

The actual EU relations with Moldova could be symbolized as a rainbow of plenty of commitments, the realization of which will take time. Negotiations on the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), Visa Liberalization and a comprehensive programme of approximation to the EU acquis have been progressing at a very good pace. In 2011, Moldova was appreciated as a leader in reforms within the Eastern Partnership. The country has cooperated closely with the EU on regional and international issues, and aligned itself with 38 of the 44 EU CFSP declarations open for alignment. The Progress was made in Visa Liberalization Dialogue: 42 documents from 44 of the First phase of Negotiations have already been successfully negotiated and agreed upon within 2010-2011 rounds.

The complex issues regarding regional security have got some progress in movement in 2011 – first half of 2012. Few remaining disagreements over the demarcation of the northern and southern segments of the common border between Moldova and Ukraine have been processing due to the fruitful assistance of the EUBAM.

Moldovan and the new-elected Transnistrian authorities start contributing to the EU sponsored confidence-building projects, and reactivated their bilateral sectorial working groups. The EUBAM contributes also to the confidence-building process through its activities and reports. We are honoured with any further progress

regarding Transnistria as were proposals of these kinds in the contents of the BRIDGE conference, held in 2009 at the Taras Shevchenko University in Tiraspol.

As to democracy, the EU reported that Moldova managed to make progress towards compliance with democratic principles, the justice system was improved and the rule of law was strengthened, the situation with regard to freedom of expression, media pluralism and the exercise of the freedom of association and freedom of religion improved.

Moldova is successfully introducing the Bologna process objectives in the high education. Higher education reform continued to benefit from participation in Tempus, Erasmus Mundus Jean Monnet etc. The Moldovan cultural organizations participated in the ENP Special Action under the Culture Programme. The Republic of Moldova associated to the FP7 Program of the EU and is active in developing the joint research and innovation activities, having good potential for this.

Having bearded in mind these and other achievements, we are putting forward the following recommendations, addressing them to the Moldovan authorities, the EU and its member states in order to develop further the EU-RM cooperation for mutual benefit.

Recommendation of General Character addressed to both the Moldovan authorities and the EU structures: Keeping up the dynamics in negotiations of the Association Agreement, in reforms and problem- solving in different fields, to move further *gradually*, on the well - thought basis, to get not negative but positive synergy effect of the integration.

Recommendations specified in fields

1. Democracy, justice, rule of law:

To the EU and the Moldovan authorities

to join further the EU-RM efforts for the development of democracy, reforming the system of Justice and Strengthening the Rule of Law, undertaking more sustained efforts concerning the fight against corruption, and respect for fundamental human rights to decent and secure life, education, health etc.

2. Regional cooperation and local communities: A special attention is due to be paid to signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Regional and Innovation Policies which will allow the better use of mutual EU-RM potential through the

integration of the regional innovation networks, development of Euro zones and will boost the development of regions in Moldova. We welcome and support a National Strategy for Regional Development and the establishment of the National Coordination Council for Regional Development as well as the EU-Moldova declaration with the work plan for its realization and propose the following in this regard:

- to consolidate the efforts of the central authorities in the realization of the aims of the governmental program “European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Welfare – 2011-2014”, regarding decentralization of power and development of local autonomy – which is one of the five strategic priorities – and especially regarding the implementation of the National Strategy on Decentralization (fiscal and financial decentralization, increasing the capacity to co-finance projects etc.);
- to involve institutionally local and regional authorities` associations (LRA) in the negotiations within the future Association Agreement between Moldova and EU, including the examination of the possibilities of the LRA from Moldova to participate in the associations of the LRA in the UE as members or observers;
- to strengthen the cooperation (exchange of experience, including the signing of the twinning agreements; participation in common projects and programs) between the central authorities of Moldova and the EU’s which are responsible for regional development, cross-border cooperation, for the relations in the framework of Euro-regions;
- to support by central authorities and civil society in general the ensuring of transparent administration close to the real needs of citizens, compliance with legislation and the institutional development of LRA and the absorption of European funds on projects with local impact as well.

3. Reforms in economy:

To the EU and the Moldovan authorities

- to harmonize the Sanitary and Phytosanitary standards, in the context of preparation for the DCFTA, and to establish the EU-RM joint centralized laboratories for both Moldovan exporters to the EU and the EU importers to Moldova so that they would not be the subject of double check and payment.

The laboratories should be equipped with everything necessary for the analysis of the highest quality and trust, the standards being the same for both sides. The expenses for maintenance of the laboratories should be taken by both sides, at the extent possible;

- to encourage eco agro producers in their business and in both their export to the EU and in their trading at the domestic market;
- to revise the policy of loans giving and taking for using them mostly in favour of the development of *production* sphere, especially supporting and facilitating the joint small and medium enterprises which focus on high technologies of post-industrial society (biotechnology, nanotechnology etc.);
- to support and facilitate the development of spin-off and start-up companies within specialized programs;
- to facilitate linkage of the high-tech SMEs with the universities and Academy of Science, using the potential of the FP7 association in the full extent;
- to adopt a Law on Intellectual Property Rights Protection as an integrated, organic law, which, on the one hand, will integrate the laws in domain previously adopted on various aspects of intellectual property rights, on the other hand, becomes organic in new Moldovan legislation harmonized with the EU *aquis communautaire*.

To the Moldovan authorities

To elaborate the system of adequate measure for increasing competitiveness of Moldovan producers at local market with respect to future EU competitors in the context of the DCFTA

4. Employment, social policy:

Addressing the Moldovan government

- to promote viable economic policies oriented to increase employment, eradicating long-term unemployment, especially among young people and other categories of persons excluded;
- to implement on the widespread level flexible forms of employment in order to ensure equilibrium in the labour market;
- to improve the measures for integration in the labour market of disabled persons or persons released from prisons;

- to expand public works, which are paid as a temporary measure to protect the unemployed individuals;
- to apply measures for ensuring sustainability of rural incomes, diversification activities in rural areas, and efficiency measures for supporting small business in rural areas;
- to develop and implement an effective education and training in order to maintain and develop the existing human capital and to apply the most wide the possible career planning activities especially for young people with a low level of training;
- to adjust the existing legal framework to the new values of social policies;
- to decentralize social services, enlarge the involvement of civil society in dealing with problems of social services and to overcome social exclusion, and to implement measures which would improve social welfare in disadvantaged areas;
- to diversify continuously the social services aimed at individuals identified as socially and economically excluded people, giving them an inclusive content;
- to elaborate a scale for communalities payments in cooperation with the Centre of Consumer Protection and other competent representatives of the civil society. The scale has to be based on the sum paid for communalities as an interest of total family income (apart from the minimum of existence per each family member). As a sample, it is recommended to consider the Law on Consumer Protection of Germany.

5. Enhancement of the civil society:

Addressing the European Commission and the government of Moldova

- to strengthen the attention to the Moldovan civil society organizations in the EU-Moldova Association Agreement that is under preparation;
- to add to the Association Agreements a clause defining the legal conditions to facilitate the effective functioning and independence of civil society organizations (modalities of registration, taxation, co-operation with foreign entities). These particular legal conditions should be specified in a separate document summing up requirements for legislative changes to be made at the national level by Partner countries.

Addressing the government of Moldova

- to continue and enlarge consultations with the relevant non-governmental organizations and institutions on the preparation of agreements on the EU – Moldova relations, and inform them promptly on the on-going activities concerning the implementation of the EU – Moldova cooperation;
- to include the relevant civil society organizations and institutions in the preparation of particular EU-Moldova projects, especially those, where the civil society members have recognized for their expertise and experiences.

Addressing the EU:

- to elaborate an agenda and action plan for the establishment of a Civil Society Facility and of an European Endowment for Democracy;
- ensure the participation of civil society organizations in preparations of regular Eastern Partnership summits, intergovernmental platform meetings and ministerial meetings, and in courses of drafting specific programme modalities as well;

6. Non-discrimination, national minorities, ethnic territorial autonomy:

To the Moldovan government

- At present, Moldova discusses in the Parliament the draft of the Law on Non-discrimination with the purpose of its adoption. It is recommended to accelerate the process.

To increase the protection of national minorities, it is recommended

- to ensure the effective implementation and application of the adopted legislation regulating the status and rights of national minorities and improve and up-date these norms, also in accordance with the obligations of Moldova emanating from the relevant international instruments, first of all from the CoE Framework convention on the rights of national minorities;
- to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms prohibiting all forms of discrimination;
- to elaborate and carry out special programs of learning minority languages by the majority population, and the state language by national minorities, with the intention of strengthening the “unity in diversity” of the Republic of Moldova;
- to pay special attention to the problems of Roma population, among other by adopting adequate measures for reducing the negative stereotypes of the

majority population towards Roma and for improving their educational opportunities and socio-economic conditions (health, housing, employment, etc.), having in mind, of course, the general socio-economic situation in Moldova;

- to get familiar with experiences abroad concerning the ethnic data collection and to elaborate on this basis their own procedure; these data would be of help for the consideration of ethnic issues in Moldova;
- to encourage further development of cooperation of Moldova with Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and other countries on cultural, linguistic, economic and other fields what will be to the benefit of ethnic communities living in Moldova and the Moldovan minority living in Ukraine as well.

Addressing the EU

- to consider the establishing of new programs and financial lines, aimed at increasing the opportunities for developing projects, which will contribute to the further development of inter-ethnic relations and national minority protection, and thus to the political stability and unity of the Republic of Moldova.

Recommendations concerning the ethnic territorial autonomy of Gagauzia

We are convinced that it should be of particular importance to care for a positive political attitude of the Moldovan political structure towards the ethnic territorial autonomy of Gagauzia, which has been an important achievement of the Moldovan democracy after the independence in 1991. It is thus of paramount importance to develop further this autonomy. Thus are proposing:

- to organize a dialogue between the autonomous authorities and the central government in order to clarify the division of competences in general, and the well-defined competences of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia in relation to the central government in particular;
- to provide the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia with legal possibilities for developing territorial cross – border cooperation with regions and local communities in foreign countries, in order to increase its opportunities for cultural, economic and social development;
- to provide a legal basis for establishing regional political parties on the territory of Gagauzia and thus broadening the democratic political structure in that part of Moldova;

- to stimulate and finance (by the Moldovan government and the Gagauzian authorities) research and spreading of results, on national and international levels, of studies on history and culture of Gagauzians and on national minorities living on the territory of Gagauzian autonomy as well.

7. Education and culture:

For the Moldovan authorities

- to encourage University charters and consortiums in order to promote national mobility;
- to enlarge the number of credits for optional units and for internships in study plans (I-st cycle of HE);
- to start and develop an information campaign on the importance of linking Higher Education and labour market;
- to develop the opportunities and conditions for the incoming students and professors for short-mobility periods.
- to create the portal with country profile and the tendencies in domain and comprehensive data bases of artists and cultural organizations and update them in real time;
- to establish Contact Points for job and training linking and enlarging the opportunities of domestic market and abroad, including employment opportunities, coproduction, and project opportunities;
- to create a Central Recognition Unit in order to support effective and coherent recognition of study abroad periods or degrees, including also types of recognition such as formal and informal learning and locate this unit within student service functions;
- to contribute to the creation of residences for artists, including cross-border ones;

For cultural organizations: to enlarge the dialogue with the EU on mobility and funding opportunities.

For the EU:

- to establish a Code of Good Practice on Mobility with a separate part on recognition, based on universities procedures;
- to launch a common Erasmus portal that would spread the information on Mobility and on recognition issue.

- to establish a database of study programs, academic calendars and short description of the learning outcomes for different periods of study (alternatively of NQFs of concerned countries).
- to elaborate Recommendations on Procedures on Recognition procedure for Moldova;
- to stipulate a comprehensive and transparent procedures of Recognition in the Partnership Agreement;
- to increase the number of academic staff mobility – as it is the key of change - in order to change stay home mentality;
- to elaborate and implement quality assurance criteria and indicators for mobility programs;
- to ensure access for Eastern partners to the new generation programs, especially programs supporting contacts between people, such as Erasmus for all and creative Europe;
- to continue to support the Jean Monnet Initiative and increase the number of scholarships available for students from Partner countries;
- to develop a network similar to Erasmus Mundus educational program aiming at promoting cultural mobility and long life learning programs for cultural sector;
- to support the elaboration and implementation of a national culture development strategy;
- to facilitate the networking and the best practices experience between EU and Moldova cultural organizations.

8. Cross-border cooperation and Visa Liberalization

Addressing the EU organs and agencies

- to elaborate further the cross-border cooperation with Moldova within the in the ENP and EP programmes;
- to increase the share of the financial means subscribed to cross-border security and territorial cooperation in the region in the next financing period (2014-2020);
- to consider the empowerment of the EUBAM or to create similar organization for the Moldovan-Romanian border in order to further strengthen the security

on this border and to contributing to the progress in visa liberalization for Moldovan citizens;

- to continue with the endeavours for diminishing the negative consequences of the Schengen border regime management and of the existing visa system, which is a serious for the people to people programmes and for the development of cross-border cooperation in particular;
- to include in the EU Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monnet, Marie Curie, Leonardo da Vinci and research programs priorities that are important for education and training of people and for researching issues related to the development of ENP and EP respectively and CBC, in particular;
- to create and support the joint business info networks and institutions of innovation economy, which would serve for exchange of information, realization of common business ideas and transfer of knowledge;
- to adopt a “Code for Migrants”, *in the context of Visa Liberalization Dialogue*, for defending the interests of foreign migrants, including the Moldovan ones. To take it true, a coordinating mechanism has to be elaborated. It will ensure support for the EU state-members in their implementation of “General framework for Integration” in the directions as follows:
 - organization of joint events and European “modules” for facilitating the process of migration by means of training, language studies etc.;
 - participation of immigrants in all domains of social life;
 - elaboration of indicators for evaluation of achievements related to integration of immigrants.

Addressing the Moldovan government

- to ensure an equilibrated regional development through specific regional approaches in order to avoid the increase of social and economic differences, caused also by greater capability of more developed regions to use the EU funds;
- to build up an adequate legal framework – in the context of decentralization – which will provide regional/local authorities with competencies regarding CBC;
- to consider and accelerate procedures for accession to the 3rd Protocol to the Madrid Convention of 2009 on establishment of European Cooperation Groupings (ECGs);

- to strengthen the cross-border cooperation and integration with Romania and the strategic partnership with the EP countries, Russia and CIS, and the USA.

9. Transnistria:

Addressing the EU, Moldovan government and the unrecognized Transnistrian authorities

- to advance the statute of the EU within the negotiations from observer to mediator;
- to develop a democratization and demilitarization policies regarding Transnistrian region, within the trust consolidation efforts between involved parties;
- to include elements for the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict in the instruments and programs of cooperation between the EU, Ukraine and Moldova, particularly in areas of strengthening economic ties between Moldova and the unrecognized Transnistrian authorities, implementing joint economic, social and humanitarian projects, infrastructure and communication systems;
- to support the gradual internationalization of the peace-building forces in Transnistria.

CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE EU - BELARUS RELATIONS

1. Conclusions: We reiterate our conviction that the BRIDGE project has made since 2008 major contributions to the fostering of mutual understanding and cooperation with academics, civil society members, and legal practitioners, students, and civil servants, members of national minorities and religious communities in Belarus who took part in its activities. Therefore we are expressing deep concern at the present situation in the EU-Belarus relations. The attempt of isolating Belarus from EU does not contribute to good neighbourhood relations and stability in Europe. We thus urge the EU and Belarus to develop a dialogue - on all levels - in order to discuss the observations of international organizations concerning the human rights and democracy in Belarus.

The new European Union "Dialogue on modernization should provide opportunity for all the civil society organizations concerned to express their views on the necessary reforms for the modernization of Belarus. It would be commendable that the EU invites also the civil society organizations and institutions that have different opinion concerning the modernization of relations of the EU with Belarus.

The Belarus authorities should:

- Realize the reforms of electoral law and system in the way of plural democracy announced by the Belarusian leadership.
- Ameliorate the legal norms for the unhampered activities of organizations of civil societies and support the involvement of civil society in cooperation with local authorities.
- Improve adequate legal norms, which will make able local and regional communities to carry on more independently economic and other initiatives and provide citizens with the adequate opportunities in decision making processes.
- As a sign of positive political will for the beginning of political dialogue with the EU, the participants proposed to the competent Belarus authorities to

humanize further the criminal liability, including the moratorium on death penalty, in accordance with the European standards.

The EU should:

- Build up a comprehensive concept and policy concerning the role of Belarus in the European Neighbourhood policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy as well. This policy should not be based on the interests of particular member states but on a common approach of EU as a whole. The aims of the National Indicative Program 2012-2013 namely, in opinion of participants, do not meet sufficiently the necessities of EU-Belarus cooperation.
- Take into account the geopolitical situation of Belarus. Its cooperation with Russia and Kazakhstan within the Custom union and future common economic space is not in controversy with its endeavours - as a historical member of the European family of nations - to create a close cooperation with the EU in the frame of ENP and EaP respectively. The international isolation of Belarus in its relations with the EU deploys it towards tripartite integration with Russia and Kazakhstan as the only strategic orientation.
- Consider, as a matter of high priority, the realization of people to people policy declared by EU, which depends first of all on the agreements of visa liberalization and readmission. In addition the EU should diminish the visa fees and simplify the procedure of issuing visas, including the possibility of on-line procedure. Indicative is the following data: the member states issued in 2010 about 400.000 visas to the Belarus citizens and thus had from this source the income of at least 12 million Euros.
- Ensure in accordance with the Belarus priorities, the comprehensive development of cooperation in the fields of education, science and culture and the mobility of academics, scientists, and the youth and students in particular.
- Support as much as possible the development of the cross border cooperation Poland/Belarus/Ukraine, Latvia/Lithuania/Belarus and in the Baltic Sea region, and the cooperation within the existing euro-regions. The participants welcome the beginning of cross-border local traffic between Belarus and Latvia and urge the conclusion of similar agreements of Belarus with Poland and Lithuania as soon as possible.

- Support as a matter of priority the programs of cross-border and inter regional cooperation between the members of Eastern Partnership countries.
- Support the development of local and regional authorities economic and other projects undertaken in the benefit of population and creating conditions for sustainable development of local and regional communities.
- Continue the support of projects initiated by civil society organizations and institutions.

We propose to Belarus authorities and to the EU to invite a group of distinguished academic and members of civil society organizations from both sides to take part in the working group which should discuss all aspects of EU-Belarus relations and elaborate proposals and suggestions for the future. This group could become a forum for periodic discussion of these matters. The BRIDGE project, if invited, would help in realizing of this initiative.

CONCLUSIONS, PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND EU

When dealing with the “four strategic spaces”, the main dilemma was and still is: are EU and Russia strategic partners or regional competitors? We strongly opt for the first notion. The European Commission in 1995 has already underlined that “it is time that the EU and Russia recognize their historical mission as two key European powers and that in the common interest endeavour for the development of close and mutually enriched partnership, which will reflect their political, social and economic importance and their concern regarding respect of human rights without which will the cooperation remain unfulfilled and without contents”. Mr. Putin 17 years later, on 2 March 2012, confirmed that: “Russia is an inalienable and organic part of Greater Europe and European civilisation. Our citizens think of themselves as Europeans. We are by no means indifferent to developments in united Europe.”

RECOMMENDATIONS OF GENERAL CHARACTER

1. In general we proceed from the point that the potential of the strategic partnership between Russia and the EU is not fully used yet and a lot can be done to improve the situation. However, at the same time we need to stress the growing gap between *economic* and *political* spheres of cooperation being this gap the main trend in the Russia – EU relations during the last years.
2. The absence of a clear vision of future cooperation between the EU and Russia is compounded by a shared tendency to adopt broad schemes, leading to what analysts call ‘virtualization of cooperation’ or ‘formalized symbolism’, i.e. the lack of substance being hidden under rich layers of dialogue. Let us note that the Commission’s overall assessment of progress in the implementation of the common spaces is mixed. There are few breakthroughs but day-to-day business is conducted efficiently. The assessment of the Russian side is more positive.
3. Basically, the general context of the relations between two parties is determined by the following important factors:

From the Russian side:

- lack of effectiveness showed by the Russian political regime with certain negative implications for the sphere of foreign policy.
- corruption being turned into systemic phenomenon.
- over-centralization and existence of so called “power vertical”.

From the EU side:

- economic crises as a threat for unity of the Union.
- fast and large-scaled enlargement.
- the special character of the EU foreign policy formation: the intergovernmental character of EU decision-making requires significant input from the Union’s member states.

General Recommendations for Russia – EU relations:

- To form clear priorities of the both parties towards each other. On our view, the relations should be built (at least at the current stage) on the principles of functionality and practicality – this should contribute to overcome *the mismatch between cooperation and partnership on paper and interaction in real life*. The analysis of the current state of Russia – EU relations leads us to the recommendation to scale down mutual ambitions in the future.
- The EU cooperation with Russia should represent the interests of all EU members and should not be the reflection of standpoints of some of the EU member states, which views are anchored in the history.
- As a condition for building a lasting foundation for our partnership, Russia must prove that it can uphold the commitments that it has taken upon itself – first and foremost – respect for democracy and human rights (as stipulated by various acts of the Council of Europe of which Russia is a member), but also other commitments such as the ones stipulated by international law.
- It would be also important to abandon the language of mutual reproaches and accusations, in particular the issue of who needs who more: Russia needs EU more, or the EU needs Russia. This approach is completely misleading.
- We strongly opt for intensification of cooperation in the “human sphere” – putting persons in the centre of Russia – EU relations. Such an approach presupposes development of “low politics” (instead of “high politics”) with possible and rational reorientation of the EU funds and instruments towards civil society and non-commercial sectors in Russia.

- We consider as perspective the development of close cooperation between representative and legislative institutions (first of all, parliaments) of Russia, the EU and the member-states. This kind of cooperation could be a valuable contribution to the “common values component” of the EU – Russia relations.
- We also recommend continuing, intensifying and giving new impetus to cross-border cooperation, in particular cross-border personal traffic, between Russia and the neighbouring EU-members – Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Finland.

I. COMMON ECONOMIC SPACE

1. This sphere obviously represents the basis of Russia – EU relations. There is a high level of interest and commitment to the dialogues on the Russian side. Both EU and Russian industry have also been quite supportive. However, progress in implementing the objectives of this common space has been achieved only in discrete policy areas but leaves much to be desired. A number of factors – from state protectionism of the “strategic industries” to corruption in Russian businesses and institutions inhibit further advancement in EU-Russia economic and trade relations.

Some specific achievements should be enumerated – agreement on the gradual abolition of Siberian over flight payments, measures to reduce congestion on the EU-Russia border, entry into force of the EU-Russia Visa Facilitation Agreement or cooperation between Frontex and the Russian Border Guard Service. But the economic agenda has been overshadowed by geopolitical considerations. Many sectors of Russian economy are deemed strategic and therefore remain closed for European investment. However, with Russia’s membership in the WTO, there will be objective incentive towards changing this situation.

On the view of the European experts the EU fails to promote its interests and impose its values in the context of negotiations with Russia. The main reason behind that is the asymmetrical interdependence that Russia managed against EU countries by promoting and succeeding bilateral negotiations and agreements with its EU partners. *In the economic sphere, the focus of the EU-Russia relationship has been concentrated on a few areas where Russia has the comparative advantage such as energy, and where negotiations have been left to autonomous foreign policies.*

Asymmetry has been noticed in the levels of development of the various sectorial dialogues. Some directions are quite successful while the others show limited

progress (for example, pharmaceuticals). On practical issues, the main difficulty is the slow exchange of information and communication from the Russian authorities.

2. We have the following recommendations of general character concerning this common space:

- To avoid the politicization of technical issues and to follow the standard procedures in the realization of bilateral economic cooperation;
- To increase the scope of consultations between authorities and business (for the Russian side);
- To multiply the “talking grounds” and to speed up the direct access of the Russian business to the EU political and economic infrastructures;
- To decrease the level of bureaucratization (there has been a long delay in starting the work of some groups since the Russian side was not able to appoint a co-chair for a long time);
- To monitor closely the work of the subgroups. Let us mention the Aerospace subgroup: most of the cooperation between the EU and Russia on aerospace and aviation issues has taken place outside the subgroup, This subgroup has failed to lead to any fruitful cooperation and the reasons are fairly diverse: predominance of international standards as opposed to European ones, overlaps with the work of other policy sectors (research, transport) and a marked lack of interest of industry in this group. The European Commission has proposed to the Russian side that the work of the group should cease;
- To overcome the split of responsibility between different institutions (subgroup “SMEs and enterprise policy”: a complication on the Russian side is that responsibility for SME issues is split between the Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology (MIT) and the Ministry of Economic Development (MED).
- The Commission should continue to monitor the development of this Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan and of its implications for the EU-Russia customs cooperation.

3. More specific Recommendations concerning the common economic space:

3.1. Regulatory dialogue on industrial products.

Future progress in this area requires:

- Integration of policy making principles and process in the sectorial working groups, such as prioritization of the industry-specific issues and problems, elaboration of joint recommendations for the solution of the identified problems in order for the dialogue to become more operational;
- Promotion of commitment, participation and representation in the dialogue from both sides, based on identified priorities;
- Raising awareness within the sectorial stakeholders and enhancing consultation on sectorial regulatory and technical issues;
- Encouraging further participation of Russian public and private organizations in standardization institutions, initiatives and dialogues; and
- Utilization of the funding opportunities in the context of the ENPI through projects enabling the reinforcement of the institutional capacity of the Russian services and organization.

3.2. Public procurement.

The main problem of the Russian public procurement system remains the lack of transparency. Dialogue, consultation and projects on public procurement policy need to concentrate on the promotion of transparency and non-discriminatory practices, in all aspects around public procurement on both federal and regional level. To this end, dialogue can contribute to:

- The continuation of the trial for the elaboration and implementation of a modern and effective legal framework on public procurement in Russia;
- The exchange of experiences and practices on the utilization of modern tools including e-tendering and e-government routines to exchange information.
- In terms of projects, technical assistance should concentrate on the rapid diffusion of expertise on public procurement in the public sector and the global implementation of transparency in tendering rules and procedures.

3.3. Intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights.

The most recognized deficiencies of the Russian IPR protection problem include counterfeiting and goods piracy (e.g. optical discs), Internet piracy and the legislation (Civil Code).

- Dialogue and consulting are oriented towards the adequate policy fields concerning IPRs, yet this policy area needs stronger political will and support from the Russian government, given that the cost for both the private and public sectors of counterfeiting

is estimated at many millions of Euro per year.

3.4. Competition.

The competition policy area aims at the approximation of competition legislation systems and the strengthening of implementation of competition policy by the parties. In terms of legislation, Russia's new law of 2006, in which the Commission had significant input – including the incorporation of increased penalties for competition infringement in 2007 – approximates Russian legislation to EU *acquis* on competition. However, some differences still remain.

Regulatory dialogue on competition needs further to:

- Highlight the specific market structure deficiencies; Seek higher political commitment to competition policy;
- Promote discussion on formal and informal means of cooperation in investigation of cases of infringement of competition law with transnational effect;
- *Important:* Interoperate with other policy areas, such as enterprise and industrial policy, especially in the fields of the role of state or state-protected monopolies and the abolishment of barriers to market entry.
- Priority should now turn to the issues of enforcement, business transparency and structural reforms necessary for the establishment of competition in the Russian market.

3.5. Investment.

Until now, *no significant progress has been reported (!)* in the investment dialogue.

In any case, the large and increasing volume of investment capital from the EU makes investment policy a necessary and fruitful area for cooperation both in terms of technical assistance and support from the EU side, as well as on a higher political level for the improvement of framework conditions for the establishment of foreign capital in the Russian economy.

Policy dialogue in this area should take into account that:

- The current geological reserves and technological capacities are not enough to maintain the vital role of Russia's energy sector for the domestic economy and international economic relations, unless a sound energy investment policy framework enables adequate foreign and domestic investment in this sector;.

- Russia's competitiveness and sustainable growth need the expansion and the diversification of the production base for the supply of goods and services. Investment is needed both for the expansion of the energy infrastructure – in order to maintain the current level of production and respond to an ever-increasing demand – and the diversification of the production base for the supply of goods and services, in order to balance the exposition of the economy to the volatilities of the international energy prices;
- Russia's potential for attracting foreign investment is significant, given its abundant natural resources and the large and dynamic domestic market yet the insufficient policy transparency remains a serious obstacle to investment;
- The tax system needs to be considered extensively, especially as far as FDI to Russia is concerned.

3.6. Enterprise policy and economic dialogue.

The objective in this policy area is the development of an in-depth dialogue on economic reform and enterprise policy for the improvement of the framework conditions for economic actors and the enhancement of their competitiveness.

Future steps towards an in-depth and effective dialogue in enterprise policy should consider:

- Integration of policy-making principles and process in the sectorial working groups, such as prioritization of the industry-specific issues and problems, elaboration of joint recommendations for the solution of the identified problems so that this dialogue becomes more operational;
- Utilization of funding opportunities in the context of technical assistance programs through projects enhancing competitiveness of the mining sector and promotion of the creation of an early warning mechanism for metal and mining products;
- Elaboration of joint programs to promote regulatory convergence, industrial restructuring and the sustainability of the chemical sector;
- Systematic analysis, prioritization and technical support for the improvement of entrepreneurial environment and SMEs and enterprise policies.

3.7. Financial services (banking, insurance, securities), accounting/auditing and statistics.

Russia's financial system faces chronic problems related to specific deficiencies and dysfunctions of its banking system and capital market in general.

The current framework imposes additional uncertainties on foreign financial companies that operate in the country, and it does not facilitate foreign investment and entrepreneurship. *If there were more banks from the EU, investors would feel safer: they may well have done business with these banks before.* So perhaps we should consider the partial integration of the banking system, in the sense of exchange of information between banks. This would render feasible the facilitation of transactions between banks and citizens, as well as the monitoring system we mentioned. This might also act to limit to some extent the influx of Russian money into EU countries for laundering.

In view of the on-going global financial crisis, dialogue and cooperation in this area should prioritize the mechanisms for mutual cooperation in regulation and institutions that *enhance transparency and stability in the financial systems*, as well as the participation and the role of Russia in the global financial scheme.

3.8. Trade facilitation and customs

Rapid growth in trade volume between the EU and Russia has sought for immediate actions and programs to confront emergent problems and issues, as well as to facilitate the unhindered movement of goods and services and advance institutions and procedures.

Recommendations:

- Projects and actions already planned in this policy area are expected to contribute to the *improvement of customs infrastructure* as soon as they are implemented. Future actions in this area are also urged by the developments in the markets and the increasing movement of goods between the two areas;
- Problems related to customs infrastructure call for coordination with other policy areas, especially transport and regulation;
- Legal framework reforms need to be considered to improve administrative procedures and reduce costs and other burdens on cross border transactions.

3.9. Telecommunications, information society and e-business.

Recommendations:

Given the limited progress in dialogue and consultation on information and communication technologies and on information society issues, priority must be given

to progress in dialogue and to the participation of business, academia and research actors in the dialogue and consultation. *Both sides should become more actively involved* in joint projects to promote public and private sector awareness on information society and cooperate in the areas of policy development. Issues of digital property rights and internet security should also be addressed in the context of the information society dialogue.

3.10. Transport.

Further steps needed in the air transport policy area are:

- Formalization of EU-Russia aviation relations based on initially agreed principles;
- Adaptation of the current bilateral air services agreements between Russia and EU member states in order to comply with EU law.

3.11. Energy.

In fact, the respective energy monopolies in the EU states are pursuing privileged partnerships with Gazprom – negotiating one-on-one agreements and closing long-term contracts in order to secure the provision of maximum quantities of natural gas to their domestic markets – thus hindering Brussels’ efforts to avert a hostage situation, in which Russia will be holding the gun. The emergence of oil-and natural gas-producing “champions” as key states in the energy community has heightened European concerns regarding state intervention in the rules regulating the international energy market. Concerns arise from the fact that 79% of global oil production rests in the hands of state-controlled companies.

Furthermore, Russia’s reliance on strong bilateral energy relationships with European states further divides the EU and precludes the formulation of a common energy policy vis-à-vis Russia. On another level, Brussels is trying to persuade Moscow to open its market, as lack of investment in gas exploration and development, especially in the Far North and East Siberia, may result in Gazprom’s inability to meet supply targets in the next decade, while the optimum use of gas exports by the Kremlin to pressure Ukraine and to an extent Moldova clashes with the EU’s preference for their development.

Russia already controls a significant portion of natural gas exports from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, with an additional stake in Algeria and, potentially, Libya. The geopolitical headache for Europe now in a particularly unfavourable position is that now Iran and Qatar have been added to this list via the

cartel idea. North Sea reserves are reduced, and Chinese companies have established a firm foothold in African energy assets. So, we are talking about quantities vital to satisfying European needs. Given also Azerbaijan's limited capabilities, the EU's options are dwindling.

Dependencies concerning energy deliveries between Russia and Europe are, however, not at all one-sided. Europe is a secure, reliable, high-paying customer for Russia. Gazprom's sales to Europe account for 65% of the enterprise's revenues although in terms of quantity they represent only 35% of total deliveries.

No new projects (Shtokman, Yamal-LNG etc.) have been moving forward in the energy sector for some time, as the current Russian economic model does not facilitate their implementation and Gazprom capital investment in recent years has been channelled into areas other than gas production.

The rapidly growing Russian economy will increase its demand for energy, which might have delimitating effects on Russia's export possibilities, prompting it therefore also to search for additional resources – and the danger is in competition with the EU.

Foreign investment and – in some cases – Western know-how is needed if Russia is to fulfil its future obligations. All this entails interdependence, but nevertheless, the downside of the situation for Moscow is that the EU will have more leverage if the partners in Brussels can reach a consensus on a clear, cohesive stance in their dealings with Moscow. Solidarity within Europe is needed (at least in a crisis situation), but it should be followed by renewed efforts to find alternative forms of energy that are friendlier to a long-suffering environment.

Recommendations:

Progress in energy policy strongly depends on the developments in other policy areas, such as investment protection, improvement in investment climate, promotion of regulatory convergence and harmonization of standards of environmental protection. More will also depend on the evolution of the diplomacy approach. Yet dialogue should in any case continue and be intensified in order promote important issues pending for agreement such as:

- Convergence of energy strategies of the EU and Russia;
- Cooperation on the elaboration and implementation of joint energy infrastructure projects;
- Cooperation in the field of nuclear energy;

- Examination of the feasibility of the integration of electricity markets;
- Cooperation in the field of safety of the transport of energy products, including by pipeline, rail and sea;
- Launch of full-scale business dialogue of energy companies, and facilitate fair trade and transit of energy products.

3.12. Environment.

The promotion of environmental policies and initiatives in Russia, in the EU-Russia context, is a matter of high- politics and much of the progress depends on higher political level pressures on Russia's government to follow international conventions. In any case, awareness raising and the strengthening of Russian civil society play a crucial role. To this end, active dialogue and cooperation in all aspects related to the active engagement of Russia in global environmental conventions need to be actively promoted. In this context, priority should be given to promoting Russia's understanding of the long run benefits from its participation in global initiatives against climate change and for environmental protection, especially as long as environmental pollution (due to industrial waste, fossil fuels, etc.) puts in serious danger the health of the country's population.

II. COMMON SPACE ON FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

The complexity of the common space of freedom, security and justice does not allow making a generalized conclusion about the degree of progress because the findings present a rather diverse picture. Let us stress, that in negotiations over the creation of the EU-Russia common spaces, the EU initially proposed a fifth space of democracy and human rights. However, this idea was rejected by the Russian Federation. Nevertheless we are calling for further development of democracy and the rule of law in Russia. We are putting forward these issues:

1. Regulation of visa issues. In attaining the freedom objective, the entry into force of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements is seen as the most tangible achievement within this common space. *Negotiations in this area have been characterized by intense bargaining.*

2. Judiciary. On our view, the most important part is the reform of the judicial system in Russia. Indeed, the justice segment of this common space is the one that is raising most concerns, due to:

- the low effectiveness and political dependence of the Russian judicial system;
- the human rights situation in Russia and
- the futile outcomes of the EU-Russia consultations in this field.

3. Security. A key problem hampering progress in this area is a lack of common understanding of what terrorism is and who can be called a terrorist. This absence of agreed-upon definitions is a broader international problem.

There is a mismatch between repeated claims for the establishment of an EU-Russia partnership on security matters on the international scene, also in relevant international organizations, on one hand, and the sub-optimal day-to-day performance in implementing these ambitious goals.

Recommendations:

- The EU must ensure that its cooperation with Russia on combating terrorism and organized crime is based on respect for human rights and high standards of personal data protection. The EU should continue to make clear that certain forms of cooperation (e.g. operational cooperation between Europol and the Russian police) are conditional on Russia's progress in meeting these standards.
- The Human Rights Consultations with the Russian Federation should be reformed. The meeting with civil society representatives should be given more prominence and visibility. The EU must make its views on the state of democracy and human rights in the Russian Federation more audible by issuing press releases, reports, etc.
- The EU should intensify efforts to improve document security, including biometrics, as an essential measure in combating trans-border criminality.
- The EU should make better use of the member states' liaison officers stationed in the Russian Federation in order to intensify the fight against organized crime and to better identify relevant threats.
- The EU should link cooperation on visas, border management and cross-border cooperation to Russian efforts to conclude treaties on borders between Russia and Baltic states and in particular with Estonia.

- To ensure the effectiveness of EU financial assistance, including with regard to projects within the FSJ common space, the EU should take measures to increase Russian ownership (primarily by insisting on co-financing).
- EU and Russian institutions must provide accurate, comprehensive and truthful information to the public about all aspects of EU-Russia cooperation and interaction.

4. Civil society. Today social activities in Russia are understood either as the work of NGOs, (the so-called "third sector") or as a political tool of opposing the authorities. In this sense, Russia's civil society has not yet become an institution of democracy development as in the EU. At present, cooperation EU and Russia could evolve in the following formats:

- Modernization of the Russian social institutions, taking into account the European experience. We are interested in further development of cooperation with European civil society structures and the search for optimal models of such interaction.
- The European Commission and the government of Russia should make efforts to include in adequate ways Russian civil society organizations and institutions in the EU-Russia preparation, supervision and implementation of activities and especially in the fields where members of civil society organizations have outstanding expertise and experiences.
- There should be an on-going dialogue between the relevant organizations of the third sector on topical areas. Today, the interaction between the structures of civil society in Russia and the EU has mostly "elitist" character. Cooperation is carried out at the level of associations, funds, etc., while we need the direct contacts, involvement of grassroots activists, and development of horizontal connections.
- Creation of joint discussion platforms for developing common approach to current issues related to the dissemination of information on the Internet, copyright and the rights of minorities. Participation in joint projects of this kind will increase the efficiency of solving the acute problems in the conditions of transition to a "society of open access".
- The development of exchange programs between the civil and public organizations of Russia and the EU.

- To organization of the international socio-environmental monitoring of the problems of poverty, destruction of natural habitats of indigenous peoples, socio-economic impacts of climate change, with the participation of activists of environmental and civic organizations.
- To assist the strengthening of efficiency of local government, protect cultural self-determination of local communities, interaction of civil structures and political parties.
- To create joint projects on protection of the interests of women and children in difficult life situations. In this case it seems timely to align provisions of European and Russian legislation concerning the rights of children from international marriages.

5. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations and protection of minorities and migrants. Recommendations:

- We support the efforts of the President of the Russian Federation, the government as well as legislative organs in the further harmonization of the legislation and normative legal acts of the Russian Federation in accordance with international instruments guaranteeing the legitimate rights and freedoms of ethnic and religious minorities.
- The Russian government should sign and ratify all international acts prohibiting discrimination and protecting equality and provide full and effective implementation of relevant international norms at national level. Some of them such as Article 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990), and the European Convention on Nationality (1997) have not yet been adopted by the Russian Federation.
- The Russian scientific community members should be involved in carrying out the monitoring process regarding the realization of international conventions and acts of minorities' protection in the Russian Federation on a regular level. The results of this monitoring should be presented to state bodies.
- It is commendable to provide active involvement of the academia as well as non-governmental organizations in the preparation of reports to international treaty bodies in the field of human rights and freedoms of ethnic and religious minorities in Russia.

- We proceed from the assumption that ethnic diversities and political problems related to them will form one of the major challenges for Russia in the nearest future. That is why the adoption of the national (ethno cultural) concept and then policy should be prioritized and thus accelerated.
- The adoption of the national ethno cultural policy should be accelerated.
- We support the introduction of the position of the Commissioner for Human Rights in all constituent entities of the Russian Federation.
- It is necessary to create and support information programs on eradication of discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance on the federal, regional and local levels and to support the activities of non-governmental organizations in this area. And to up-date the federal target program “Generation of the tolerant awareness and attitudes and prophylaxis of extremism”.
- It will be commendable to create the structures of free legal help for the migrants and ethnic minorities’ representatives regarding Russian legislation that determines the procedures of migration, registration, obtaining of job permission and relevant documents, activities of ethnic and cultural organization and religious groups.
- We consider it feasible to create a national Centre (with affiliations in the regions) for the complex expertise of the literature and other information materials with religious content and assign it with the expertise functions during investigations in court concerning extremism and terrorism, and to organise the professional training of relevant experts.

6. Local self-government. As far as the local self-government in Russia is concerned, we need to state that the degree of current centralization leads to the detriment of the local governing, which in turn gives birth to the following risks:

- superfluous concentration of resources at regional administrations. Without any oppositions they restrict representatives of federal bodies as well as economic subjects;
- readdressing of political responsibility to the central power in case of mass discontent;
- property redistribution between regional and local levels which provoke different conflicts;
- limitation of a social base of reforms and, as a result, pro-slipping of carried-out transformations and other significant changes;

- declining beliefs in ability to influence the power by civil initiatives and declining the level of civil participation.

Further cooperation with EU should be built on the increasing of participations of local authorities and local communities in the different kind of exchanges with EU organizations.

- Russian government should adopt relevant legislation in order to provide local and regional authorities with necessary competencies to take part efficiently in different kinds of cross-border cooperation with the EU member countries.
- Bi-national (bi-municipal) exchanges and different programs of sister city. Nowadays not more than 70 cities of Russia have their twinned cities in Europe and there are mainly capitals of regions and cities from European part of Russia.
- Participation of Russian local authorities in all European Associations can have high potential ("Cities for children", European Cities Marketing, Eurocities, Cities for active inclusion, European Association of Cities Interested in the Use of Electric Vehicles, Welcome to the European Association for Urban History, Foundation of European Carnival Cities (FECC), Federation of Napoleonic cities of Europe). Nowadays there are isolated cases of participating Russian cities in this kind of associations. It was very good experience of Perm's participating in the all European project "Cultural capital of Europe" or successful attempt to attract some Russian cities (Tilsit, Mogaisk) to the European Federation of Napoleonic cities.
- Another way of cooperation is cooperation between NGO and different form of people diplomacy. Both Russian citizens and local staffs need some educational program to improve their skills and qualification in political and civil participation and to assimilate the exciting experience and civil rights. The most important topic for staff could be budgeting of local government, territory branding, strategic plans of cities' developing and involving people in the process of decision making.

The most outstanding problems of local communities are the following: lack of democratic traditions; non effective laws about municipal power; social base of civil society is not formed; most of municipal organs are still formed according to the principles of hierarchy; municipalities always face to the budget deficit; municipal

authorities are not transparent to the people; resistance of regional elite and regional authority; forms of citizens activities haven't been increasing.

III. THE COMMON SPACE OF EXTERNAL SECURITY

There is still continued divergence of security and foreign policy perceptions of security challenges, threats and solutions. At the same time, the two parties have divergent interpretations of the implications of these threats. The EU is concerned with the stabilization of its adjacent territories and sought to do this by means of a selective and limited process of inclusion. Russia perceived this process as encirclement and reads the situation as a threat. Another example is terrorism. From a European perspective, the phenomenon requires a range of policies often involving external action as in the case of failed states. Russia does not necessarily share this view and is much more inward, "in-country" looking.

The absence of an agreed set of criteria or benchmarks for the achievement of the stipulated provisions of the common space is a serious shortcoming, severely limiting the utility of the cooperation and partnership process.

What would be of help for improving the situation?

- Growing internal authoritarianism has implications for the external security agenda given the important linkage between democratic practice, transparency and governance and the management of security threats. One way of addressing the proposed discrepancy involves the scaling down of the goals of EU-Russia ties in order to more fully reflect its present realities.
- Work will need to be done in order to determine which activities may be the subject of benchmarking. For instance, it is clear that result-oriented progress on initiatives in multilateral settings such as the UN and the OSCE will be difficult to benchmark. On the other hand, areas of purely bilateral cooperation may easily be operationalized in such a manner. This tool will help structure and prioritize activities needed to fulfil the agreed priorities.
- The EU should clarify its principled position towards sub regional integration projects within the former Soviet space.
- The EU should find out a better combination between its regional and bilateral approaches. A sub-regional level is certainly required to act more efficiently and also to get a better geopolitical understanding. Regional dimensions such as the Northern one deserve to be explored.

- The EU should not conduct its policies towards Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia separately from its Russian one, but alongside it. At the same time, it should insist on the necessity to resolve the so-called “frozen conflicts”, using in particular “human component” – more transparent approach, direct information flows, personal contacts, etc.
- The EU should use the implementation of the ENPI to address overall thinking about its “strategic partnership” with Russia.

IV. COMMON SPACE OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INCLUDING CULTURE

The common space of science, education and culture can be perceived as rewarding because, out of all bilateral spaces, this one is considered the least controversial and the most successful and beneficial to both parties. EU-Russia cooperation in higher education is almost completely geared to the Bologna process and the agenda is dictated by requirements for reforms in all European countries, including Russia. The intergovernmental and voluntary character of the Bologna program is of particular importance for Moscow policy makers who have to implement the necessary reforms in a complex domestic political ambience that is far from consensual. Progress has been achieved on important issues such as the introduction of B.A. and M.A. degrees, transition to the ECTS, modernization of curricula, quality assurance, but the introduction of the Ph.D. degree in the Russian educational system has proven an insurmountable challenge.

A serious future challenge is transition from the “technological” aspects of the Bologna process (involving mostly administrations) towards prioritizing its “substantive” aspects (involving teaching staff, students and employers). In other words, all the technical efforts should be “converted” to the basic goal – the improvement of higher education quality in Russia.

In general, when assessing the 4th space as whole, Russian analysts single out scientific research and innovation as the cooperation field where clearly “there is a win-win situation”. An important achievement in implementing the 4th road map is the establishment of the European Studies Institute (ESI) with the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), and with the cooperation of the College of Europe – Bruges.

The EU should monitor a possible evolution of the modalities of application of the Russian Federal Targeted Program for Research and Development in order to assess the extent, to which (i) international cooperation has been mainstreamed in this program, (ii) cooperation with European research entities has been prioritized, (iii) the claim of raising private funding equal to the commitment from the federal budget has been met.

According to EU science experts, future EU cooperation with Russia could build upon several strengths demonstrated by the Russian S&T sector as, for example, achievements in basic science and “big science” (space, fusion, high energy physics). It could exploit advances in technological niches in materials, nuclear technologies, biotechnologies, while taking into account the fact that research in these fields is essentially publicly funded and publicly executed. Given recent growth in Russian SMEs, cooperation on emerging industrial products could also be beneficial.

On the other hand, cooperation might be hampered because of the difficulty for Russia to overcome a “too much inward-looking approach”, which is the result of the accumulation of a number of factors throughout the years, including: language; weak networking in the past; lack of active presence in international meetings; different approach to cooperation, notably reluctance to share financial burden; discrepancies in intellectual property rights policies; different project management styles; political obstacles such as visas, export control and information disclosure issues; differences in S&T structures; weak implication of industry; meagre involvement of the younger.

1. Recommendations in S&T:

- Extend the EU-Russia Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement;
- Develop coordination mechanisms for planning and implementing research programs targeted at Russia that operate at EU level (FP7), at national level (in EU member states), in a pan-European framework (Eureka, INTAS, CERN, etc.);
- Establish more viable and effective mechanisms for monitoring and coordination of EU-Russia cooperation between the scientific segment of the 4th common space and the 1st (economic) common space; in view of the possible association of Russia to FP8 and the opening of cooperation to security research – prepare the establishment of similar mechanisms for monitoring and coordination between the scientific segment of the 4th

common space and the 2nd and the 3rd common spaces (internal and external security);

- Carry out a comprehensive ex ante assessment of opportunities arising from Russia's possible association to FP8, as well as of potential risks of this association in such sensitive thematic fields as security and energy, and possibly in other politically sensitive areas;
- Assess negotiations on Russia's possible association to FP8 in terms of their political dependence on (or autonomy from) negotiations on a new EU-Russia "strategic partnership" agreement and outline possible scenarios.

2. Recommendations in education:

- To prevent over-centralization and ineffective management practices, the emphasis should be made on the "bottom – up" approach, strengthening the autonomy of the departments within the Russian universities. This is critically important to introduce subsidiarity principle to the system of higher education in Russia;
- When planning EU higher education programs open for Russia, consider a gradual mid-term shift of funding from support for "technological" aspects of higher education reform to support for "substantive" reform – from action undertaken by administrations to activities performed by university teaching staff, students and employers;
- Strengthen coordination between EU programs in the field of higher education open to Russia and those of EU member states;
- Improve feedback and evaluation of higher education activities towards Russia at policy level (esp. the progress report) by fully exploiting the results of joint evaluations at program level (e.g. of the Tempus program);
- Upgrade support for the European Studies Institute with MGIMO also with a view to possibly making it the hub of a network of EU centres in Russia;
- Strengthen the potential of youth activities carried out within the educational segment of the 4th common space for fostering European identity;
- Assess the relevance of developing EU-Russia cooperation in public health as a "sub-field within the sub-field" and its implications for the overall coherence of the 4th common space.
- More funds should be allocated to student and scholar mobility;

- The essence of the Bologna process should be better explained to the Russian professors and teachers, otherwise, there is a possibility to introduce some bureaucratic “innovations” “under cover” of Bologna Process.

3. Recommendations regarding culture:

The intergovernmental character of cultural cooperation within the EU should be better exploited by the Commission in designing cultural exchange with Russia, and we are therefore recommending:

- to consider the elaboration of a qualitative assessment of the impact of cultural exchange at EU and member state level on fostering European identity in Russia;
- to prepare and adopt a real (with specific objectives, benchmarks and deadlines), comprehensive and meaningful (covering policy and regulatory issues) Culture Action Plan;
- to coordinate with EU member states the possible placement of their national cultural events/programs targeted at Russia in a common European framework.
- to consistently apply *the principle of equal partnership* not political rhetoric in the three “arms” – institutional, policy-related and financial - of cooperation within the 4th EU-Russia space;
- to tackle the potential for a normative debate and for value-driven action as one of the most complex issues in the 4th space.

CONTACTS:



Prof.Dr. Silvo Devetak
BRIDGE Coordinator and
Director of ISCOMET Institute
ISCOMET – Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies
NGO enjoying Participatory Status with the Council of Europe
Pupinova ulica 6, SI-2000 Maribor, Slovenia
Mobile: +386 41 699 641
Phone: +386 2 25 00 440
Fax: +386 2 23 55 372
E-mail: ISCOMET@siol.net
www.ISCOMET.org

and/or

Prof.Dr. Silvo Devetak
Head of the Department of International Law and International Relations
Faculty of Law, University of Maribor
Mladinska ulica 9
SI-2000 Maribor
Slovenia
Phone: +386 2 25 04 253
Mobile: +386 41 699 641
E-mail: devetak@uni-mb.si