



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

REPORT ON EAP CSF WORKING GROUP 1 ACTIVITIES

BETWEEN THE SECOND AND THE THIRD FORUM ASSEMBLIES

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The members of WG1 (Democracy, Human Rights, Good governance and Stability) are 108 delegates of the CSF 2nd assembly (Berlin, 2010). The coordinators of the group are Vera Rihackova (“Europeum”, Institute of European Studies NGO, Czech Republic) and Boris Navasardian (Yerevan Press Club, Armenia). 6 working sub-groups (SWGs) operate within the working group – Human Rights (Coordinator – Marek Svoboda, People in Need, Czech Republic), Media (Boris Navasardian), Public Administration (Svyatoslav Pavlyuk, PAUCI Foundation, Ukraine), Judiciary Reform (Tamar Khidasheli, Young Lawyers Association, Georgia), Anti-corruption (Natalya Shapovalova, FRIDE, Spain), Visa facilitation (Olga Stuzhinskaya, Office for Democratic Belarus, Belgium).

2. MEETINGS OF THE WG1

One meeting of the WG1 took place between the 2nd and the 3rd Forum assemblies – on May 27 in Brussels. The representatives of the WG1 also took part in two meetings of the official Platform 1 (Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability) of the Eastern Partnership, presenting the works of CSF and its WG1, as well as channeling Forum’s recommendations related to the Thematic Platform 1 priorities and activities. Both meetings took place in Brussels – on May 6 (Vera Rihackova and Tamar Khidasheli represented the WG1) and November 17 (Boris Navasardian and Jeff Lowitt, PASOS).

3. APPROACHES

The representatives of the WG1 as all participants of the Civil Society Forum welcome the formula “more for more” and the concept of “deep democracy” stressed in the Warsaw summit of EaP. These principles met the expectations of the CSF reflected in the Position Paper to the Summit. WG1 members pay special importance to their role and re-confirm their capacity in strengthening and enhancing the monitoring of the commitments undertaken by the partner country governments in the field of democracy, human rights and good governance, as well as expertise provision in the priority areas of the Thematic Platform 1.

As stated in the above mentioned Position Paper of the CSF "... it is a historical lesson, including most recent developments in Arab world, that in non-perfect or far-from democracies, politics determine the economic relations to a very high degree; the rules of the game are bent to suit the people holding power. Subordination of development of real democratic institutions to economic reform, approximation to formal EU standards, and a lack of proper conditionality both weakens the consistency of efforts to support democratization and diminishes the role of civil society". That is why WG1 members advocate for consideration of democratic reforms progress in the EU – partner countries negotiations on Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement.

The CSF WG1 members acknowledge the approach within the official Platform 1 to focus efforts on selected thematic areas. At the same time it is obvious that the situation in different domains are very much interconnected and, for instance, achieving sustainable results in fighting corruption is impossible without strong and independent media. Therefore absence of certain important areas in the agenda of the official Platform 1 is a subject of concerns of the WG1. In its turn during the period between the Berlin and Poznan CSF assemblies the Working Group 1 CSF paid attention to almost all areas included in the thematic Platform 1.

4.STATEMENTS

On May 15, the Working Group 1 made a [statement on events of 26th of May in Georgia](#). WG1 members also joined the [CSF statements on events in Belarus on December, 2010](#) and in [Azerbaijan in April, 2011](#).

5.WORK OF THE SWGs

The major part of the activities of the Working Group 1 was concentrated in the level of working sub-groups.

- **Human Right SWG** accomplished monitoring of the state of human rights in all 6 countries, reflecting situation with the freedom of assembly and freedom of association, access to legal aid and observation of electoral rights, access to information and property rights, etc. The preliminary report on this monitoring was prepared in February 2011, the chapters for each EaP country were prepared by the delegates of the Forum from the respective countries. And then upon receipt of comments from other organizations and experts the report was revised and edited by the SWG coordinators. The final version of the report was prepared in November, 2011 (*it is available in a separate document*).
- On February 21-24, 2011 Yerevan Press Club with the support of Black Sea Trust has initiated the meeting of the **Media subgroup** of the EaP Civil Society Forum in Istanbul with the participation of a group of invited experts. At the event the media situation of 6 EaP countries was presented. The discussion also contributed to sketching and summing up the methodology and structure of the Media Landscape research, which preparation was included in the Subgroup's recommendations. Ivan Nikolchev, the Head of the Media Section of the Council of Europe, informed the participants about the CoE further plans related to the support of media in the countries of the region.

Further to Istanbul meeting the SWG members from the EaP countries started working on the research “Media Landscapes of the EaP countries”, which received the support of Friedrich Ebert Foundation. This book (in English and Russian versions) with the research was published in September 2011 and presented in Warsaw in the Institute of Public Affairs two days prior to the Summit of the EaP. The research is based on strict common methodology and addresses different areas of media environment – from legislation to the state of journalistic education. The report reflects both specific problems of each country and similar ones. Among the latter absence of effective strategies for digital switchover of broadcast media, that should have ensured not only technological progress but also diversity. This issue remains a challenge for most of EaP countries (the pdf version of the book is available in http://www.ypc.am/upload/Media%20Landscapes%20of%20EaP%20Countries_eng.pdf.)

- Representatives of **Public administration** SWG participated in the CORLEAP conference, in Poznan, on September 8, 2011, as well as PA panel 1st meeting in Tallinn on October 6, 2011. In the first event CSF was represented by Co-Chair of the Steering Committee Antonella Valmorbidia (ALDA) and George Toklikishvili (the Centre of Strategic Research and Development of Georgia) and in the second by George Toklikishvili and David Tumanyan (Association of Community Financial Officers, Armenia). In Poznan Antonella Valmorbidia presented Position Paper of EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF) on Needs of Public Administration Reform at Local and Regional Level in EaP Countries. The paper was prepared by PA SWG CSRDG in the frames of the project supported by Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Human Rights and Transition Policy. It analyses the challenges and needs in this sphere and presents well elaborated recommendations. (*The Position Paper is available in a separate document*)
- **The anti-corruption SWG** established good working relations with the EaP panel on fight against corruption of the Platform 1. Its representatives took active part in the respective events of the CoE and OECD and contributed a lot to the elaboration of recommendations for the countries of the EaP region. Certain projects have been initiated, including a research of best practices of NGOs involvement in the development and implementation of anti-corruption strategies.

The report and "Civil society participation in policies to combat corruption in the Eastern Partnership countries" was prepared by the Ukrainian Institute for Public Policy, International Center for Human Development (Armenia), Institute for Public Policy (Moldova) and FRIDE (Spain) and supported by the Black Sea Trust. A policy brief summarizing its findings and recommendations was distributed among representatives of the EU institutions and member states. (<http://www.eap-csf.eu/en/working-groups/wg1-democracy-human-rights/resources/policy-brief>)

On April 27, 2011, a letter from the anticorruption subgroup containing the recommendations on the EaP activities on fight against corruption was distributed among relevant representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, interested EU member states governments, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe and the Eastern Partnership Multilateral Platform 1.

The Ukrainian Institute for Public Policy together with the All-Ukrainian Special Board on Fight Against Corruption and Organized Crime (**Ukraine**) created a coalition with the Institute for Public Affairs (**Poland**), Oživení (**Czech Republic**), Centre for Analysis and Prevention Corruption of the Republic of Moldova (**Moldova**), Georgian Young Lawyers Association (**Georgia**) and National Centre for Legislative Research (**Armenia**) to conduct a research on best practices of civil society participation in implementation of anti-corruption policies in the Eastern Partnership and EU countries. This 5 months long project was among those supported by the Czech MFA.

Eurasia Partnership Foundation (**Armenia**) was awarded a grant by the Czech Government for a project entitled “Addressing grey areas in anticorruption reform”. The aim of the project is to develop a toolkit that will address corruption types and corruption risks that appear because of lack of knowledge or understanding of procedures and regulations among the Armenian population, particularly when the issue concerns Local Government. The toolkit will consist of case studies presenting different types of corruption and followed by different options of behavior from which the reader is asked to choose the most correct option. In order to provide the reader with the opportunity to make adequate choice each case study will also contain the legislative framework that regulates the issue and its legal definition. The EPF team and a consultant have conducted series of interviews with NGO representatives, independent experts, lawyers and state representatives; three study trips to Georgia, Czech Republic and Moldova took place. Overall 40 interviews were conducted to collect cases suitable for the toolkit. EPF also supported a study on plagiarism in university education, funded from SIDA. The study finds that plagiarism among students is rampant and suggests reforms to tackle this illness.

- The members of **Visa Liberalization SWG** has been involved in several EU and EaP initiatives. Namely, at a meeting in Warsaw on November 25-25, 2010 over 200 NGOs from EU countries and EaP states launched a Coalition for a European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers. The coalition undertakes joint actions to accelerate the process of EU Visa Liberalization for EaP countries and called Hungary and Poland to treat the Visa Liberalization toward EaP countries as a top priority while their Presidency of EU Council this year. The coalition also appealed to governments of EU Member States to waive fees charged for national visa for Belarusian citizens and impose visa sanctions on Belarusian officials for the violent repressions after Presidential elections of December 19, 2010.

At a meeting in Vilnius on March 26-27, 2011 a number of Belarusian NGOs launched public VISA-FREE Coalition. Assisted by partners from EU member states, Belarusians are planning to advocate-including within Belarus-an idea of visa-free travel between Belarus and European countries. The coalition will be engaged in the Visa-Free public campaign to promote arguments for waiving the visa regime between Belarus and EU.

The Coalition for the European Continent Undivided by Visa Barriers has published an Appeal to the leaders of the European Union and Eastern Partnership (EaP) states gathered at the EU-EaP summit in Warsaw on the 29th-30th of September, 2011, calling them to reiterate their pledge to establish visa-free travel between the EU and the EaP countries and to commit to do so as soon as the technical criteria are met. The Coalition called upon the EU to remove the wording of “as a long-term goal” as concerns visa liberalisation from all the relevant documents to be signed soon including drafts of negotiated Association Agreements with Ukraine and Moldova, as well as Visa Facilitation Agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan. (Respective information is available in www.visa-free-europe.eu.)

6. SOME OTHER ACTIVITIES

- The work on the "European integration index for the EaP countries" project is coming to its end with members of the CSF WG1 playing crucial role in it. The index will be presented in one of side events of the CSF assembly in Poznan. The results of the consistent research are planned to be published each year and trace the progress of the EaP countries in terms of European integration, the degree of interaction with the EU and Europeanization through domestic reform process in the comparative perspective.
- An effective form of engagement of CS in specific countries in the Eastern Partnership was introduced in Armenia – series of seminars for local NGOs attended by SWG coordinators and active members, the best experts of the WG1, representing other EaP and EU countries was conducted. Through these seminars local CSOs got aware about most important developments in the frames of EaP and priorities of the CSF.
- On April 18, 2011 a meeting within the Eastern Partnership for the South Caucasus Roundtable Program was held in Tbilisi, Georgia. This is the initiative of Georgian Levan Mikeladze Foundation and Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The meeting was dedicated to all 4 Thematic Platforms of the Eastern Partnership, including "Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability". Analytical reports on the progress with the Platform priorities were presented by experts from the 3 countries. Later on a book with these contributions was published. The reports on Platform 1 were presented by EaP CSF Steering Committee members Tamar Khidasheli (Georgian Young Lawyers Association), Boris Navasardian (Yerevan Press Club) and delegate of CSF assemblies of 2009 and 2010 Anar Mammadli (Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center) from Azerbaijan.

The Co-ordinators for the group are:

Boris Navasardian

Yerevan Press Club

wg1@eap-csf.eu

boris@ypc.am

Věra Řiháčková

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

wg1@eap-csf.eu

vrihackova@europeum.org