Strengthening sustainable and digital trade routes and logistics concepts between Eastern Partnership countries and with the EU

EasTnT – Eastern Partnership for Trade and Transport

The challenge

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative of the European Union comprising Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, with the overarching objective of facilitating their gradual integration into the EU's internal market. Achieving this objective requires the adoption and implementation of digital, sustainable, and climate-friendly solutions within the transport and logistics sectors. Realizing such a transformation calls for comprehensive structural reforms, reinforced institutional capacities, and closer cooperation between public authorities and private sector stakeholders involved in the planning and management of trade corridors and logistics systems.

The process of reinforcing cooperation among key actors in the EaP countries is particularly complex due to varying levels of economic development, institutional maturity, and regulatory frameworks. Therefore, continuous coordination and structured exchange of best practices are critical to designing and implementing measures that generate meaningful and lasting regional impact.

Key challenges are:

- Building institutional capacity and aligning climate-resilient transport strategies across countries with differing regulatory and infrastructural conditions.
- Advancing the digitalization and harmonization of customs procedures despite significant disparities in technological readiness.
- Facilitating the effective adoption of sustainable and digital practices by SMEs, many of which face limitations in resources, expertise, and access to support mechanisms.

The benefits

The project targets closer economic integration of Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries with each other and the EU, leveraging strengthened cooperation among key stakeholders in trade routes and logistics. By supporting digitalization and sustainable practices in the transport and logistics sectors, the EasTnT project helps align regional systems with EU standards, enhances cross-border cooperation, and contributes to more efficient, resilient, and future-oriented trade networks.

Project name	Strengthening sustainable and digital trade routes and logistics concepts between Eastern Partnership countries and with the EU (EasTnT)
Commisioned by	Federal German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine.
Duration	01.02.2024 – 31.01.2028

Approach

The EasTnT project adopts a comprehensive, multi-level strategy to support economic integration, sustainable development, and digital transformation across the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region. The project operates in the following areas:

Container ship Reecon Whale on Black Sea

❯ **Green transport and logistics:** The project develops and implements pilot initiatives showcasing climate-friendly and digital transport solutions. A key strategic priority is strengthening the institutional capacities of ministries and border authorities, while facilitating the exchange of best practices among Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and with the European Union. This includes formulating targeted strategies to reduce transport-related CO_2 emissions, alongside legal and regulatory support to improve cross-border and transport management. These efforts advance environmentally sustainable logistics and contribute significantly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the region.

❯ **Cross - border transport:** To enhance cross-border goods movement in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region, the EasTnT project supports the digitalization of customs procedures and fosters cooperation between customs authorities through structured exchanges with EU Member States. It promotes sustainable development across road, maritime, and rail sectors while advancing EaP integration into international systems.

❯ **Strong SMEs:** The project supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in transport, trade, and logistics through training and capacity-building to enhance the adoption of digital and sustainable solutions. It also promotes collaboration between public institutions and private stakeholders by facilitating joint planning via dedicated working groups focused on sustainable and digital logistics practices.

❯ **Alignment with the EU Enlargement Process:** EasTnT plays a pivotal role in advancing Ukraine and Moldova's path toward EU accession, by supporting the alignment of their national frameworks with the EU acquis in the context of the ongoing enlargement process. The project particularly addresses priority chapters such as Chapter 14 (Transport Policy), Chapter 21 (Trans-European Networks), and Chapter 29 (Customs Union), providing targeted legal and technical assistance while fostering structured knowledge exchange with EU stakeholders. At the same time, EasTnT extends its support to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, other countries of the Eastern Partnership, in enhancing their cooperation with the European Union and promoting convergence with EU transport and trade systems, even though they are not formally engaged in the accession process.

❯ **Promoting Gender Equality:** EasTnT prioritizes gender equality by integrating gender-responsive approaches across its transport and trade activities. The project promotes women's inclusion and empowerment through targeted awareness campaigns and encourages female participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors. By supporting inclusive planning and equal opportunities, EasTnT fosters more balanced and equitable sector development.

An example from the field – International Winter Academy "Sustainable Transport and Trade"

The International Winter Academy "Sustainable Transport and Trade," held from 25th to 28th February 2025 in Chisinau, served as a key platform for advancing dialogue and cooperation on digitalization and decarbonization in the transport and trade sectors. The event brought together stakeholders from across the region to explore topics such as electronic freight data exchange, green customs practices, and multimodal transport solutions. One impactful session focused on the use of eATA carnets, demonstrating how digital tools can streamline cross-border trade procedures. By promoting knowledge sharing and alignment with international standards, the Academy strengthened regional collaboration across the EU, Eastern Partnership, and Central Asia, contributing to the sustainable transformation of trade and transport systems.