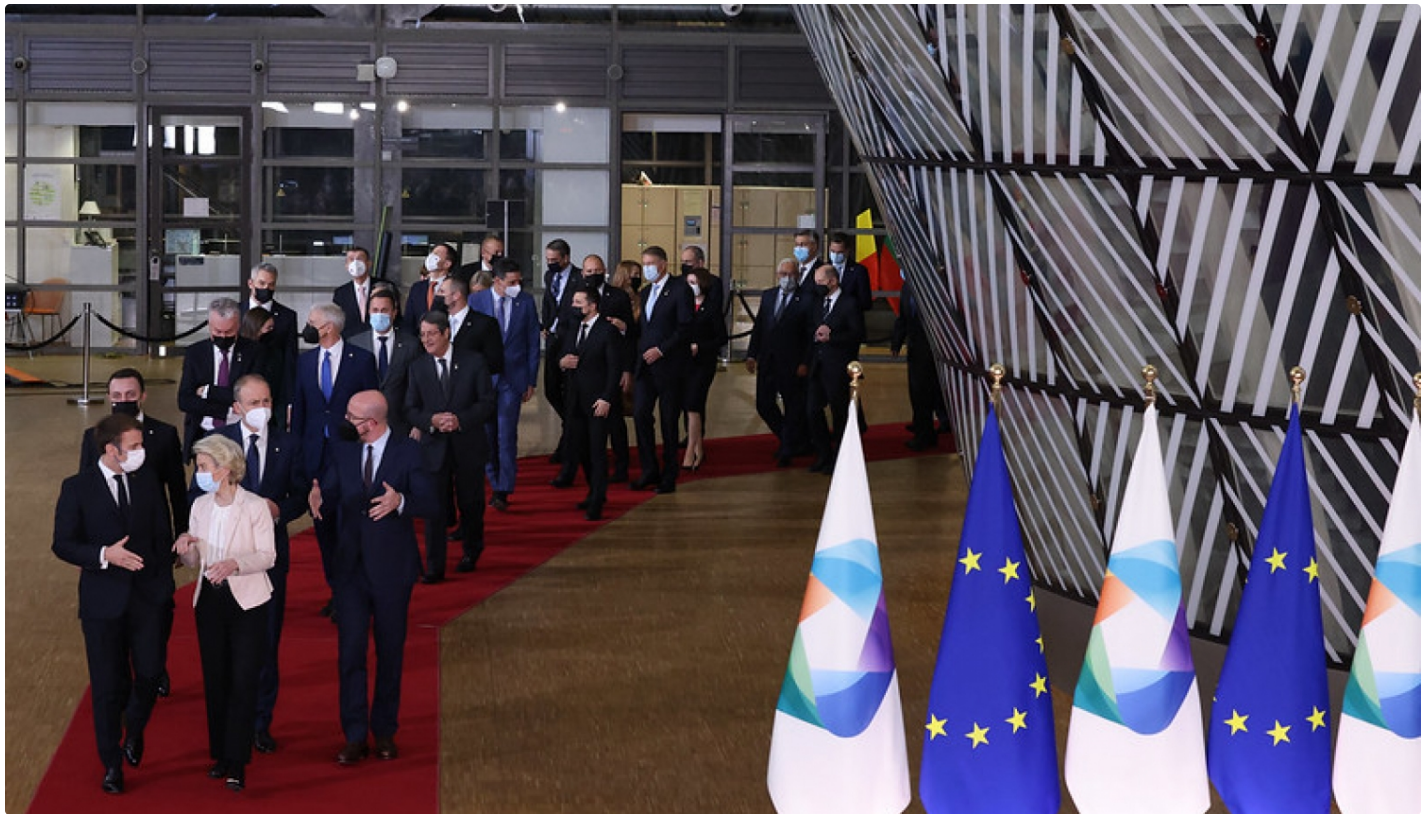


## Kariņš: The EU needs to strengthen Eastern partner countries

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On Wednesday 15 December, Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš participated in the sixth Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels, where leaders of the European Union (EU) met with leaders of partner countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The aim of the Summit is to demonstrate that this partnership is rooted in shared values, unity and solidarity.

99 Addressing the participants of the Summit, Prime Minister K. Kariņš stressed, “The complex and worrying security aspects in the region need to be taken into consideration, including the situation in Belarus and its hybrid attack on the external border of the European Union, the concentration of Russia’s armed forces on the Ukraine’s border and energy crisis caused by Russia, as well as disinformation campaigns against Western countries. In the current geopolitical context, it is important to maintain a strong EU position, to continue to support reform processes and to strengthen the resilience of the Eastern Partners. The Eastern Partnership policy must bring tangible benefits to the societies of the partner countries.”

The Prime Minister called the EU to be supportive and to respond to the willingness of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova to deepen cooperation, as well as to gradually integrate them into the EU’s internal market. K. Kariņš emphasized that the Eastern Partnership policy has proved to be successful, while keeping in mind that countries differ in their level of ambition to align with the EU.

The agreement was reached at the Summit on the future strategic policy objectives and the Joint Declaration, clearly demonstrating not only the ambitions of the Eastern Partnership policy, but also mutual responsibility to continue it in the future.

It is vital at this time for the Eastern Partnership to ensure the recovery of partner countries after the Covid-19 pandemic, to support the implementation of reforms, as well as to strengthen the resilience of partner countries, ensuring their future development. It was confirmed at the summit that the Eastern Partnership agenda will be based on reforms, recovery and resilience.

As the Belarusian regime decided to suspend its membership of the Eastern Partnership, an empty chair was left for Belarus at the summit. The relevance of the Belarusian civil society in the Eastern Partnership policy was reaffirmed on 12 December, when the foreign ministers of the EU Member States met with the representatives of the Belarussian opposition and civil society.

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