

Article – Good neighbours: EU relations with countries on its eastern borders



The EU values good relations with other countries, especially those along its borders. Through a variety of initiatives from free trade agreements to partnerships, it seeks to stimulate trade and cooperation and encourage democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

This also applies to the countries along its eastern borders. In fact [countries in the Western Balkans could be next to join the EU](#). Candidate countries include Montenegro, Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates.

The EU has also set up the [Eastern Partnership](#), a framework for collaboration between the EU and eastern neighbours Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus.

In addition to helping these countries with the Covid-19 outbreak, the EU is also reflecting on how to deepen relations.

Support with Covid-19 pandemic

In addition to €3.07 billion, announced in April, from existing resources, on 15 May, [Parliament approved €3 billion in favourable loans](#) to help EU neighbours and partner countries deal with the fallout from Covid-19: Albania (€180 million), Bosnia and Herzegovina (€250 million), Georgia (€150

million), Jordan (€200 million), Kosovo (€100 million), Moldova (€100 million), Montenegro (€60 million), North Macedonia (€160 million), Tunisia (€600 million) and Ukraine (€1.2 billion).

Other concrete EU measures include a new health security initiative with the European Centre for Disease Control. The €9 million initiative covers all 23 neighbourhood and enlargement countries and focuses on capacity-building for epidemiologists and front-line health staff in partner countries.

[Read more about how the EU is supporting other regions, including Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries](#)

[Discover 10 things the EU is doing to fight the coronavirus and its impact](#)

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Future relations

The EU is currently reflecting on the best way to advance relations with its eastern neighbours and Parliament is keen to contribute to the discussion.

On 17 June the Parliament will vote on a [resolution regarding the Western Balkan countries](#) in which MEPs call on the EU to do more to make the enlargement process for these countries succeed.

The Parliament has always been in favour of Western Balkan countries having the opportunity to join the EU once they are ready. In a [resolution adopted last October](#), Parliament expressed disappointment that Albania and North Macedonia were not able to start accession talks, stressing that the enlargement process has played a decisive role in stabilising the Western Balkans.

After months of delay, in March, the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia.

On 17 June, Parliament will also vote on a [resolution regarding the Eastern Partnership](#), which deals with how MEPs want the partnership to develop ahead of a crucial summit on 18 June.

In May 2019, the European Commission launched a consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership to help identify new policy objectives. This led to a [communication on the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020](#) adopted by EU leaders in May 2020. The next step is the Eastern Partnership summit on 18 June 2020.