Major Challenges Ahead

- **Rule of Law**, the implementation of judicial reforms and the fight against corruption
- Further protecting the **environment** and actively tackling climate change
- Increasing societal resilience by countering hybrid threats and disinformation
- Strengthening the environment for civil society and a free and independent media
- Stepping up EU engagement to help improve the lives of citizens affected by the conflicts in the region

Launched in 2009 as a joint policy initiative, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the European Union (EU), its Member States and its six Eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Within this framework, all partners have committed to demonstrate and deliver tangible benefits to the daily lives of citizens across the region.
The EU has new political and economic bilateral agreements, which guide relations and cooperation with most Eastern Partner countries and bring tangible benefits to citizens across the region.

More trade and investment opportunities between the EU Member States and the six Eastern Partner countries:
- More investment: The number of companies from DCFTA countries exporting to the EU has significantly increased since 2015: Georgia by 35%, Moldova by 40% and Ukraine by 26%.
- More trade: The six Eastern Partner countries together are now the EU’s 10th trading partner. Volumes of trade have also increased: by 12% with Armenia, 28% with Azerbaijan, 16% with Belarus.

More energy resilience and efficiency by decreasing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, and by increasing the share of renewable energy:
- Thanks to EU support, almost 100,000 families could reduce their energy bills and improve their living standards.
- The Covenant of Mayors – the EU’s trademark initiative for local energy and climate action – has grown into a network of 400 municipalities, covering around 40% of the 6 partners, while over 10% of the whole population have benefitted from municipal infrastructure improvements thanks to the E5P Fund.

Support for young people, particularly in terms of developing their skills and fostering their employability, including through more access to EU programmes:
- More than 80,000 youth exchanges by 2020 including through the Erasmus+ programme.
- The European School launched in Tbilisi offers high quality education to the leaders of the future.

More diversified and vibrant economies across the region, which attract investment and create jobs. The EU has provided over 125,000 loans to SMEs, of which more than 50% were in local currency, to support growth in the region.

Better transport links and infrastructure under the EU’s TEN-T extension which foresees 4,800 km of new and rehabilitated roads and railways by 2030. This will open new opportunities for economic development and exchanges between the EU and the Partner Countries, as well as among the Partner Countries themselves.

Visa free regimes have been put in place between the EU and Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. The EU has facilitation and readmission agreements in place with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and has finalised negotiations with Belarus. These are key in promoting the movement of both EU and partner country citizens in a secure and well-managed environment.

Easier access to a high-capacity broadband internet network for 2 million scientists, academics and students at over 700 Research and Education institutions in the six Eastern Partner countries.

More awareness of the EU among citizens across the Eastern Partner countries, as well as the Eastern Partnership among EU citizens.