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[Press release](#) | 22.05.2015

Eastern Partnership Summit

EU must support sovereign choices of neighbourhood countries

Commenting on the outcome of today's summit between the EU and its 6 Eastern Partnership countries, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** and Green foreign policy spokesperson **Heidi Hautala** (1) said:

"Now, more than ever, we must work to ensure our partner countries in the East are encouraged to continue on the path of European integration. Clearly, this is a path the countries themselves need to choose, rather than some kind of compulsion, but the EU must support the right to free and sovereign choices of countries in our neighbourhood. It is also crucial that the possibility of membership remains open.

"The conclusion of Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine confirm the two-track nature of the Eastern Partnership. These agreements cannot be the final point of the European integration process for these countries and the EU must continue to integrate our Eastern partners. This is equally as important for the other 3 partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus), to encourage them to also make further efforts in the process. To this end, it is a big mistake that there has again been no breakthrough in overhauling the burdensome and unfair visa regime, which is currently in place for Georgia and Ukraine.

"One of the key calls of the summit is a need for more differentiation and flexibility. At the same time the Eastern Partnership needs to remain inclusive to meet the needs of all six countries. Energy security issues, justice reforms and the fight against corruption are important for all of them.

"The summit has been overshadowed by the boycott of Azerbaijani president Aliiev. This only confirms his unwillingness to address the serious concerns about human rights in his country, which have been brought into sharp focus by civil society organisations in the context of the Baku European Games. Instead of tip-toeing around the issue, EU governments and the EU institutions need to now proactively engage with all our Eastern partners and ensure that human rights and the promotion of democracy are top priorities. These core European values cannot be for sale and we cannot turn a blind eye to rights abuses for narrow commercial interests."

(1) Heidi Hautala attended and addressed the summit today in her role as co-chair of the EURONEST assembly.

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Rebecca Harms

Member



Heidi Hautala

EP Vice-President, Member

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