



**EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM PRESENTATION
AT THE NINTH MEETING OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
PLATFORM 1: Democracy, Good Governance and Stability**

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Speech

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Committee of the Civil Society Forum*

The fourth year of the Civil Society Forum (CSF) existence that started from its Assembly in November 2012 in Stockholm is probably the most responsible period in its biography by now. We have no more excuses for not making essential contribution in the reform process in the EaP countries because of absence of resources or a Secretariat. CSF Secretariat was created in December 2012, and a consortium built within the CSF received funding for the strengthening of the national platforms in 6 EaP countries. We appreciate this support by the European Commission and EEAS and we realize our responsibility.

The Working Group 1 of the Civil Society Forum, which area of activity corresponds to the one of Platform 1, has chosen three selected flagship areas – elections, fighting corruption and media - as its priorities.

Free and fair elections are the bedrock of the approximation process of legislation in the EaP participating states to the legal system of the EU. If parliaments and presidents in these countries are elected in a fraudulent way then the laws that they subsequently pass to implement Association Agreements will lack legitimacy and the whole process will be fundamentally flawed. Serious doubts have been raised as to the results of this year's presidential elections in Armenia stemming from the results of the CSF national platform's own monitoring and the final ODiHR election monitoring report published on May 8. We have hopes for an honest presidential election in Georgia this October. However one of the main concerns is that the local government administration will be used to build a majority for the party of the government in what is called the "abuse of administrative resources". We are concerned about the ongoing crackdown on Azerbaijan on civil rights and the imprisonment of opposition activists. This will affect the conduct of the presidential election in October. One small fact which shows the way in which things are going is the request by the Azerbaijani government to downgrade the OSCE delegation in Baku. We hope that governments participating in the OSCE will oppose this suggested change and that the government in Baku will withdraw this proposal.

With regard to media flagship, NGOs involved in the *Media subgroup* two months ago started a project *Media Freedom Watch*. Within this initiative the update of *the Media Landscape of the 6 EaP countries*, which was first introduced in 2011, is envisaged. One more exciting product of the project will be the annual *Media Freedom Index for the EaP*

countries that will be produced in autumn. I am just coming from the OSCE Human Dimension Seminar in Warsaw, which was dedicated to media issue, and many crucial recommendations, including those coming from EU, were made there. We will take them into consideration in our work, as very relevant ones for our priorities.

Another consortium formed within CSF sub-group on *Fight Against Corruption* will implement monitoring of the introduction of the “conflict of interest” principle in the EaP countries.

Following one of the main goals formulated for the CSF upon its establishment: “stronger participation of civil society to enhance oversight of public services and strengthen public confidence in them”, the Forum is starting monitoring of the implementation of the *Eastern Partnership Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit*. This effort is another opportunity for the Forum to demonstrate its added value by providing independent analysis of the process. The CSF monitoring of the Roadmap will make clear arguments for:

- reforms that will further democratic values and respect of human rights.
- bilateral and multilateral co-operation and European integration through increasing transparency in the relationship between the EU and the EaP countries.
- improving efficiency, co-ordination, and implementation of policies towards European integration.
- elaboration of a new roadmap, or an alternative to a roadmap, for the coming two years - based on a design derived from the conclusions and recommendations emanating from the CSF monitoring.

The CSF will formulate clear, concise conclusions and recommendations targeted at a variety of audiences, including national governments of the EaP countries, EU institutions and EU member states. Certain emphasis will be put on monitoring of inclusiveness and transparency of policymaking and implementation (including both openness to CSF, and responsiveness to initiatives and policy proposals from larger civil society). Building on the monitoring, the proposals for reform of policies, including further development of flagship initiatives, adjustments to EU funding policies and priorities, and the inclusiveness of policymaking vis-à-vis the public and civil society. The Roadmap monitoring will actively involve CSF national platforms and working groups, thus strengthening the capacity of the latter. The outputs will both reflect the situation per country and comparative component. Roadmap monitoring reports will complement the *European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries*, another initiative of the civil society, for which CSF will have ownership this year. The third edition of the Index will come out within the next few weeks.

The context of the mentioned assessment initiatives provides for the need of more regular exchange of information between the national governments and national platforms, as well as other forms of their interaction within the concept of *structured dialogue*. Certain progress in this sense was achieved in Georgia and Armenia.

During the last few months further steps were made for the institutional sustainability of the CSF and its subdivisions; Ukrainian and Armenian National Platforms established their Secretariats.

All information I shared with you displays understanding by the Forum of its responsibilities, and, I am sure in half a year we will have even more convincing statements to make.

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