



Ensuring environmental security through the Eastern Partnership policy

Position Paper from the Working Group 3: Environment, Climate Change and Energy Security

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In its joint communication, “A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence” (2023), the European Commission stresses that **climate change and environmental degradation pose increasing risks to international peace and security**. Extreme weather events, rising temperatures and sea levels, desertification, water scarcity, threats to biodiversity, environmental pollution and contamination and loss of livelihoods threaten the health and well-being of humanity.

Achieving environmental and climate resilience remains a challenge for all countries in the Eastern Partnership region (EaP). This is further **complicated by Russia’s aggression against Ukraine**. The war causes enormous damage to nature, destroying ecosystems and habitats, polluting air, water, and soil, and increasing greenhouse gas emissions. It also undermines regional resilience by weakening institutional capacity, diverting funding and exacerbating resource-scarcity stress in neighbouring states. **These impacts extend beyond the national level, affecting neighbouring countries and even having global consequences**.

The civil society organisations from six EaP countries and the EU, which are members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, joined their advocacy efforts to ensure that **the future EaP policy and initiatives properly consider the security component**, in the energy, climate change and environment nexus.

The policy paper should be seen in the context of the EU’s broader 2030 framework, including the 8th Environment Action Programme, which emphasises integrated governance, stakeholder engagement, and setting mid-term reviews.

1. Russia’s war against Ukraine has strong implications for the EU and Eastern neighbourhood region, as well as the entire Black Sea Region. The dependence on imported energy from Russia has become a clear source of vulnerability and requires urgent solutions. Countries must immediately overcome this dependency. Plans aiming to boost **green transformation, diversify energy**

sources, and decentralise to scale up renewable infrastructure must be prioritised at both the EU and national levels.

2. As EU policies now revolve around security issues, the EaP policy, as one of the EU's policies, should also integrate this component. This requires both a general revision of the EaP Policy, as well as a **revision in the context of the environment-climate-energy-security- just transition nexus.**
3. The Eastern Partnership region needs a **framework document** outlining each country's commitment to protecting its **environment, climate and security within the context of green transformation.** This could be shaped through an inclusive preparatory process that helps raise awareness and involves various stakeholders. An EaP Working Group could be set up with the active participation of EaP CSF representatives. Setting clear targets, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and regular reporting could support countries in their attempts at a green transition.
4. For several EaP countries, the **EaP policy continues to serve as the sole link to the principles of environmental democracy and high standards of nature protection.** The EU should therefore take more responsibility, as this is mutually beneficial in terms of bolstering the environmental and climate security belt of Europe.
5. **The EU should help EaP countries to prioritise their green transformation policy,** uniting efforts as strongly as possible "to find the strength to reform" and reach transformative resilience. Such unity is a logical response to the high turbulence and severe challenges that EaP and EU countries are currently facing.
6. **It is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the national authorities** to conduct a systematic, qualified, transparent, and accountable dialogue with the public on urgent issues of public environmental policy. The issues of environmental protection - and therefore the greening of the economy - are not just urgent: these issues determine the civilisational future of the EaP countries. The discussion will avert future disputes and lessen current ones (between the authorities and civil society organizations active in the environmental protection sector), in addition to enhancing the quality of choices on environmental reforms.
7. All Eastern Partnership countries face significant climate change-related threats (extreme temperatures, floods, droughts, forest fires, etc.). Besides the impact of climate change, which reinforces environmental degradation, major environmental security issues for EaP countries include biodiversity loss, decline in water quality and quantity, soil degradation, deforestation, and urban air pollution. Effective policy is the answer to climate and environmental problems. **The green transition in the Eastern Partnership countries requires robust legislative frameworks and long-term strategies, as well as further approximation with the EU acquis and substantial investments.**
8. **Good environmental governance (GEG) is a key precondition for reaching environmental and climate resilience.** The proper implementation of the GEG

principles in the environmental and climate policy will have a robust impact on the integration of environmental considerations into all policies, allowing for better implementation of legislation and increased public participation and visibility of reforms. It is crucially important to develop, adopt and start implementing a plan for state environmental institutional reform in connection with the reform of state environmental finances for each EaP country. EaP governments and public authorities should enhance openness and transparency in their cooperation with civil society, particularly regarding the design and implementation of environmental reforms and the principles of good governance. Strengthening structured dialogue, ensuring timely access to environmental information, and prompting participatory policy processes would significantly contribute to building institutional trust and improving environmental security outcomes in the region. Ensuring transparent public access to environmental information is essential, in line with the obligations under the Aarhus Convention which has been ratified by all six EaP countries.

9. Countries should plan, start, or accelerate the implementation of basic reforms in state environmental monitoring, environmental control, legal liability for environmental degradation and violations of environmental legislation, and financial reform in the field of environmental and climate protection. **The effective and timely implementation of the EU's environmental and climate acquis will ensure both green the transition of the EaP countries and environmental and climate security in the region.** Urban population growth is accelerating, making cities increasingly vulnerable to pollution and unsustainable practices. Therefore, local governments should prioritize policies that support the twin transition and promote biodiversity.
- 10. There is also a clear need to increase support to civil society in the Eastern Partnership.** The National Platforms of the EaP CSF are making significant contributions under challenging circumstances, including preparing shadow reports, facilitating open dialogues with officials and Members of Parliament, and supporting local communities in the development and implementation of environmental and climate policies and strategies in line with modern standards. This essential work remains substantially underfunded and would greatly benefit from enhanced financial support. The dialogue should be supported and developed between the government and civil society, which have strained relations.

The EaP CSF Working Group 3 focuses on shaping sustainable environmental, climate, and energy policies for the EaP region, considering national interests. Its members work towards improving environmental protection, energy efficiency and climate resilience as well as mitigating dependency on energy imports.

Environmental security is central to securing the welfare of future generations. The proposals in this document lay out a principled roadmap by which the Eastern Partnership can move toward a more sustainable, resilient and secure future. Achieving that future requires safeguarding nature through coordinated, unified action.

For more information, please refer to the Working Group 3 Policy Paper: Environmental security in the EaP countries: state of play, challenges and opportunities, which underpins the findings of this position paper: <https://eap-csf.eu/articles/how-to-involve-civil-society-in-promoting-environmental-security-in-the-eap/>

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