



Committee on Foreign Affairs The Chairman

February 2010

BACKGROUND NOTE on EASTERN PARTNERSHIP and its Parliamentary Assembly - EURONEST

I. SUMMARY

The European Council adopted at its meeting on 19/20 March 2009 in Prague a Declaration on the Eastern Partnership. This Declaration provides for an institutionalisation of this Partnership by the holding of regular meetings in principle every two years at the level of Heads of State or Government of the Eastern Partnership countries, and once a year at the level of Foreign Ministers.

The creation of such a new executive structure needs to be completed by the creation of a parliamentary assembly called to hold the executive to account and to scrutinize its activities.

The (EP's) Conference of Presidents decided on 15 January 2009 in principle in favour of establishing this Parliamentary Assembly. On 6 of May 2009 the European Parliament took a decision on the number of interparliamentary delegations and multilateral Parliamentary Assemblies, including EURONEST-PA. These delegations were established in the first full plenary session of the newly-elected European Parliament in September 2009. The Constitutive meeting of the EP Delegation to the EURONEST PA took place on the 30 September 2009.

In order to enhance the link between the membership and the work of Parliament's bilateral delegations, the MEPs to serve in the EURONEST-PA are drawn from the members of Parliament's bilateral delegations for relations with Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and for relations with the countries of the Caucasus (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia).

II. BACKGROUND

1. The idea to establish an 'EU Neighbourhood EAST Parliamentary Assembly' (EURONEST-PA) dates back to a proposal of December 2006 by (then) Vice-President Jacek SARYUSZ-WOLSKI (EPP-ED, Poland). Since taking up office as Chairman of the Committee in Foreign Affairs in February 2007, he actively pursued this proposal and gained the full support of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Indeed, the EP resolution of 15 November 2007 on 'Strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy' (AFET rapporteurs TANNOCK/OBIOLS Y GERMA), proposed to set up such

an assembly "following the example of the multilateral parliamentary assemblies already established with the participation of the European Parliament.

2. On 4-5 June 2008, Parliament organised a Parliamentary Conference ENP-EAST, inviting representatives of the six Neighbourhood countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). Belarus was represented by extraparliamentary opposition leaders. In the final statement of the Conference, a reference to the creation of EURONEST was adopted.
3. With its resolution of 8 June 2008 on the Annual report on the CFSP (AFET rapporteur: Chairman SARYUSZ-WOLSKI), the European Parliament "undertakes to set up an EU-Neighbourhood-East Parliamentary Assembly (EURO-NEAST) by 2009, in order to enhance the parliamentary dimension of the political partnership between Parliament and the countries involved in the eastern part of the ENP."
4. Following a consultation by President POETTERING, the Chairs of the four bilateral delegations concerned agreed to the creation of a multilateral assembly EURONEST, while insisting, however, on maintaining the bilateral structures and their importance.
5. In early October 2008, the President of the European Parliament sent letters of consultation to each Speaker of the parliaments of the countries concerned (with the exception of Belarus). All the Speakers replied positively, insisting - as did our delegation chairs - on the importance of maintaining and developing the bilateral relations.
6. On 3 December 2008, the Commission presented a communication on the Eastern Partnership (COM (2008) 823 final), in which the Commission stated that "it would welcome any initiative by the European Parliament to make the "EuroNest parliamentary cooperation that it has developed an integral part of the Eastern Partnership". Its institutional proposals concern the provision for summits and meetings of the foreign ministers of the ENP countries at regular intervals.
7. On 16 April 2009, the Conference of Presidents reconfirmed its earlier decision of 15 January 2009 and decided:
 - to establish, after the forthcoming European Parliament elections, a Parliamentary Assembly for relations with the Countries of the Neighbourhood East;
 - that such an Assembly would have 120 Members - 60 from the European Parliament and 60 from the parliaments of partner States - with the Parliament's delegation being made up of Members of the relevant bilateral delegations;
 - that the Assembly would meet once a year, alternating between one of the Parliament's places of work and one of the partner countries;
 - that the Assembly would be jointly presided by the President of the European Parliament and a representative from the parliaments of the partner States;
 - that the Assembly would be assisted by a secretariat drawn in equal part from the Parliament and the parliaments of partner States.

8. In his speech at the meeting of the European Council on 19 March 2009, President POETTERING included the following: "Even prior to today's formal endorsement of the Eastern Partnership, the European Parliament decided to support and build on the Commission initiative by endowing it with a parliamentary dimension. From the start of the European Parliament's seventh parliamentary term, a Parliamentary Assembly for Relations with the Countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood will address matters of mutual interest, such as democracy, sound governance and stability, economic integration, energy security and interaction between people."
9. The Presidency conclusions of the Brussels European Council (19/20 March 2009) contain in Annex 2 a Declaration by the European Council on the Eastern Partnership which includes the following "5. The multilateral framework of the Eastern Partnership will provide for cooperation activities and dialogue serving the objectives of the Partnership. It should operate on a basis of joint decisions of EU member states and Eastern partners, without prejudice to the decision making autonomy of the EU.

The European Council proposes to hold regular meetings in principle once every two years at the level of Heads of State or Government of the Eastern Partnership, and once a year at the level of Foreign Ministers. Four thematic platforms should be established according to the main areas of cooperation (Democracy, good governance and stability; Economic integration and convergence with EU policies; Energy security; and Contacts between people). The European Council also supports the launching of Flagship Initiatives in order to give momentum and concrete substance to the Partnership. The EU looks forward to an early discussion with the partners in this regard." and "7. On the basis of this Declaration, the EU will conduct the necessary consultations with Eastern partners with a view to preparing a Joint Declaration on the Eastern Partnership to be adopted at the Eastern Partnership launching summit on 7 May 2009. The European Council looks forward to launching the Eastern Partnership as a common endeavour with partners, being confident that this initiative will advance the cause of good governance, increase prosperity and strengthen stability, bringing lasting and palpable benefits to the citizens of all participating countries."

10. The European Council's decision sets up an institutional framework for the future cooperation of the Executive. This being done, the last outstanding condition for the creation of a parliamentary layer for the scrutiny of this executive body has been fulfilled.
11. The European Parliament was represented by President POETTERING, Vice-President SIWIEC and AFET-Chairman SARYUSZ-WOLSKI at the official ceremony announcing the launch of the EASTERN PARTNERSHIP with the six eastern partner countries to be held on Thursday, 7 May 2009 in Prague."
12. On 16 December 2009 the EP Delegation to the EURONEST PA adopted the Constitutive Act and the Rules of Procedure for the Euronest Assembly
13. On the 10 February 2010 The Conference of Presidents endorsed in principle the Draft Constituent Act and the Draft Rules of Procedure, as proposed by the EP delegation to EURO-NEST Parliamentary Assembly and decided to return to the matter considering the participation of Belarus in the EURONEST PA on the basis of the report and recommendations of the ad hoc delegation to Belarus .