

**SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTS AND DECISIONS OF STEERING COMMITTEE OF
EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM,
30 NOVEMBER 2011 – 23 NOVEMBER 2012**

<i>1. Introduction – A year when the Forum mapped the future, and laid a sustainable basis for further development</i>	1
<i>2. Eastern Partnership Roadmap</i>	2
<i>3. Statement to the EU-Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting</i>	3
<i>4. Flagship initiatives</i>	3
<i>5. Euronest</i>	3
<i>6. Strategy concept, registration of Secretariat, and appointment of Director</i>	3
<i>7. Funding</i>	5
<i>8. Forum participants' selection procedure</i>	6

1. Introduction – A year when the Forum mapped the future, and laid a sustainable basis for further development

By the time of the Poznan annual Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum event of 28-29 November 2011, national platforms were in place in all six Partner countries, the Forum had achieved permanent participant status in thematic platform meetings (right of attendance and participation for the whole of the intergovernmental meetings), and the European Commission was launching the Civil Society Facility. In Poznan, the Forum approved the Forum's strategy concept and the creation of a Working Group 5 on social dialogue, and endorsed the registration of the Secretariat of the Steering Committee of the Forum as a legal entity in Brussels.

During 2012, the Civil Society Forum has built on the foundations successfully laid since its launch in 2009, and set in place strong forward planning for 2013. After Poznan, the new Steering Committee had to work to confirm and secure funding for the 2012 Forum event in Stockholm. As we now prepare to meet in Stockholm, the 2013 Forum already has a host, for the first time a Partner country – the government of the Republic of Moldova - ready to share the funding for the event with the European Commission, and in 2013 the Secretariat of the Steering Committee of the Forum will have funding from the European Commission – and, following an open call for the position, a Director for the Secretariat, Natalia Yerashevich, who will be introduced to the Forum in Stockholm, ready to support the new Steering Committee and the work of the Forum as a whole.

On 15 November 2012, the permanent participant status was renewed for a second year, an important signal that the Forum's engagement is valued by the participating governments, and during 2012 the Steering Committee has led fundraising efforts bringing in ca EUR 1.3

million to the activities of the Forum, primarily for the work of the national platforms, but also for the launch of a Secretariat, and for working group participants' projects. Relations have been strengthened with the European Parliament, specifically Euronest (Steering Committee representatives Krzysztof Bobiński and Gubad Ibadoglu addressed the Euronest Plenary meeting in Baku in April 2012), and the co-Chairs (Ihor Kohut, country facilitator, Ukraine, and Jeff Lovitt, EU co-ordinator) were invited to address a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the EU member states and the Partner countries in July 2012. The continuing support for civil society provided by the European Commission and Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle has been particularly welcome.

In addition, flagship initiatives have been launched in the areas of election monitoring, independent media, and anti-corruption. New initiatives from the Forum include as well as the European integration index an economic integration index, a visa liberalisation index, and an energy security index.

With funding in 2013 for the Secretariat, the incoming Steering Committee elected in Stockholm will be the first to have a dedicated full-time Secretariat supporting its work. Agreements have been struck with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Moldova to host the 2013 Forum annual event in a Partner country for the first time. The Forum, to be held in Chisinau in October 2013, will be followed in November 2013 by Forum participation in a side-event, agreed with the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to accompany the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius during Lithuania's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The challenge in 2013 will be for the Forum to build on this work to ensure that added value input from civil society, including analysis and monitoring, feeds into the Eastern Partnership roadmap interim assessment that is planned to be prepared for the May 2013 Euronest plenary meeting in Brussels, and the comprehensive assessment planned for the November 2013 Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius.

2. Eastern Partnership Roadmap

Based on the declaration of the 2011 Warsaw summit on the Eastern Partnership, the EU prepared a roadmap for the Eastern Partnership, and EU delegations held meetings during February 2012 with the national platforms.

In a submission to the European Commission and European External Action Service, the Steering Committee proposed that the roadmap should incorporate a set of clear benchmarks to guide bilateral relations between the EU and the respective Partner countries, and to strengthen the engagement of both the EU and the Partner countries with civil society actors who can take up the role as independent watchdogs, monitoring and evaluating the effective use of resources, and observance and strengthening of democratic reforms, human rights, and the rule of law. The Forum statement is available here:

http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Downloads/english/EAPCSF_roadmap05032012.pdf

3. Statement to the EU-Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers meeting

In an important development, the Civil Society Forum was invited to address a meeting of EU and Eastern Partnership foreign ministers, held in Brussels on 23 July 2012. The statement, delivered by the co-Chairs of the Forum at the ministerial meeting, welcomed the inclusion in the *Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit* of recommendations from the Forum, in particular the EU's stated commitment to strengthening support to civil society actors, and the role of the CSF national platforms in monitoring implementation of the roadmap. Civil society actors are well-placed to take up the role as independent watchdogs, monitoring and evaluating the effective use of resources, and observance and strengthening of democratic reforms, human rights, and the rule of law. The statement also called for the unconditional release of all political prisoners in the region, marking the anniversary of the imprisonment of Ales Bialiatski, a courageous human rights defender in Belarus. The Forum statement is available here:

http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Downloads/english/EAPCSF_statement23july2012.pdf

4. Flagship initiatives

Under the leadership of EU Co-ordinator, Krzysztof Bobiński, flagship initiatives were formed on **independent media**, **election monitoring**, and **anti-corruption**. Events during the year have included a side-event at the Working Group 1 platform meeting, statements around elections in Ukraine and Georgia, and the organisation of debates on all three areas are taking place at the annual Forum event in Stockholm on 29-30 November 2012.

5. Euronest

EU co-ordinator Krzysztof Bobiński and Azerbaijan country facilitator Gubad Ibadoglu participated in the Euronest plenary meeting in Baku in April 2012, where the Civil Society Forum received welcome support from Commissioner Štefan Füle and Werner Schulz MEP (Green, Germany), in particular in encouraging EU delegations to bring together the national platforms with the national authorities – in line with the Forum recommendations to the Eastern Partnership roadmap.

6. Strategy concept, registration of Secretariat, and appointment of Director

Following the decisions of the Forum annual event in Poznan on 28-29 November 2011, the strategy concept and draft statutes for the Secretariat were circulated for final input from the Forum participants.

At its January 2012 meeting, the Steering Committee finalised the strategy concept – which was then shared with Forum participants and published on the website in English and in Russian. The concept is available here:

http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Downloads/english/EaPCSFconceptpaper29jan2012final_eng.pdf

Concerning the statutes, the Steering Committee decided that:

- (a) the governing board of the Secretariat should comprise Steering Committee members;
- (b) the statutory representative of the Secretariat should be the Director of the Secretariat.

Following the consultation with the Forum participants, a draft set of statutes supplied by Boris Navasardyan of the Yerevan Press Club served as the basis for the statutes finalised by a subcommittee of the Steering Committee. The sub-group worked to ensure that the statutes reflected the decision of the Forum (that it would be the Secretariat of the Steering Committee), and ensured that the governance of the legal body was such that the Board will always change upon the election of a new Steering Committee. The statutes were then submitted for registration of the Secretariat under Belgian law as an international non-profit organisation registered in Brussels.

The statutes were duly shared with the participants of the Forum and published on the website in English and in Russian. The registration process with the Belgian authorities was finalised in August 2012.

The founding Board of the Secretariat comprises the Steering Committee of the Forum, the two co-Chairs serve as co-Presidents, and Victor Cotruta, country facilitator for Republic of Moldova, is serving as Secretary. These office-holders' terms end as soon as their terms end on the Steering Committee. Marcos Da Costa of Office for Democratic Belarus, based in Brussels, was appointed external Treasurer given the need for someone familiar with accounting procedures in Belgium.

The statutes are available here:

http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Downloads/english/StatutesCSF_Secretariatfeb2012_eng.pdf

The job description for the Director and a draft budget were updated in line with the outline of functions set out in the strategy concept approved by the Poznan forum.

The budget includes the appointment by the Director of a second staff member, a Communications Manager. Upon confirmation that funding would be available from the European Commission, an open call was published on the website inviting applications for the position of Director. The whole Steering Committee went through the applications, drawing up an initial shortlist of 15 applications. A sub-group narrowed this to six applicants, a selection approved by the whole Steering Committee. Interviews were then arranged with those shortlisted. The interview panel comprised: Manana Kochladze, Yaroslav Bekish, Jeff Lovitt, and Olga Stuzhinskaya.



The panel agreed on one candidate, then approved by the Steering Committee. **The position of Director has been accepted by Natalia Yerashevich**, who will be presented to the Forum in Stockholm, Sweden, on 29-30 November 2012. Natalia has more than eight years experience in designing and managing projects in civil society development. Having worked as Project Manager at the USAID Regional Mission for Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, she also brings fundraising and advocacy experience in Brussels as Programme Co-ordinator with Independent Diplomat. Natalia, who has an MA in International Economics and an MA in Globalisation and International Development, speaks fluent English and Russian.

The structure of the Secretariat, including the profile and appointment of a second staff member, will be decided by the Director, in consultation with the Steering Committee elected in Stockholm.

7. Funding

An application was submitted by EU co-ordinator Amanda Lökvist to the Swedish government for **funding for the 2012 Forum event to be held in Stockholm, Sweden**. The Forum, entitled *Mapping the Future*, will be a two-day event, with side-events held in parallel, and takes place on 29-30 November 2012. As well as plenaries, the event will include civil society development workshops and panels around the flagship initiatives, and presentations of the indices under development by Forum participants. The Forum will also see the launch of Working Group 5 - Social Dialogue. The outgoing co-Chairs of the Steering Committee will chair the Working Group 5 meeting in Stockholm until the election of WG5 co-ordinators.

A funding proposal submitted under the European Union's **Civil Society Facility, primarily to support the work of the national platforms, was successful (grant of ca EUR 950 000)**. The partners on the grant were agreed by the Steering Committee after consultation with the national platforms in the six countries. Given its location in Brussels (the only organisation in Brussels represented on the Steering Committee), the Steering Committee included the Office for Democratic Belarus as an additional partner to the proposal. The proposal leader is the Regional Environmental Centre, Moldova.

Further funding was secured for a call opened to Working Group 1 and 4 Forum participants from the **Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, resulting in € 100 000 in funding** for the following projects:

- Foreign Policy Association, Moldova: Increasing the role of Civil Societies in promoting confidence building measures in the areas of “frozen conflicts” of the Eastern Partnership, by generating, exploiting and sharing positive examples
- Ukrainian Institute for Public Policy (UIPP): Strengthening capacities of the Eastern Partnership civil society organizations in using Open Government Partnership as a tool for fight against corruption
- Legal Education Society: Improving the situation of human rights defenders and lawyers in South Caucasus
- Centre for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia: Promote Citizen Participation in Local Governance in 6 Partner Countries
- Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation (ACGRC): Contacts between people: EU visa policies and Eastern Partnership countries. Prospects and barriers for visa-liberalization
- Europe XXI Foundation, Ukraine: Non-formal education for regional democratic transformations
- National Youth Council of Moldova (CNTM): Strengthening the youth cooperation in Eastern Partnership countries
- The Common Europe Foundation: NGO map - linking the best local initiatives between Eastern and Western Europe

The Office for Democratic Belarus then secured a **EUR 250 000 grant from the European Commission for launch funding of the Secretariat with effect from 1 January 2013** –

the lead application of which is the newly registered Secretariat of the Steering Committee of the Forum. The Steering Committee decided that the proposal should include ODB as a partner due to its added value as a Brussels-based organisation in legal and financial reporting support, and with the possibility of shared office costs essential to the launch of the Secretariat.

8. Forum participants' selection procedure

In April 2012, the selection procedures and the Forum 2012 application form were updated – to stress the need for bona fide, independent NGO applications – and the call for applications launched. Based on the three selection lists – National Platforms/EU co-ordinators, Working Group co-ordinators, and EU delegations – the selection of participants was then finalised. There were 583 applications to participate in the Forum, out of which 202 organisations were selected by the Steering Committee in line with the eligibility guidelines.

The selection process included a goal of having 40 per cent new participants compared with the 2011 Forum. This was achieved - as 45 per cent of participants did not attend the 2011 event in Poznan. In addition, 34 per cent have not attended any of the three annual Forums to date. In the case of EU delegates, with an increase in applications, 50 per cent of those selected did not attend in 2011. The final list prepared by the Steering Committee was consulted with the European External Action Service (EEAS)/European Commission before final publication. The list of selected organisations was then published on the website.

Questions were raised by some NGOs about the selection process – a similar number of questions as in 2011 (this year from the Belarusian National Platform as well as a group of Forum participants from Azerbaijan and other applicants). In response, the Steering Committee noted that some responses propose giving more weight to the national platforms, others have proposed the opposite, and some have questioned the role of the shortlist from the EU delegations. The Steering Committee believes that the current three shortlists are in fact a useful check against each other – for instance, the need to look outside those making the selection in the national platforms, the need for focus on thematic expertise of the working groups, and the external perspective of the EU delegations. The Steering Committee does not support an increased weight to the shortlists from the national platforms.

The Steering Committee believes that it is necessary to strengthen the criteria to ensure that there is greater knowledge about the experience, national and international, and commitment to engagement and to enrich Forum activities, on the part of applicants, and that this information should be made available to all three parties drawing up the shortlists. Amendments to the application process will be managed by the Secretariat Director in conjunction with the new Steering Committee.