

The Future of the EU Policy Towards the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia Public Round Table

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*Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. Österreich – Multilateral Dialogue Vienna
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The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is changing the geopolitical environment in the post-Soviet area. With the exception of Belarus, it strengthened Eastern European states' orientation towards the West and accelerated their rapprochement to the EU. In the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, there is a growing interest in closer relations with the bloc. However, these countries' interest is less driven by a wish for European integration, but the necessity to balance the increasing influence of China in the region, since Russia is not a viable option for counterbalancing anymore.

There is a window of opportunity for strengthening the EU's foreign policy role in political and economic terms. The partner countries are especially interested in deepening their economic relations with the EU. Western sanctions against Russia have led to the relocation of both companies and experts from Russia to countries such as Kazakhstan and Armenia. To a certain degree, these countries have also become hubs to circumvent these sanctions.

Current developments in the Union's Eastern Neighbourhood require a reconsideration of the EU's policy towards the region. With maybe three countries moving to Enlargement Policy, how could a future Eastern Partnership – with Armenia and Azerbaijan remaining, look like? In the short-term, the EU should upgrade its relations with these countries. Still, the strong focus on the war in Ukraine and the already largely exhausted flexibility of the current Multiannual Financial Framework limit resources available for reinforcing EU engagement. In the medium-term, a revision of the institutional setup of the EU policy towards Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia is necessary, since the current Eastern Partnership will become dysfunctional with only three remaining partner states.

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Prof. Dr. Ghia NODIA, Director of the International School of Caucasus Studies, Ilia State University, Tbilisi

Dr. Gerhard SAILLER, Ambassador, Deputy Director General, Directorate General, Federal Ministry of the Republic of Austria for European and International Affairs, Vienna (tbc)

Arman YEGHOYAN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Armenian Parliament, Yerevan

Chair: Florence ERTEL, University of Passau

To participate, please register by email to florence.ertel@uni-passau.de.