

RETHINKING THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY. EASTERN PARTNERSHIP¹

*Mircea BRIE**

Abstract. *The new geopolitical realities, in conjunction with the redeployment of European policy and program directions in the aftermath of the crisis, with the new foreign policy priorities and neighborhood borders of the EU, have led to the need to rethink the European Neighborhood Policy. Reforming this policy for the Eastern European Space through the implementation of the Eastern Partnership did not reach its original goal. The current paper aims to analyze the European Neighborhood Policy in terms of its evolution, its mechanisms and instruments, but also by addressing the new challenges that European integration has in Eastern Europe. Beyond the general and contextual introductory character, the emphasis is on the analysis of the Eastern Partnership, its progress, its stages and, in particular, its current challenges. The European Neighborhood Policy has evolved much since its launch in the early 2000s. The European Union has been obliged to rethink this policy due to the new geopolitical challenges, but also to the need for internal reformation, including at the institutional level. Thereby, European policies and programs for cooperation at European external borders have diversified and adapted to the new needs. The rethinking of the ENP has led to the implementation of Eastern Partnership in Eastern Europe, a partnership that initially wanted to be a solid, open-ended opportunity to facilitate the European integration of the six partner countries. Meanwhile, the geopolitical context has changed a lot. Russia has strengthened regional power, and the European presence has been considered a competitive situation where former Soviet states that have begun a special relationship with the EU have often been forced to choose between the two sides.*

Keywords: *European Union, Neighborhood, Eastern Partnership, cross-border cooperation*

¹ The present work constitutes a revised edition of several own contributions within the paper Jordan Gheorghe Bărbulescu (coord.), Mircea Brie, Nicolae Toderaș, *Cooperarea transfrontalieră între România și Ucraina, respectiv între România și Republica Moldova. Oportunități și provocări între 2014-2020*, Tritonic, București, 2016, 232 p. The study *Cooperarea transfrontalieră între România și Ucraina, respectiv între România și Republica Moldova. Oportunități și provocări între 2014-2020* is part of the series „Studii de Strategie și Politici SPOS 2015”, elaborated under the European Institute from Romania (EIR); Mircea Brie, *A New European Neighbourhood Policy toward Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in the Context of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the Association Agreements (AA)*, in *Studii Europene*, nr. 10, Chisinău, 2017, p. 123-155.

* PhD professor at the University of Oradea, Department of International Relations and European Studies. E-mail: briedri@hotmail.com