

Minutes of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee meeting, held in Brussels, 26-27 January 2012

Summary of decisions and conclusions

1. **Priority issues for 2012** decided:
 - registration of the Secretariat
 - strengthening the work of the Working Groups and National Platforms
 - Fundraising for Secretariat, WG/NP activities and projects
 - preparation and organisation of the next Civil Society Forum (2012)
2. **The SC met with Iliana Iotova, MEP**, co-rapporteur, Euronest, and discussed potential co-operation, including possible participation of the SC in the Euronest Plenary in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 2-3 April 2012.
3. **Strategy Concept approved.** The strategy concept was approved (and will be circulated to Forum participants in English and Russian).
4. **Statutes of Secretariat of Forum approved.** A working group of the SC finalised the statutes for registration of the Secretariat of the Forum to ensure they reflected the decision of the Forum, 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 approved by the SC, subject to any amendments required under Belgian law, upon which the Secretariat of the Forum will be registered under Belgian law with the SC as the Board. EU member states will be approached to raise start-up funding for the Secretariat (those who indicated positive interest in funding the Secretariat in 2011).
5. **Forum annual event 2012.** An application will be submitted to the Swedish government for funding for the 2012 Forum event to be held in Sweden. The Forum will be a two-day event, with side-events held in parallel, and fewer plenaries than in 2011. Dates to be proposed to the Swedish government: 29-30 November 2012.
6. **Two applications to neighbourhood civil society facility.** Two applications from the Forum will be submitted to the neighbourhood civil society facility, one focusing on the national platforms (lead applicant: Regional Environmental Centre (REC) Moldova), and one focusing on the working groups, Secretariat, and capacity-building of working groups and national platforms (lead applicant: Office for a Democratic Belarus). In both cases, partners from the six EaP countries were decided by the country facilitators after consultations with the national platforms.
7. **Two co-Chairs.** The SC decided to have, as in 2011, two co-Chairs, at least one of whom should be from the EaP countries. The following co-Chairs were elected:
 - Igor Kogut, country facilitator, Ukraine
 - Jeff Lovitt, EU co-ordinator

8. **EaP Roadmap.** Based on the declaration of the 2011 Warsaw summit on the Eastern Partnership, the EU is now working on the roadmap for the EaP, and EU delegations will hold meetings during February with the national platforms. The country facilitators and working group coordinators will gather input from the Forum participants, and the SC will submit feedback to the EEAS and European Commission, and encourages the national platforms to do so as well.
 9. **SC sub-groups formed.** Sub-groups of the SC will comprise: (a) country facilitators; (b) working group co-ordinators; (c) EU co-ordinators/communications group; (e) Sweden Forum event group. Sub-groups would consider a framework for development of guidelines and procedures for the work of the Forum and its constituent parts, building on the existing rules and procedures. CSF flagship initiatives would be another focus (flagship initiatives were proposed on: elections; anti-corruption; visa liberalization; monitoring of bilateral agreements).
 10. **Priorities for external relations.** As well as the donors mentioned in (2) above, the SC will be exploring ties with Euronest and MEPs generally, as well as examining relations with the Council of Europe, EESC, and other partners. At the SC meeting, meetings were held with Commissioner Fuele, with EuropeAid, with the External Action Service, and with Iliana Iotova MEP (a co-rapporteur on Euronest committee).
 11. **Dates of meetings.** Working group meetings - the External Action Service shared with the SC a preliminary calendar for events in 2012. The SC will try to link up some of the WG meetings with intergovernmental platform meetings, and to include greater participation of governments, where appropriate, in CSF working group meetings, and to identify relevant CSF experts to participate in specialist parts of intergovernmental platform meetings and expert panels.
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