

EAP CSF STEERING COMMITTEE STATEMENT
ON THE EU ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT WITH UKRAINE

The Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) reiterates its lasting commitment to the closer engagement of the Eastern Partnership countries to the model of political association and economic integration espoused by the EaP. This year is crucial for the launching of new contractual relations between the European Union and the most advanced EaP countries. These will streamline and consolidate reforms throughout the whole region. The signing of an Association Agreement (AA) with Ukraine initiated in 2012 could be the breakthrough which will open the way to irreversible changes in Eastern Europe.

For us as civil society actors the principle value of these new contractual relations is the impact the new agreements will have on the further strengthening of civil society, its commitment to reforms, and the consolidation and motivation of Europe-oriented social actors in the region. Therefore we support the signing of the AA between the EU and Ukraine at the forthcoming EaP summit in Vilnius in November this year. To make this possible we call on **the Ukrainian government to take steps to meet the requirements listed in the EU Council's Conclusions dated December 10, 2012** and on both sides to work closely to remove remaining political obstacles for signing the AA.

Any substantial delay of the process could derail the entire EaP policy and demobilise democratic and reformist forces in the partner countries. We fully share all the present concerns regarding the rule of law and democracy in Ukraine but we consider the political risks of a failure to sign the AA as much higher than the aggregated risk of signing the Agreement. We call on the EU Member States to authorize the signing of the AA with Ukraine and thus to open the way to an application of the same integration model throughout the entire region.