



Partnership for Good Governance for Eastern Partnership Countries online event: Improving the Lives of Citizens Through Better Governance

Recorded Message by Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement



Dear participants and colleagues,

We live in unprecedented times caused by the **COVID-19 outbreak**. And to manage the challenges ahead of us, we need unprecedented responses. The European Commission is hard at work to ensure them in order to kick-start economic recovery and to shape a better way of living for the world of tomorrow.

From the very beginning of this crisis, the European Union has shown solidarity and cooperation with international partners in tackling the pandemic, including in its Eastern Partner countries. And our efforts continue, since we can only recover together.

This week we are celebrating the **EU-Council of Europe ‘Partnership for Good Governance’**. The work that this partnership is doing is important part of the efforts to promote and protect democracy, alongside human rights and the rule of law across the world. It is also important in the context of recovery efforts: without democracy, long-term development and economic prosperity cannot exist, nor can peace and stability. President von der Leyen’s highlighted this in her recent 2020 State of the Union address.

When it comes to our **Eastern Partnership** policy, the Partnership for Good Governance was fundamental in achieving results in priority areas of strengthening democratic institutions and good governance in our partner countries. Earlier this year, the EU put forward five policy objectives for the Eastern Partnership policy for the future, beyond 2020. We outline how the EU will work together with the partner countries to tackle common challenges and strengthen their **resilience** in the light of today’s – and tomorrow’s – challenges. Among others, we call for a **renewed**

commitment to the fundamentals of the partnership. Resilient and democratic governance and institutions, the rule of law, successful anti-corruption policies, fighting economic and organised crime, respect of human rights and security: these are the backbone of strong and resilient states and societies. They are also pre-conditions for **ensuring an effective business climate** that will **attract foreign direct investment, as well** as delivering **sustainable economic growth.**

On the basis of the five policy objectives we are now working on **deliverables** that will respond to the challenges we face and bring tangible, positive results for all citizens. These deliverables should be adopted at the Eastern Partnership Summit in March of next year.

I am confident that the Partnership for Good Governance will continue to help us achieve further positive results, including in some new areas!

The rapid development of new **digital tools** brings an enormous potential for our societies and economies, but also new challenges and threats. The fundamental rights and rules protecting them must also be applied to cyberspace. The EU remains committed to support our Eastern Partners to implement fully the Council of Europe's **Budapest Convention on cybercrime**, which is key for an effective criminal justice and law enforcement response. This is needed to protect our citizens from such threats.

Our long-standing cooperation with the Council of Europe will help us to achieve this and other shared objectives in matters related to democracy in Eastern Partner countries. In July, the EU adopted its **priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe** for the next two years. They also cover areas that are priorities of this partnership.

Among the actions we support is also a new '**quick response mechanism**', through which we fund opinions of the Venice Commission on constitutional matters and electoral legislation. To date, 12 requests have been processed from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. These opinions have often helped resolve difficult political issues.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us use the next 3 days to celebrate our common achievements. Moreover, I am ready to consider in our work on the **post-2020 objectives** for the Eastern Partnership the suggestions and ideas that may emerge from these discussions.

I wish you all a successful event, with a lot of shared reflection on how to build more resilient societies in our partner countries.

Thank you for your attention.