

# Coming to an EU near you – soon

*With the 10-year anniversary of the EU's "Eastern Partnership" coming up, **Brexit Facts4EU.Org** takes a closer look at the EU's current plans for expansion, and the direction they are likely to take. This article was originally published on the Brexit Facts4EU.Org website and is reproduced with kind permission.*

The EU's "Eastern Partnership" celebrates its 10-year anniversary in just two weeks' time. Unelected EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn has been in Yerevan in Armenia this week for further discussions.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a policy initiative which aims to deepen relations between the European Union, its Member States and six of its Eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The EaP is part of the EU's "European Neighbourhood Policy" which governs its relations with 16 of its eastern and southern neighbours. To the South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia; and to the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The EU claims that, "Over the past decade, the collective efforts of the European Union, its Member States and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine have brought considerable benefits to the citizens including more trade, mobility, increased economic development and better quality of life."

This may come as news to the people of Ukraine in particular, who have seen their country torn apart by civil war against a

Russian-backed militia in the east of the country. Russia has also illegally annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, in the south. Many commentators have argued that the EU's overly-assertive moves to bring Ukraine into the EU were seen by Russia as a direct threat, given the size of their neighbouring country, and that this is what caused Russia to act.

## **Where else is the EU expanding?**

So, aside from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, where else is the EU trying to expand?

The "Eastern Partnership" must not be confused with the EU's primary targets for expansion, which are the six Balkan countries of Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The latter country is still not even recognised by many countries around the world.

The EU has six Stabilisation and Association Agreements in force with these countries, which started in 2004 and with the most recent being with Kosovo. Four of these countries are now in official negotiations for EU membership: Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia.

Serbia and Montenegro have already started negotiations and are underway in terms of their desired membership. These are the two countries that Juncker says will be members within six years.

*"I do think that the two countries [Serbia and Montenegro] will be members of the European Union before 2025."*

*– Jean-Claude Juncker, speaking with Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov late in 2017*

In addition to the four countries above, two more countries have been promised the prospect of joining when they are ready: Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo (still not

recognised by many countries around the world). Finally there is Turkey, not part of the Balkans arrangement, but still an EU accession country.

## **How important are all these countries?**

To the EU they are all very important, particularly since the British people voted to leave.

When the latest two countries were granted accession status last year (Albania and Macedonia), Brexit Facts4EU.Org produced a simple chart showing the difference between the UK leaving and these two countries joining.



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As can be seen, the effect of these countries joining the EU can only mean another enormous drain on those EU countries which are still members. If all these very poor countries join the EU, this will barely add to EU GDP but it will most definitely soak up vast resources from member countries.