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TRENDS OF EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Vít Dostál,
Nikola Karasová,
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Asociace
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Key findings

- “Important, Forgotten, or Irrelevant? Stakeholders’ Survey on Post-Vilnius Eastern Partnership” was a project drawn up to map the ideas and opinions of influential figures from the Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership partner countries regarding the EaP initiative, and how they believe it could move forward.
- In all, 1,783 people from the V4 and EaP countries were approached, of whom 651 (36.5%) responded to the questionnaire, with 390 (21.9%) replying to all questions. The response rate was more or less the same in each country, the one exception being Azerbaijan (a much lower-than-average 5.2%).
- The EaP initiative is generally viewed in a positive light, with the vast majority of respondents from EaP countries asserting that there had been certain (62.7%) or significant (15.1%) progress in the political association between EU and EaP partner countries. Stakeholders from a majority of EaP partner countries agree that it is a vehicle driving the transformation of participating countries towards European standards and the rule of law. Similarly (Belarus aside), they believe that it has effectively promoted economic development in EaP partner countries.
- Security-related advances are generally viewed quite negatively by stakeholders from the majority of EaP partner countries. Stakeholders from Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine disagree entirely with the suggestion that the initiative has been a major guarantor of security for EaP partner countries. As for energy security, only 39% of stakeholders believe that positive progress has been made.
- The majority of stakeholders from EaP partner countries advocate the “more-for-more” approach as a cornerstone principle of the EaP initiative. Funding should, as a matter of preference, be channelled into regional development programmes, the SME Facility, the development of regional energy market, energy efficiency, and EaP partner countries’ participation in EU Community programmes.
- Respondents were quietly confident that at least one more country would sign an Association Agreement within the next five years. Nevertheless, the EaP has not been acknowledged as a precursor to candidate status by V4 stakeholders or EaP-country respondents themselves. Having said that, respondents from EaP countries do view the future more optimistically, believing that at least one country will achieve candidate status within the next five years. Respondents also think that the EU-membership carrot could stimulate further reforms, an opinion shared by EaP countries (91.1%) and the V4 (82.2%) alike.
- Although mobility has been an EaP priority since the initiative’s inception in 2009, there is room for improvement according to the stakeholders approached, with the overwhelming majority of EaP and V4 stakeholders (94.2% and 95.2%, respectively) holding this view. Individual mobility was cited by 40.9% of EaP-country respondents as a policy area that ought to be covered by the EaP in future.
- Interestingly, 37.9% of stakeholders still view the EaP as a geostrategic tool wielded by the EU against the Russian Federation’s interests.
- V4 countries share the view that the EaP mainly works to the benefit of partner countries by consolidating political cooperation. However, closer study of the data reveals that preferences for economic and political integration are split, as Slovak and Hungarian respondents favour the former, Polish and Czech the latter.

Introduction

Since its launch during the Prague Summit in May 2009, the Eastern Partnership initiative (EaP) – as an EU project under the European Neighbourhood Policy – has evolved considerably. Political developments in Ukraine (and in Eastern Europe in general) in the wake of the Vilnius Summit in November 2013 have underscored the advantages of integration-focused activity and pinpointed existing vulnerabilities in the initiative's makeup.

Moreover, the dearth of data needed for further analysis of the attitudes held on the initiative by stakeholders from the various EaP partner countries has become increasingly conspicuous. Certain EU countries have allowed the priority status, or at least importance, of EaP to lapse as they seek to respond to the complexities of the current geopolitical situation in Europe. Yet it is precisely a lack of EU interest and feebly advocated mutual understanding that could undermine the resumption of EaP reform debates and stall new solutions.

Against this background, “Important, Forgotten, or Irrelevant? Stakeholders’ Survey on Post-Vilnius Eastern Partnership” was a project aiming to map the ideas and opinions of influential figures from V4 member states and EaP partner countries regarding the EaP initiative, and how they believe it could move forward. The survey results formed the basis for a comprehensive analysis. The project was implemented, with the kind support of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF), by the Association for International Affairs (AMO) in cooperation with research centres

and independent experts from the above-mentioned countries.

The project was realized in three stages between February 2014 and April 2015. First, the questionnaire and a list of potential respondents were prepared and consulted in detail. Data was gathered from September to November 2014. In November 2014, the initial project results were presented at the EaP Civil Society Forum conference in Batumi. In the following three months, the research team analysed and evaluated the data that had been collected. The whole project was rounded off with the publication of project results and the public presentation thereof in Brussels.

Apart from the principal project goal of obtaining empirical data, we are keen to instigate animated discussion on the future direction of the EaP initiative.

This paper has three parts, starting with a general outline of project methodology before progressing to four analytical texts drawing on the data gathered. These chapters discuss differences between the EaP countries, Europeanization, the Russian influence on the EaP and the diversity among the V4 countries. The final part presents graphs of aggregated results and results from the V4 and EaP countries. Graphs for individual countries are available on the project webpage at TRENDY2015.AMO.CZ.

Methodology

A broad range of contributors to the public debate were approached to participate in the survey.

In all, 1,783 people were contacted, of whom 651 (36.5%) responded to the questionnaire, with 390 (21.9%) replying to all questions. The response rate was more or less the same in each country, the one exception being Azerbaijan (a much lower-than-average 5.2%). The average number of stakeholders contacted per country was 178. The exceptions were Poland, with a considerably higher number (275), and Georgia, where only 119 persons were contacted.

We addressed stakeholders who were involved in, or had the opportunity to engage in, the EaP on a regular basis, and as such were theoretically in a position to offer a frank assessment. Those approached included:

- politicians (selected members of national parliaments, members of governments, selected politicians active at regional level);
- civil servants (diplomats, employees of state administration);
- people in business (representatives of chambers of commerce);
- analysts and researchers;
- journalists;
- NGO workers.

The composition of the respondents contacted is shown in the first table in the appendices (page 19). The second table depicts the mix who filled in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was dispatched electronically and comprised 15 questions (one question was intended strictly for EaP countries). The questions can be thematically divided into three areas. First, we solicited an evaluation of the EaP since its inception in 2009. Secondly, we probed expectations regarding the EaP's future direction. The final set of questions was given over to recommendations.

There were three types of questions. Respondents most often expressed their level of agreement with presented statements. There were also open-ended questions. These had to be categorized during evaluation; i.e. converted to a higher level of abstraction. The number scale was used in one case. Respondents could skip any question. The answers were gathered anonymously. The complete questionnaire and datasets with answers from all participating countries containing all respondents' answers are downloadable from [TRENDY2015.AM0.CZ](https://www.trendy2015.am0.cz).

EaP partner countries: no common vision

The concept of the EaP and its results have been seriously challenged by critics over and over again in the past few years. Numerous experts have identified the project's confused aims and failings and, above all, its specific architecture and territorial focus. Despite encompassing a number of highly distinct countries, the EaP initiative lacks a sensible forked approach responding to their inner history, politics and socio-economic conditions. Instead, it tends to treat these countries as a unified group of actors purportedly sharing similar visions, needs and interests.

As early as 2010–11, there were attempts to tackle this shortcoming by introducing a “more-for-more” principle into the existing framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This principle works on the assumption that the EU should build stronger partnerships and offer greater incentives only to those countries showing progress in democratic reform in general. Following the Vilnius Summit and the subsequent political turn of events in Ukraine, the geopolitical situation in Europe has changed considerably and the existing differences between individual EaP partner countries have become that much starker. How do these countries rate the outcomes achieved by the EaP initiative thus far? What do they expect of it in the future? What conclusions have they arrived at which could be taken into consideration by the Riga Summit?

DIVIDED ON RESULTS

The majority of survey respondents from EaP partner countries were almost unanimous in singling out the initiative's pluses. First and foremost, they cited the opportunity for closer political cooperation (69.1%) and deeper integration with EU member states (27.8%), followed by the economic development of the EaP region (39.2%), as the greatest benefits of participating in the initiative. The strengthening of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and the support of mobility were also applauded. As for local specifics, the initiative's role in bolstering security played a greater role for Moldovan stakeholders (19.5% versus an EaP average of 6.7%), while conflict-resolution assistance appeared to be important for stakeholders from Armenia (13.9% as opposed to a 3.1% EaP average). This figure is noteworthy given Yerevan's turn towards Russia, probably prompted in part by security concerns.

Views of progress in the initiative's goals defined under the Joint Declaration of the Prague EaP Summit from May 2009 have revealed more pronounced differences among the EaP partner countries. Unsurprisingly, stakeholders from Azerbaijan and Belarus are more sceptical about the real impact that the EaP initiative has had on the transformation of their countries than their EaP counterparts elsewhere. They particularly emphasize the fact that there has been no progress in fortifying the pro-reform path, upholding good governance and commencing legislative and

regulatory approximation between the EU and EaP partner countries. Security in general is viewed rather poorly by stakeholders from the majority of EaP partner countries. Stakeholders from Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine disagree entirely with the suggestion that the initiative has been a major guarantor of security for EaP partner countries.

According to EaP-country stakeholders, there are several reasons why the EaP initiative has struggled to promote its goals. Development and transformation projects have often been hampered by inefficiency and red tape (44.9%). Secondly, the initiative lacks clear aims and expectations (25.8%). Nor is there any prospect of EU membership (15.7%), which is of concern mainly to Ukrainian stakeholders (30.2%). Stakeholders from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine excluded the proposal that participation in the initiative had served as a precursor to candidate status (Moldovan and Georgian stakeholders were more optimistic here). Last but not least, the disregard for country-specific factors was considered a major issue by EaP respondents (37.6%), mainly those from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Interestingly, most stakeholders (75.1%) from EaP partner countries advocate the “more-for-more” approach as a cornerstone principle of the EaP initiative (with Armenian and Belarusian stakeholders slightly less enamoured of this prospect).

Still, the overall perception of the EaP initiative is relatively upbeat. Stakeholders from a majority of EaP partner countries agree that it has helped in the participating countries' drive towards European

standards and the rule of law (84.8%). Similarly (Belarus aside), they believe that it has effectively promoted economic advances in EaP partner countries (59.2%, versus 27.6% in Belarus). Many (not Azerbaijan) hold up the EaP initiative as a means of identifying with Europe and (apart from Belarus) say that it has played an important role in deepening cooperation among EaP partner countries.

UNITED ON PROSPECTS

Turning to the future prospects of the EaP initiative, stakeholders from all EaP partner countries expect to observe continuing regional economic development (45.3%). Ukrainian stakeholders placed more of an emphasis on the need to boost security (47.7% versus a 25.4% EaP average). For Belarus in particular, the demand for economic development and energy security easily prevailed over efforts at democratization, good governance and the rule of law. Furthermore, ongoing support of mobility was considered essential (40.9%), as only Moldovan stakeholders were satisfied with results in this field so far. According to EaP stakeholders, funding should, as a matter of preference, flow into the SME Facility (68.7%), regional development programmes (68.1%), the development of the regional energy market and energy

efficiency (63.2%), and the participation of EaP partner countries in EU Community programmes (44.8%).

As for the future of the EaP initiative per se, most EaP partner countries acknowledge its importance under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). With a particular eye on the current political situation in Ukraine, they suggest that the EU place a greater focus on the initiative and make it an external-policy priority. Stakeholders from all EaP partner countries except Armenia believe that it would be better for the EU to concentrate only on certain countries in the region. Moldovan and Ukrainian stakeholders in particular expect the initiative to fragment, with some countries keen to deepen their integration and others more reticent.

According to EaP stakeholders, Moldova and Georgia are best-placed for candidate status, but a large proportion of stakeholders also thought that this status would be denied to all EaP countries (this was the most frequent answer in Belarus - 34.5%). EaP stakeholders would clearly like to see participation in the initiative directly connected to the prospect of EU membership (91.1%). Stakeholders from Armenia, Belarus and Georgia would be satisfied, in the absence of full membership, with at least special status granting them sectoral integration into the EU. Integration into the EU is clearly seen as beneficial in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, while Belarusian respondents were hesitant about whether the future of Belarus lies with the EU or Russia.

The search for a European future

The EaP is an EU-initiated project. Though this might seem so obvious it is unnecessary to say, we must not lose sight of this fact when trying to gauge how seriously partner countries view their future in the EU. Is the EaP perceived as a precursor to fully-fledged membership? What are the patterns of “Europeanism” which the EaP has delivered or ought to supply? How do they evaluate the headway made in drawing their countries closer to the EU?

Three issues are covered in this part. First, how partner countries perceive their level of integration into the EU. Secondly, how much respondents from partner countries feel they have a European identity, and what distinctive patterns it embodies for them. Thirdly, and finally, how they view progress made in individual mobility between the EU and partner countries.

INTEGRATING WITH THE EU

The first goal listed under the Prague Declaration, which initiated the EaP back in 2009, was to “accelerate political affiliation between the EU and EaP partner countries”. Political cooperation with the EU was singled out by 69.1% of respondents as one of the three EaP benefits. Political and economic integration also scored very high, with 27.8% of respondents mentioning the former and 14.9% the latter. It would be fair to say that certain advances have taken place in this field. Association agreements have been signed with Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. The vast majority of EaP-country respondents

claimed that there had been certain (62.7%) or significant (15.1%) progress here. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova proved to be more optimistic than Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia, since their integration is highly advanced.

There is even quite keen aspiration to push further ahead with integration. Respondents were reasonably confident that at least one more country would sign an association agreement within the next five years, a statement garnering 65% support. This view, interestingly, is also shared by V4 stakeholders, with the same proportion (65%) subscribe to it. Of those countries yet to sign an association agreement, Armenian respondents were particularly optimistic. In addition, respondents are sure that trade between EaP countries and the EU will increase significantly in the same period.

There has been a lot of talk about whether the EaP constitutes an intermediate stage between completely unstructured contact with the EU and full membership. Looking back at the experience of Central and Eastern European countries, which first signed Europe agreements and then applied for the membership that would see them end up with full association, it is tempting to think that EaP countries will follow the same course. Of all the integration options (the Euroasian Union, NATO, etc.), integration with the EU is viewed as the most beneficial scenario by the majority of respondents.

Nevertheless, neither EaP respondents nor V4 stakeholders acknowledge the EaP as a precursor to candidate status. Then again, EaP respondents view the future with more optimism, believing that at least one

country will be granted candidate status within the next five years. V4 figures indicate that this opinion is not shared in Central Europe, with only 43.7% of respondents expecting such a shift. The most advanced country is Moldova, which is the most likely to reach this milestone according to respondents from V4 and EaP countries alike. Georgia and Ukraine are next, but lag a fair way behind Moldova. On the other hand, a relatively high number of respondents (22%, according to the overall results) thought that none of the partner countries would advance to candidate status.

Interestingly, respondents believe that the carrot of membership offered by the EU would stimulate further reforms. This view is supported by data from EaP countries (91.1%) and the V4 (82.2%).

EUROPEANIZATION IN THE MAKING

The previous section showed that EaP countries are looking westwards and are confident that, in time, integration with the EU will be theirs. It would seem appropriate, then, to ask whether cooperation or integration stands at the heart of the EaP. In other words, whether the EaP, a project developed by the EU, is perceived as a messenger carrying distinctive European features eastwards.

One question asked whether the EaP enabled partner countries to identify with Europe; a notion supported by 63% of EaP-country respondents. A majority this may be, but it is not that high a figure. The EaP is perhaps either

not enough for partner countries to identify with Europe, and they are holding out for full membership, or they reject Europeanization per se.

The overwhelming majority of both EaP (84.8%) and V4 (90.5%) respondents viewed the Eastern Partnership as a vehicle which should help to usher in European norms and standards. Yet the question remains as to whether this need is shared among partner countries. This was covered by a question on the preferred future focus of the EaP. Respondents were asked to select three policy areas which should be covered by the EaP initiative. Interestingly, economic development and mobility prevailed over those areas which could be connected with the transfer of the European model, such as the rule of law, good governance, democratization, and the support of the free media. The issues of good governance and democratization played a greater role only in Armenia, and the rule of law was emphasized by Moldovan respondents.

It could be inferred, in this light, that even though the EaP is a means of transferring norms and standards to partner countries, this need not ultimately be coveted by the partner countries themselves. On the other hand, the transfer of norms need not be carried out only via political reforms. Further economic integration encompassing the harmonization of various rules or individual mobility may also contribute to Europeanization.

MOBILITY

Individual mobility was cited by 40.9% of respondents from EaP countries as a policy area that should be covered by the EaP in the future. It ranks second after the economic development (45.3%). This is perhaps not surprising given the fact that the removal of barriers to unrestricted travel is broadly viewed as one of the main integration stimuli among the public in the partner countries.

Support for mobility also featured among the goals of the Prague Declaration. EaP-country respondents believe it has been a partial success, as 63.4% were of the opinion that there had been some progress. The way this factor was assessed in each country reflected the local visa liberalization process - it is perceived as a roaring success in Moldova in particular, but as a failure in Belarus.

Respondents were also asked to assess individual-mobility initiatives. They think that visa liberalization, visa facilitation and students' and academic mobility have reported only average performance.

Although mobility has been an EaP priority since the outset in 2009, progress has fallen short of expectations according to the stakeholders addressed. More attention should be paid to this issue in the near future in the opinion of the overwhelming majority of EaP and V4 stakeholders (94.2% and 95.2%, respectively).

EaP and Russia-led integration

The EaP exemplifies the continued eastwards expansion of Western integration structures, a trend commenced soon after the fall of the Soviet Empire in Central and Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991. The EaP process started in 2009 and took shape against a backdrop of rising Russian resistance. The Kremlin, under Vladimir Putin, saw the establishment of the EaP as a European attempt to carve out a zone of influence or a new cordon sanitaire in post-Soviet space. It is noteworthy that 37.9% of stakeholders still view the EaP as a geostrategic EU tool directed against the Russian Federation's interests. This is certainly an interesting finding, as the EU is vociferous in its denial of the EaP's geopolitical significance, even though this is precisely what the West is being accused of by Russia. The fact of the matter is that the very existence of the EaP has helped local societies to build a sense of European identity, as the majority of EaP respondents share this view.

Russia viewed the entire process as a prolongation of the well-known wave of colour revolutions aimed at Russia's definitive ostracism from global power politics. Russia's political elite believed that the country would be unable to re-emerge as a superpower in the absence of its control of the post-Soviet area since the second half of the 1990s. Russia has been prepared to overcome this European encroachment at any cost, whether by non-military means (through the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union) or by military might (through the war in the east of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea). The EaP has undoubtedly been a factor contributing to Russia's pariah behaviour.

INTEGRATION DEADLOCK AND PATCHY SECURITY

The majority of stakeholders taking part in the research emphasized the lack of security-related issues under the EaP. Only 22% of stakeholders believe that the EaP has been a guarantor of security for the partner countries. In particular, 63.4% of respondents were also adamant that the EaP had not delivered stability or promoted security between the EU and EaP partner countries. This is especially significant if we take into account two factors. First, Russia is constantly trying to intimidate EaP partner countries by infringing their territorial integrity. Belarus is the only partner country not to have an active separatist movement, and Minsk happens to be one of the most stalwart supporters of Moscow policy in the post-Soviet area, even going so far as to create the Union State with Russia. The infringement of the Eastern partners' territorial integrity by Russia's proxies should logically prompt a security supplement to the EaP. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Secondly, the pro-Western governments in Georgia and Ukraine were denied the opportunity of NATO integration at the Bucharest Summit in 2008. Consequently, they turned their attention towards the EU and its EaP project, but ended up bewildered again upon realizing that the EaP would have no sound security component.

As for energy security, only 39% of stakeholders (and falling to as little as 31.1% among Ukrainian respondents) believe that there has been positive progress. The EU split on energy policy has been translated into the failure of the EaP's energy security component. European states

have remained aloof during Russia-Ukraine gas disputes and have shelved the once daringly ambitious Nabucco Pipeline project, instead letting Russia pursue its *divide et impera* policies. The European Union neglected and ignored the national and energy security issues faced by EaP countries, undoubtedly paving the way for the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's renewed neo-imperial goals. This could be interpreted to mean that, if the EU is to salvage the idea of the EaP, it must supply a robust security element.

Regardless of the bleak situation in the east of Ukraine, there is still hope that the EaP, and indeed the entire ENP, can be repaired. This optimism is based on the research stakeholders' conclusions on the most suitable integration structure for their country. Almost 52% of respondents from EaP partner countries believe that closer integration with the EU would be the best and most apt way forward, followed by NATO integration (27%). The Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union are attractive to around only 5% of stakeholders. Even stakeholders in Armenia, which became part of the Eurasian Union this January, were against the Eurasian vector of integration, with less than 2.5% of Armenian respondents stating that they were in favour of this integration.

While the EU has its share of weaknesses and faults, it remains extremely attractive for partner countries. This research concludes that the EaP could have a bright future, provided that there is a more tailored approach to each country, combined with a more robust security element at a time of Russian neo-imperial revival.

(Dis)united Visegrad?

Does the Visegrad Group (V4) speak with the single voice on the EaP? Russian aggression against Ukraine appears to have divided the V4. This issue was discussed heatedly, especially after the prime ministers' discussion at the GLOBSEC conference in Bratislava in May 2014, when there was a stifling atmosphere and visible discord on the panel between Donald Tusk and Viktor Orbán. The following months offered little hope of that the V4 leaders would reach an accord. Although the Ukrainian crisis has been on the agenda of all high-level V4 meetings and joint declarations proclaiming Ukraine's territorial integrity have been released, there has been little in the way of common action. What is more, the countries have adopted different positions. Poland has remained hawkish, pushing for a more resolute stance on Russia. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and especially Hungary, on the other hand, have criticized the sanction regime introduced in summer 2014.

The Eastern Policy has been a priority V4 area since 2005. The inception of the EaP cemented this approach. There have been annual meetings of EaP and V4 foreign ministers since 2010, usually bolstered by the presence of Baltic ministers or representatives of European institutions. Moreover, the four countries have contributed to projects in EaP countries via the International Visegrad Fund, which has even established special EaP schemes. In this light, the EaP has been a firm priority of the V4, which has helped to keep it high on the EU's agenda.

The key question here is whether the diverging views on the East, present at the highest political level, are

mirrored in the stance of the broader foreign policy elite? And if there genuinely are divisions, in which areas?

EVALUATING PROGRESS

The V4 respondents believe that progress has been made in EaP priority areas, with only Hungarians rather more sceptical about the achievements; e.g. the majority of stakeholders contacted here are of the opinion that the EaP has not contributed to the rule of law and good governance in the partner countries, whereas respondents from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia think the opposite. Likewise, Hungarian data show that a higher share of respondents would say that the EaP has been cultivated as an instrument aimed against Russian interests. The majority (53.1%) would subscribe this statement, a view not shared by Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The V4 countries believe that the EaP is beneficial for partner countries mainly because of the political cooperation it engenders. Yet if we were to focus on the data in more detail, we would see discrepancies in the preference for economic and political integration. Slovak and Hungarian respondents favour the former, Polish and Czech the latter.

Hungarians were also more sceptical about what the EaP initiative had achieved in individual mobility. A higher number of respondents stressed that there had been no progress. On the other hand, an evaluation of specific patterns of this area of policy (i.e. visa facilitation,

visa liberalization and students' and academic mobility) reveals that, in fact, Hungarian respondents are less sceptical than the Poles.

Therefore, the V4 appears to show a certain consensus when it comes to the evaluation of the EaP. However, the results collected in Hungary signal that certain differences exist between Budapest and the rest of the V4.

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER IN USHERING EAP COUNTRIES INTO EUROPE?

Can the same difference be felt in expectations of and recommendations for the EaP? Starting with the issue of membership prospects, only Polish respondents believe that an EaP country will be granted EU candidate status in the next five years. The V4 countries share the opinion that the front-runner for candidate status is Moldova, although one third of Hungarian respondents say that no EaP country is likely to become a candidate in the medium term. According to the Hungarians, the Western Balkan countries should accede to the EU first; 57.6% were of this opinion. Respondents from all V4 countries held the opinion that the mutual trade between the EU and the EaP will rise significantly by 2020, expressing a common view that at least the economic, if not political, approximation of EaP countries will continue.

The EaP should remain the flagship initiative of the EU's Eastern Policy, concluded the respondents, though there are certain differences between the V4 countries.

Hungarians were more sceptical in this respect, with only a slight majority (51.5%) supporting it. Interesting differences were identified in the answers to the question about the EaP's future focus. Respondents were asked to select up to three policy areas on which the EaP should concentrate in the future. The Poles and Hungarians placed a stress on economic development and mobility; Hungarian and Slovak respondents stressed energy security; and Czechs provided balanced answers stretching from economic and security issues to the strengthening of civil society, good governance and rule of law.

over political approximation. On the other hand, all V4 countries unequivocally believe that, if the EU has a leader in EaP matters, then it is Poland, with more than 90% of respondents from V4 countries listing it as one of three options when asked about the most vocal advocates of the EaP.

COHESION OR DIFFERENT PATHS

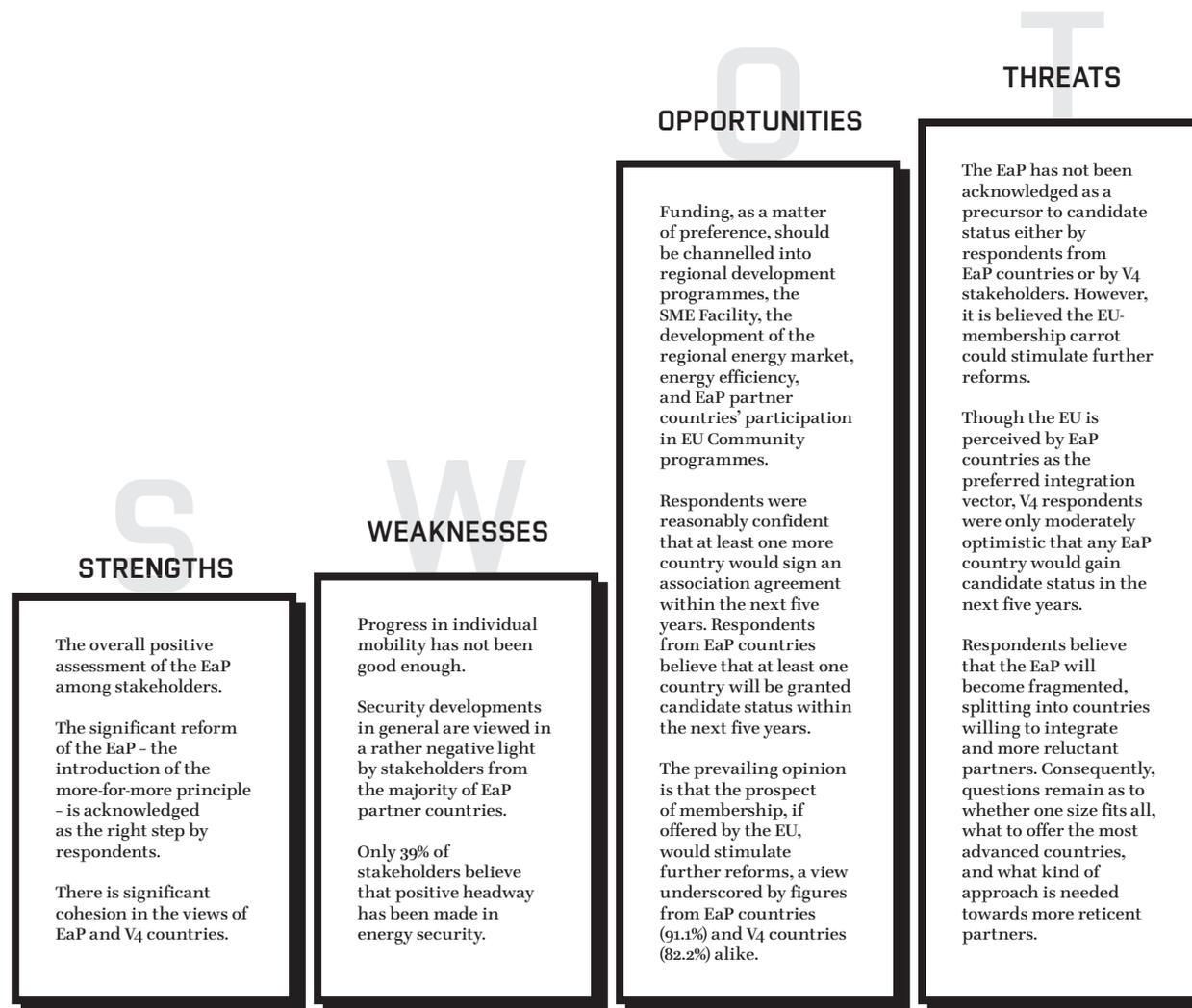
V4 observers usually say that Czechs and Poles tend to prefer the eastern vector of V4 external engagement, whereas Slovaks and Hungarians are more inclined towards the Western Balkans. This may well be correct, but different preferences do not automatically mean a clash of priorities, merely less proactivity on the part of certain countries within a single aspect of V4 cooperation. The survey has shown that the V4 countries tend to think along similar lines in most issues. Only data from Hungary indicate a certain aloofness in some aspects. Hungarian respondents were less enthusiastic about the interim results of the EaP and, by the same token, about EaP countries' integration prospects. They also favoured economic integration and energy security

Conclusions

This research has found that, despite all the shortcomings, the idea of the Eastern Partnership is still alive among those who interact with it. The results six years since its launch in Prague tend to be viewed positively and there is confidence that at least some partner countries are on a track to Europe.

However, the survey has also identified certain issues requiring attention. First, the Russian factor has been neglected. It is all the harder to ignore it now. Therefore, the EaP must focus on security, including energy security, as these issues are interconnected with Russian policy. Secondly, the EaP needs to be restructured. More attention ought to be paid to individual mobility, SMEs and regional development programmes. The more-for-more principle has been supported by respondents in the survey. Thirdly, it should be noted that there is no yawning gulf of opinion between the EaP and V4 countries, which suggests that a solution acceptable to all could be found in talks on EaP or ENP reform. Furthermore, it shows that the V4 should keep the EaP on its agenda. Divergences in views on the EaP, especially in Hungary, are, if anything, marginal and pose no threat to cooperation.

The findings are summed up as a final SWOT analysis.

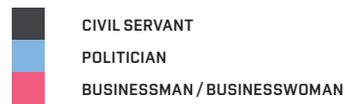
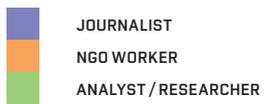
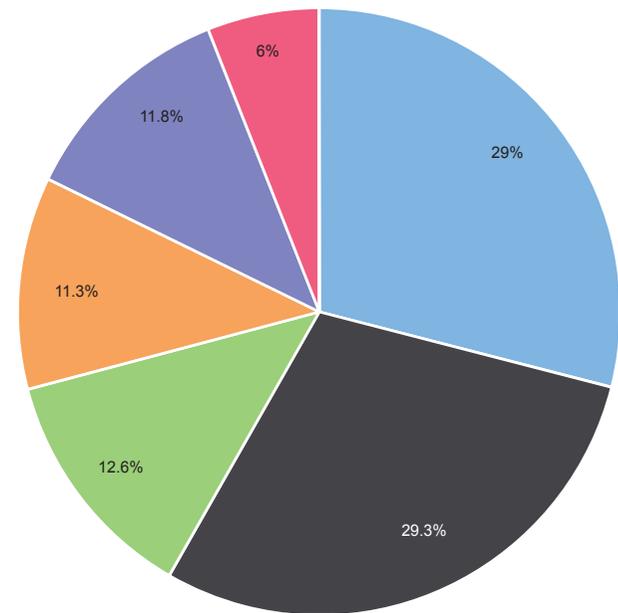
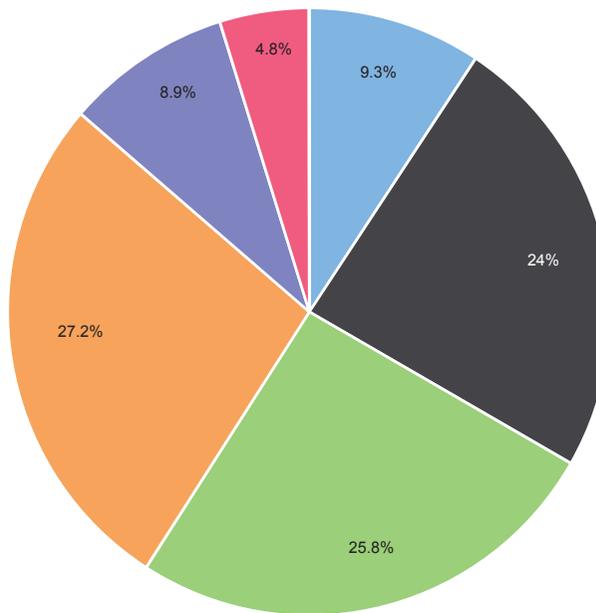
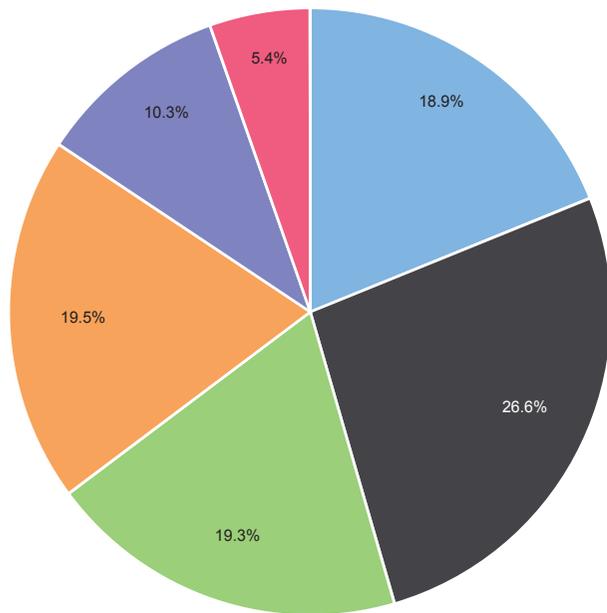


Which of the following options corresponds best to your current position? — Approached

ALL

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

VISEGRAD GROUP

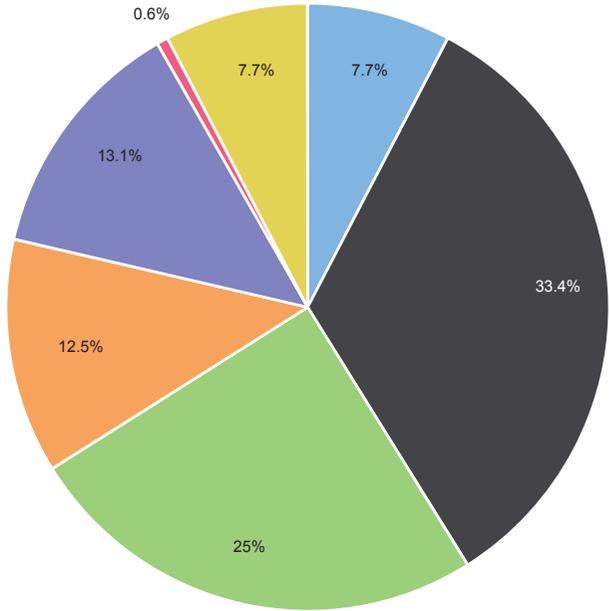
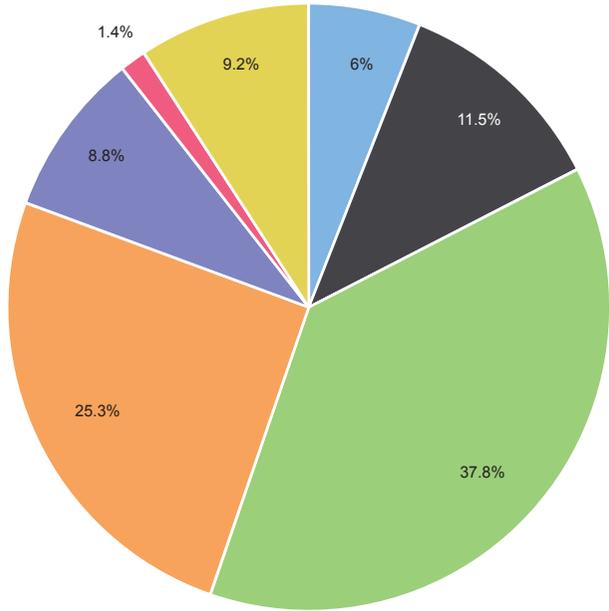
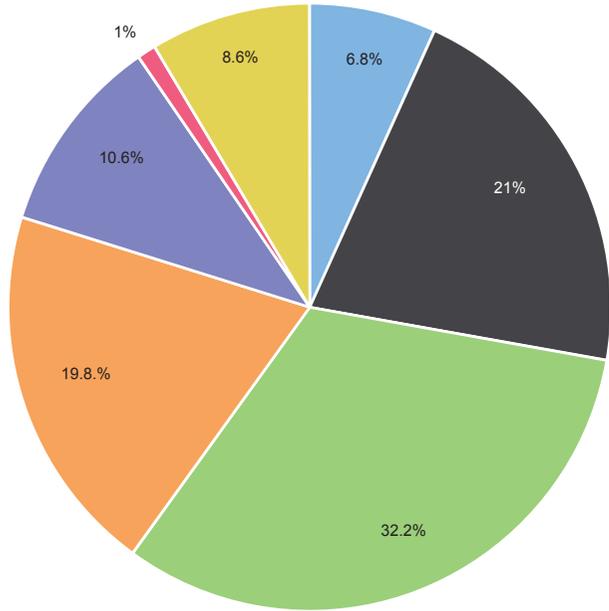


Which of the following options corresponds best to your current position? — Respondents

ALL

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

VISEGRAD GROUP



- JOURNALIST
- NGO WORKER
- ANALYST / RESEARCHER

- CIVIL SERVANT
- POLITICIAN
- BUSINESSMAN / BUSINESSWOMAN

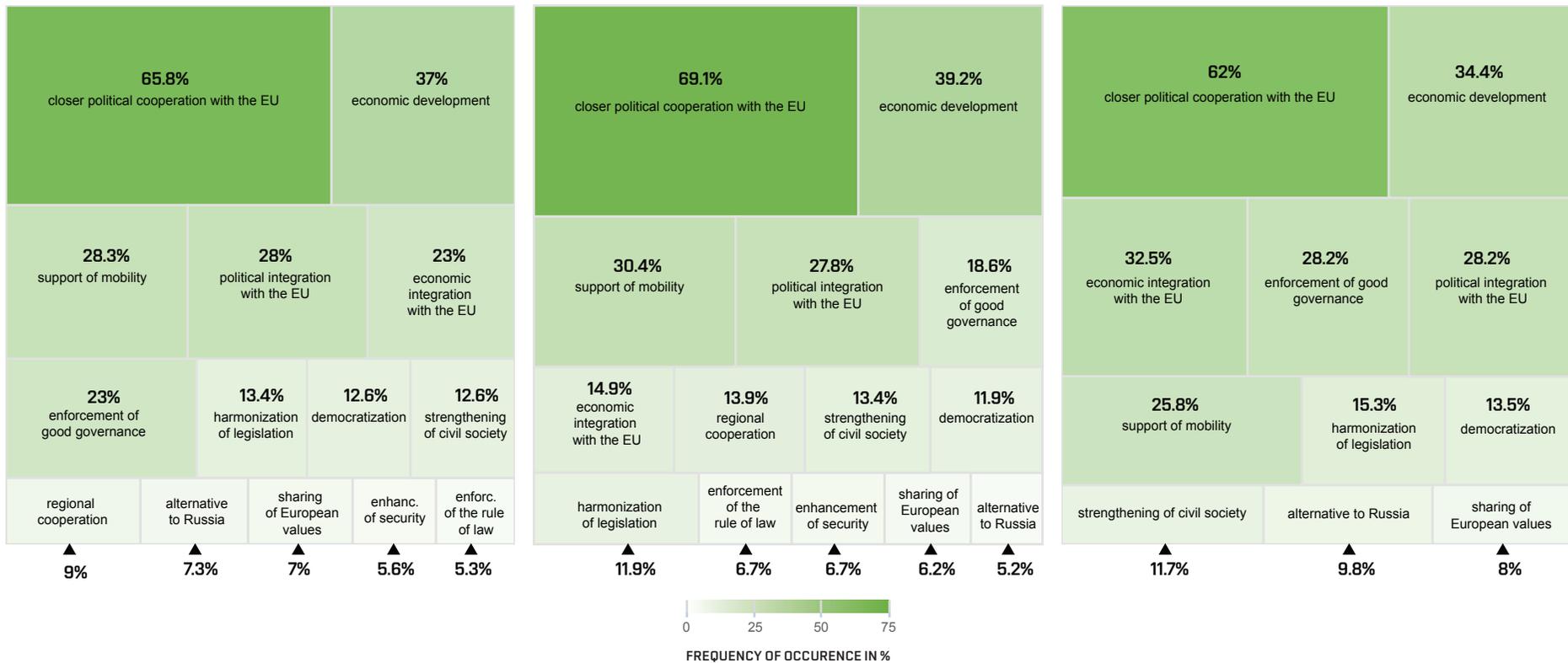
- OTHER

What do you consider to be three principal benefits of the EaP initiative for the partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine)?

ALL

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

WISEGRAD GROUP

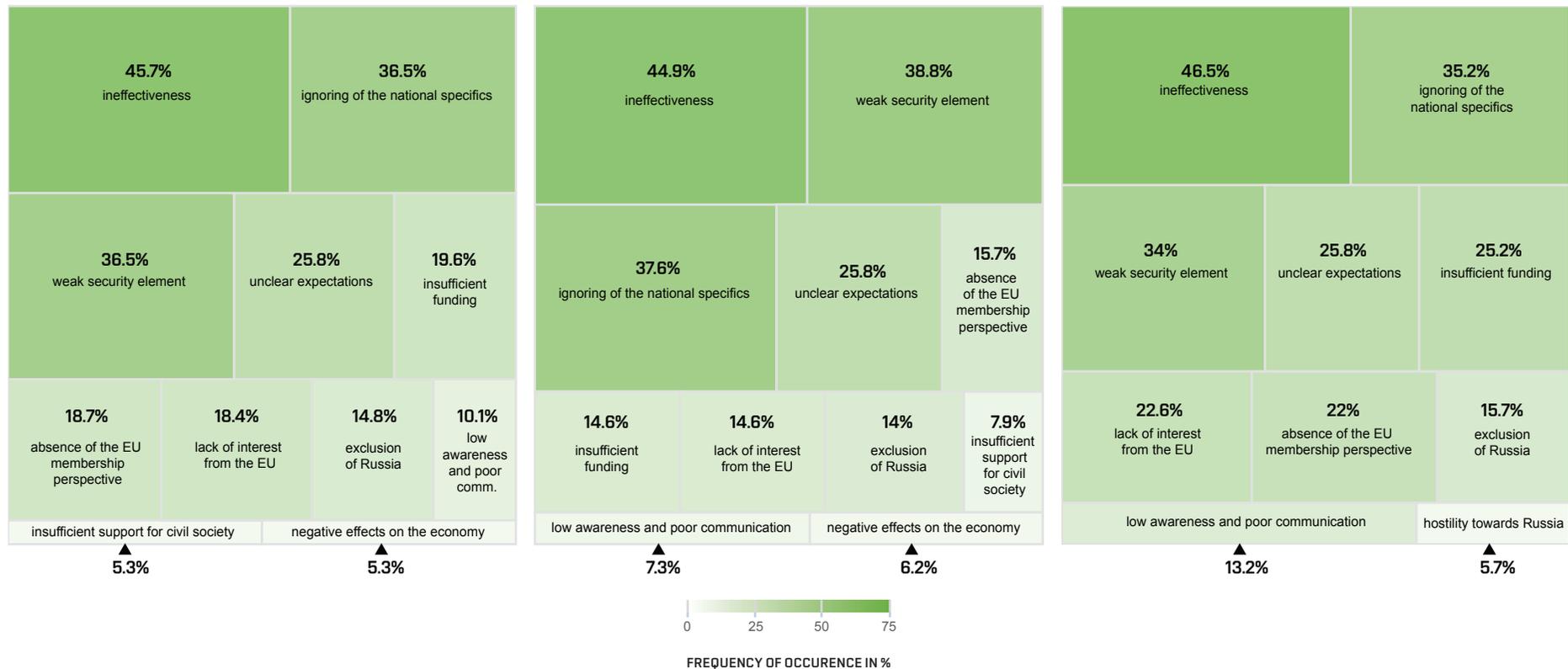


What do you consider to be three chief shortcomings of the EaP initiative for partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine)?

ALL

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

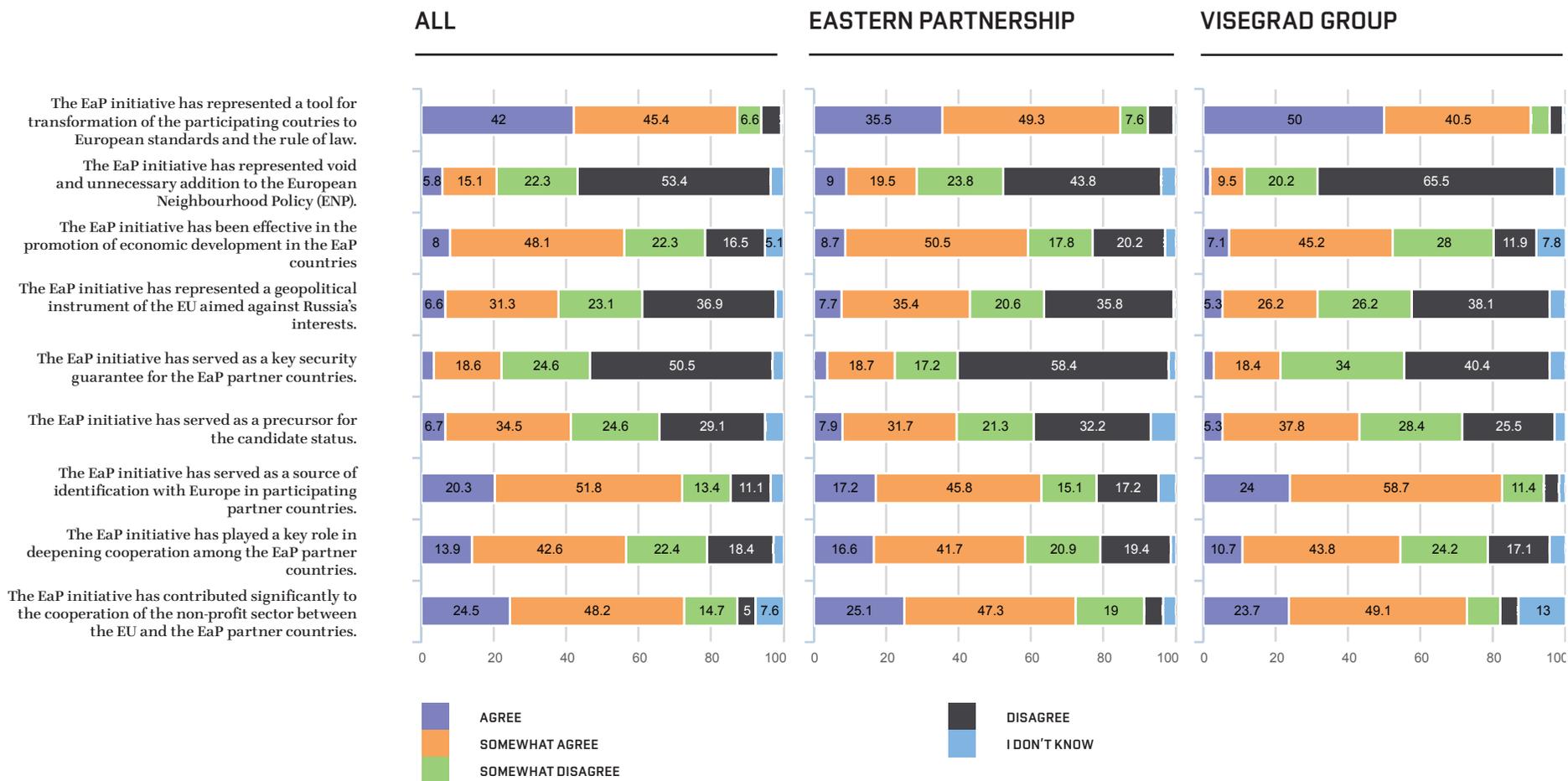
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Do you think that there has been significant progress made towards reaching the below listed goals stated by the Joint Declaration of the Prague EaP Summit, May 7, 2009?



To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the role of the EaP initiative?

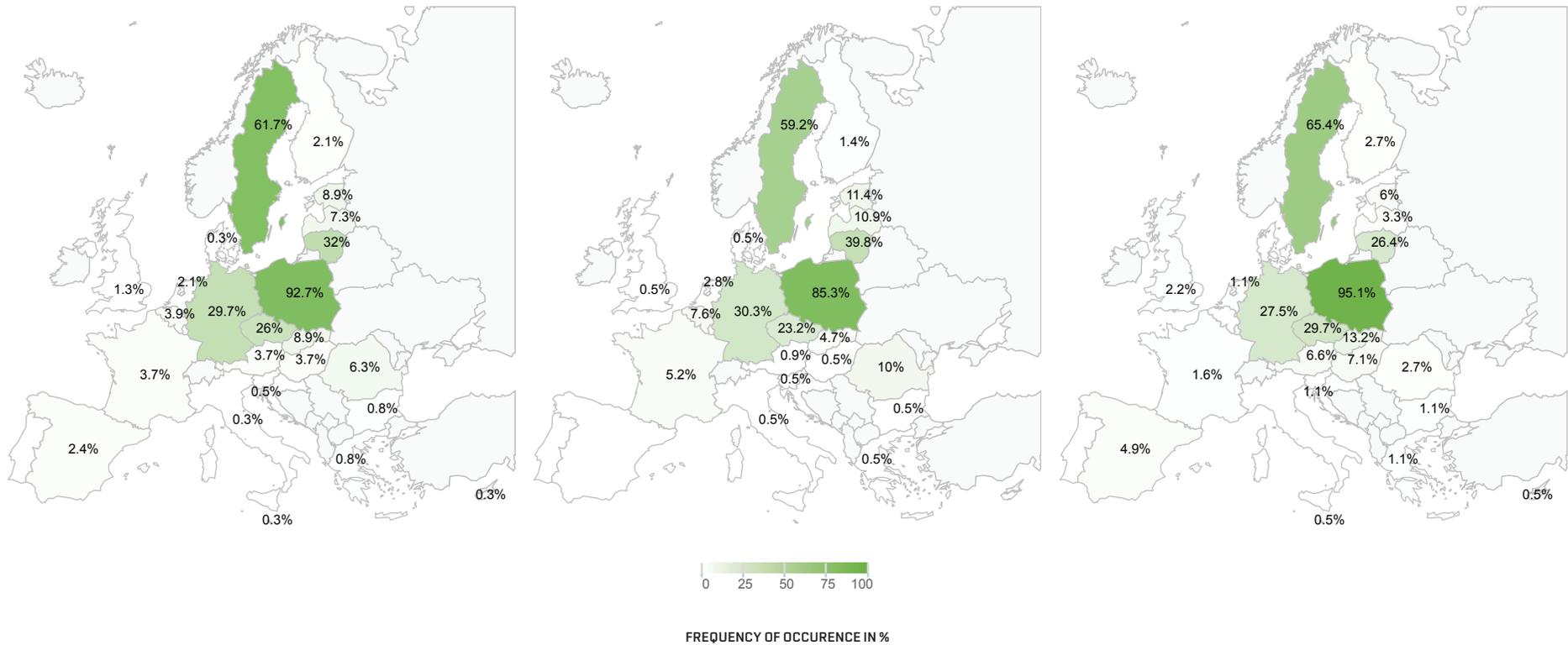


Name three EU member states which have been the most important advocates of the EaP initiative.

ALL

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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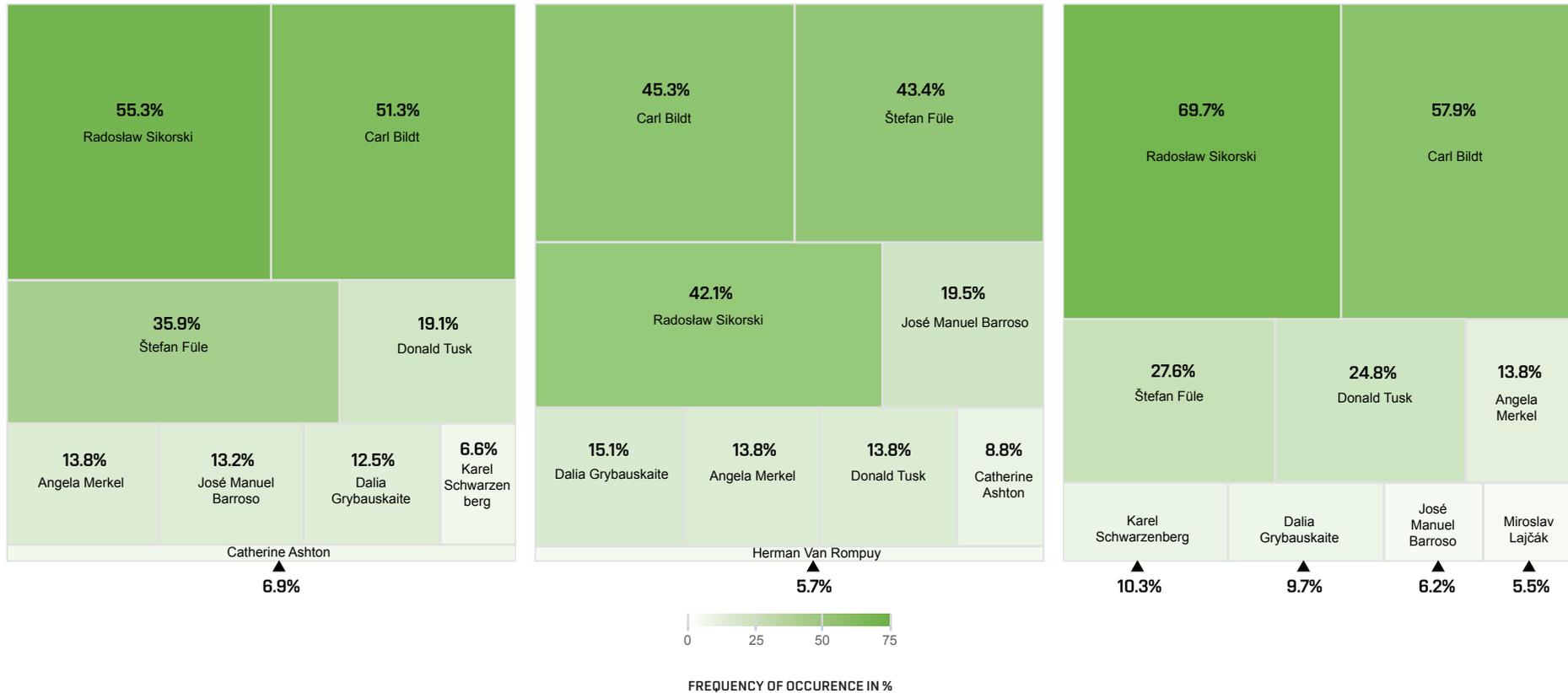


Name three European politicians who have been the most important advocates of the EaP initiative.

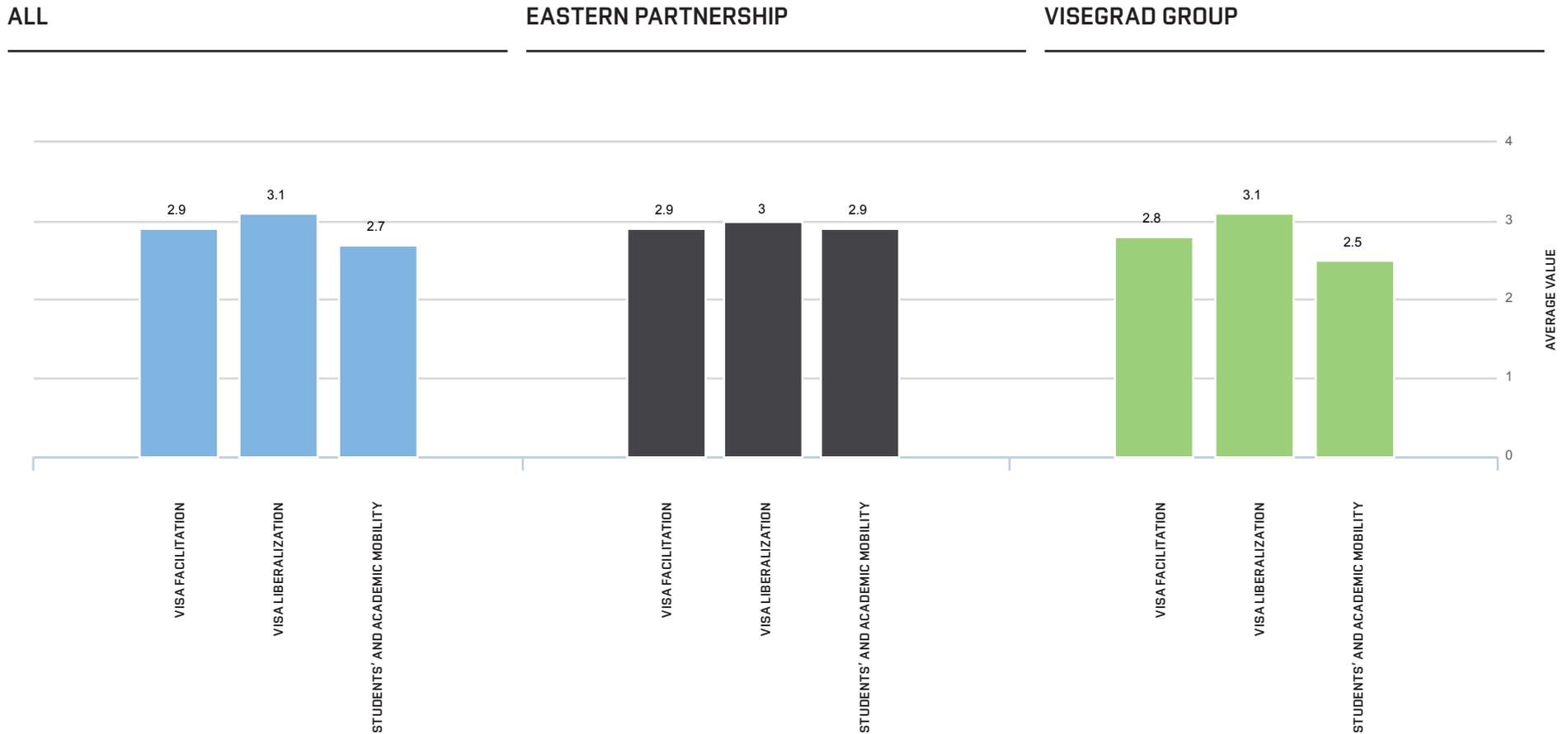
ALL

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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Evaluate the success of each of the following initiatives in the area of mobility of individuals on the scale from 1 to 5 (1 for the most successful and 5 for the least successful).

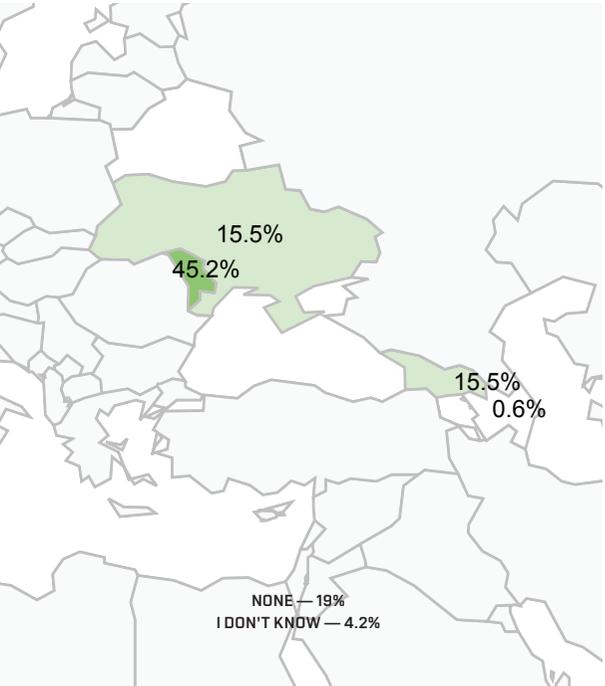
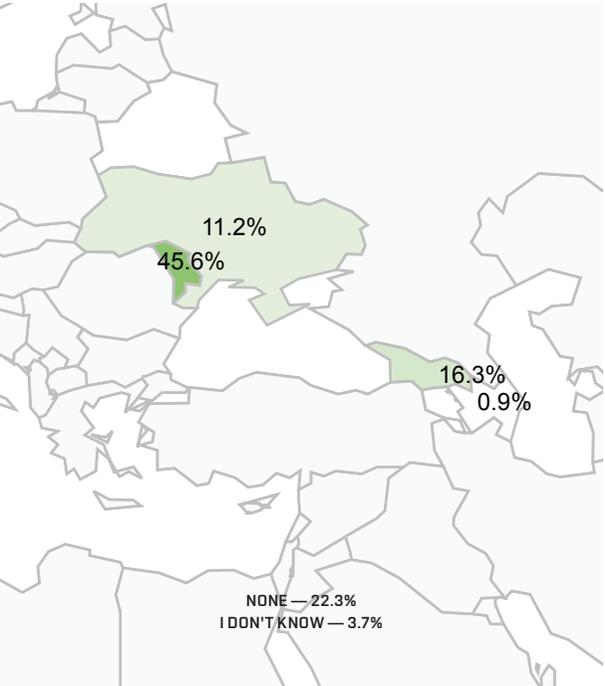
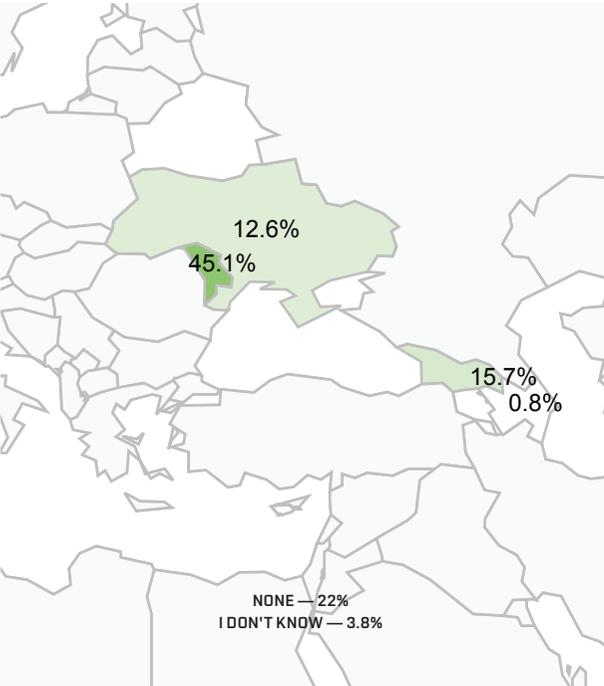


Which state is most likely to get the EU candidate status?

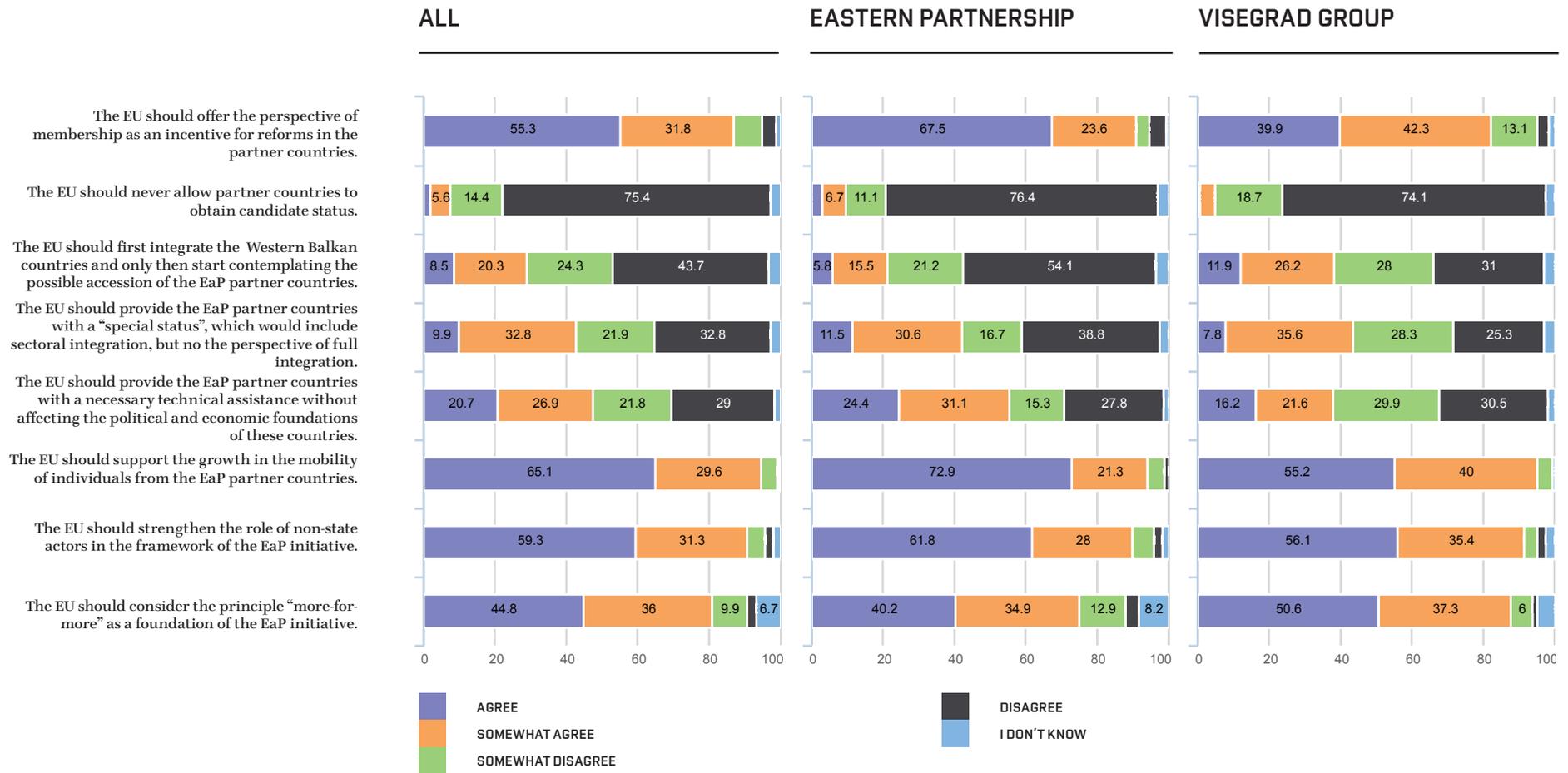
ALL

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the role of the EU?

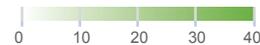


Name three most important policy areas that should be covered by the EaP initiative in the next five years.

ALL

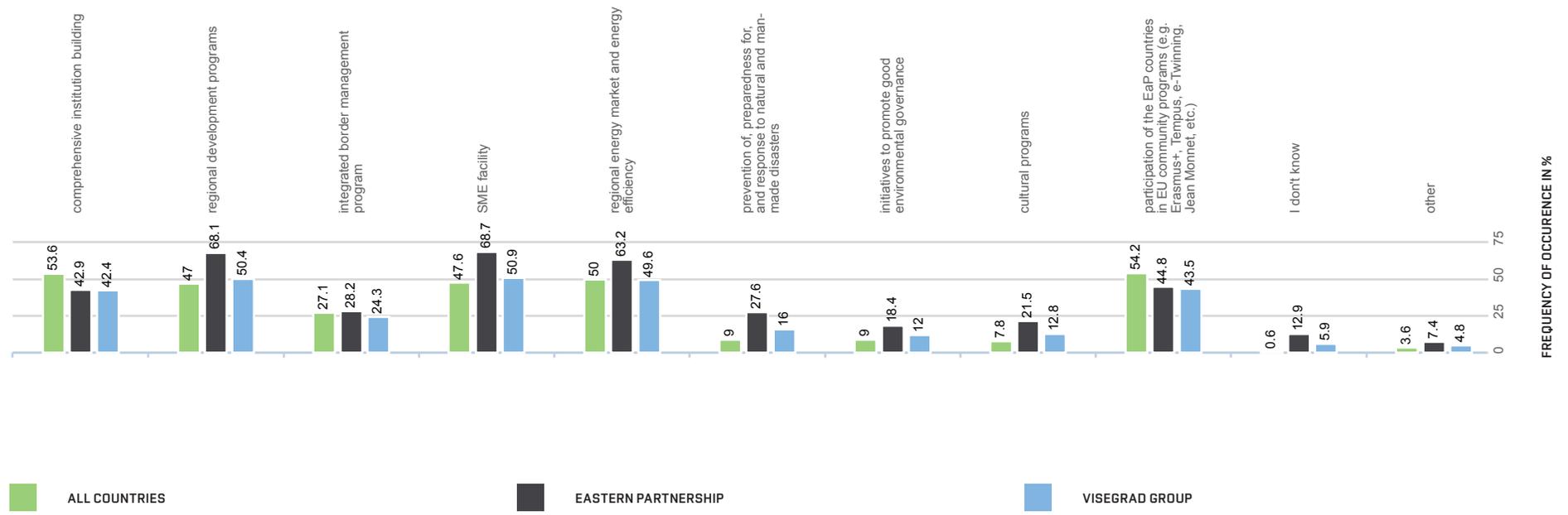
EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

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FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE IN %

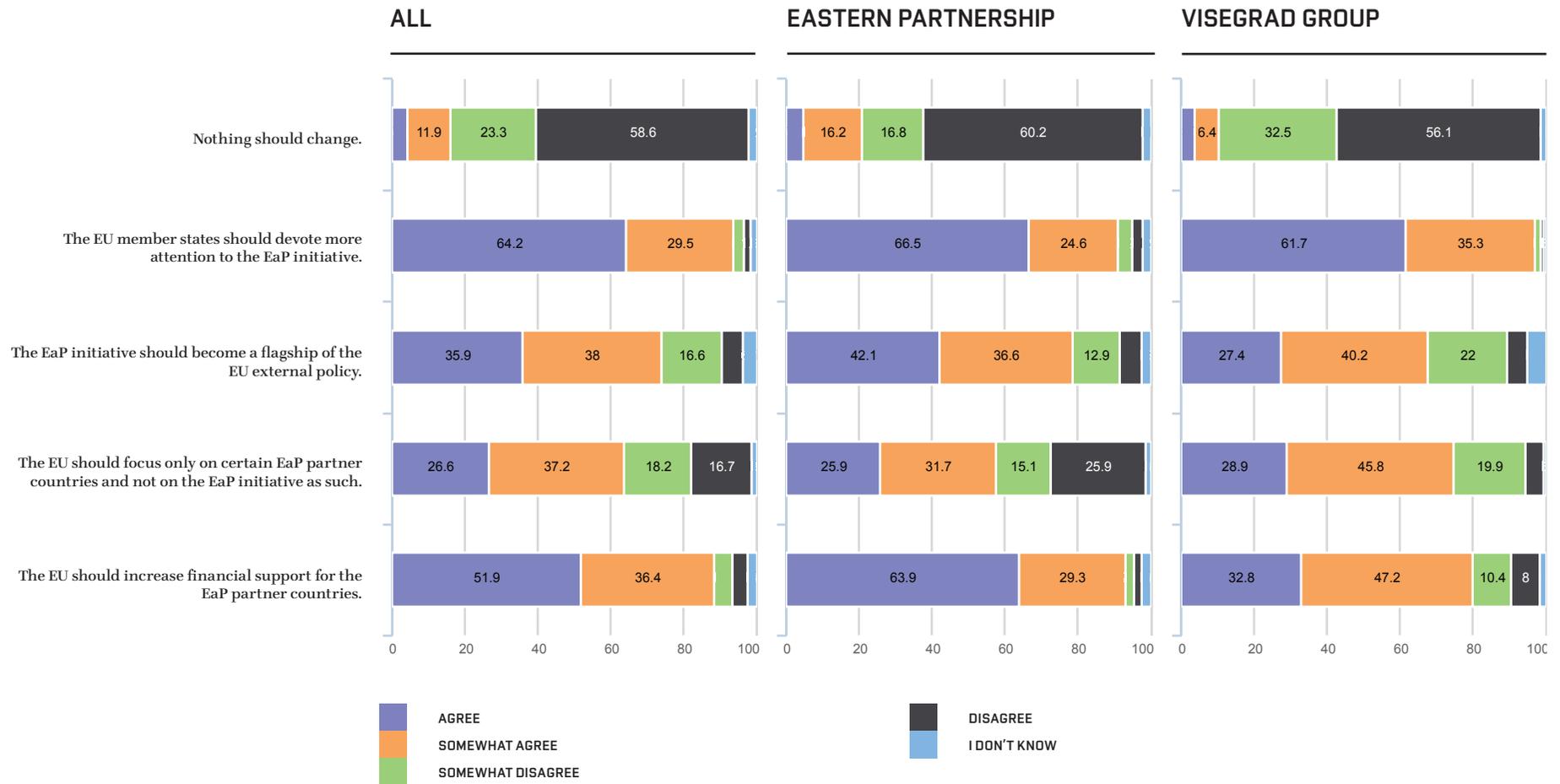
Select three policy areas of the EaP initiative where you think the funding should preferably go in the next five years.



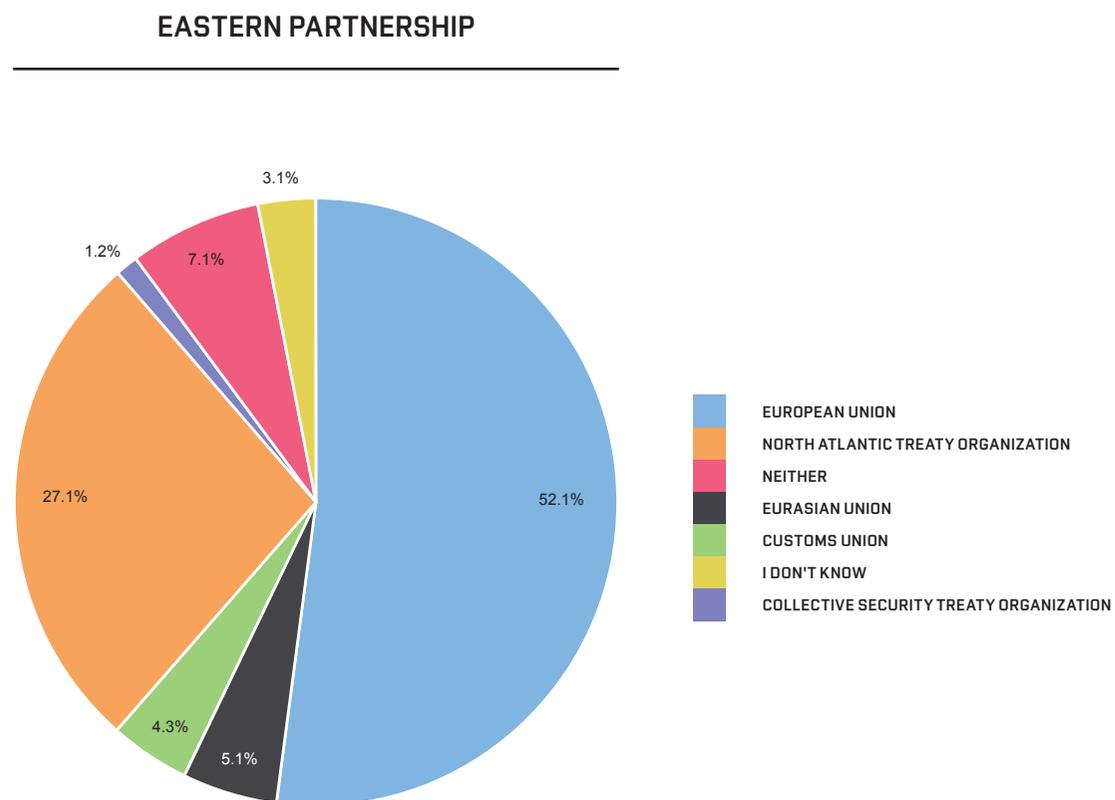
To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the future development of the EaP initiative in the next five years?



What should be the consequences of the events in Ukraine for the EaP initiative?



Integration to which structure would be the most beneficial to your country?



About Publisher

ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (AMO)

Association for International Affairs is a non-governmental non-profit organization founded in 1997. The mission of AMO has been to contribute to a deeper understanding of international affairs through a broad range of educational and research activities. Thanks to its activities in the Czech Republic and abroad and long-term tradition, AMO has established itself as the Czech leading independent institution in the field of international relations and foreign policy.

IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS AMO STRIVES TO:

- formulate and publish briefings, research and policy papers;
- arrange international conferences, expert seminars, roundtables, public debates;
- organize educational projects;
- present critical assessments and comments on current events for local and international press;
- create vital conditions for growth of a new expert generation;
- support interest in international relations in the wider public domain;
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The Research Center of the Association for International Affairs is a leading Czech think-tank, which is not bound to any political party or ideology. With its activities, it supports an active approach to foreign policy, provides an independent analysis of current political issues and encourages expert and public debate on related topics. The main goal of the Research Center is systematic observation, analysis and commentary on international affairs with special focus on Czech foreign policy.

Trends of Eastern Partnership is the third project in row using similar methodology: collection of answers from experts on selected foreign policy theme. The pilot project was the Trends of Czech Foreign Policy: Study of Foreign-Policy Elites in 2011. It was followed by Trends of Czech European Policy: Study of European Policy Elites in 2013. Results of both projects are available at TRENDY.AMO.CZ.

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