



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

Report on the activities of the Working Group II during 2011 of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

During the period since the last meeting of the WG 2 “*Economic Integration & Convergence with EU Policies*” at the Berlin Forum in November 2010 several important developments took place in the field that our working group covers i.e. the economic integration and the convergence with the EU law.

As far as the bilateral track of the EaP are concerned the negotiations on DCFTA with Ukraine advanced so that the agreement is almost ready for signature. A progress was also made in negotiations on DCFTA with Moldova and with Georgia. There is a stalemate regarding the negotiations on DCFTA with Azerbaijan due to the absence of progress regarding the membership in WTO. The negotiations with Armenia on DCFTA are still in a preparatory stage.

Regarding the multilateral track for our Working Group 2 the official **Platform 2 on Economic integration and convergence with EU sector policies** was the main subject of interest. Great number of activities has taken place in the platform and the panels established by the platform. The WG 2 was able to follow up the subjects on the Platform’s agenda thanks to the permanent membership of the EESC in the Platform where it defended the CSF interests.

A very active was especially the **Trade panel** that hold number of meetings. The subjects discussed by the Panel included **customs cooperation and trade facilitation, sanitary, phytosanitary (SPS) and animal welfare issues, intellectual property rights, public procurement.**

The important development was the involvement of business representative organizations (chambers of commerce) to meet in two **business to business contact meetings**. In this context, the role of Chambers of Commerce and other business organization in the DCFTA was discussed. A large number of business organisations from EaP partner countries participated. The idea of creating a process that would bring business organisations closer to their counterparts in the EU found strong support. Followup activities should involve European organisations and should complement ongoing work.

An important event the [Eastern Partnership Business Forum](#) was organized under the Polish presidency by the Polish employers organization Leviathan on 28th October in Sopot. The establishment of such Forum was one of the recommendations proposed by our WG and adopted by the CSF in its last two meetings. We should work for the coordination of the agenda of these Forums with WG of EaP CSF in future.

A panel on Enterprise and Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Policy started working in October 2010 and Mr. K. Gogolashvili participated as the coordinator of the WG 2 of the CSF. “Enterprise Policy Performance”, a programme developed jointly by the Commission, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation in Europe (OECD), the European Training Foundation and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was presented. The panel discussions focused also on the EU Small Business Act and on the review of SME policies in partner countries. In the context of the SME Flagship Initiative the panel discussed the East-Invest programme implemented by Eurochambres and the Turn Around Management/ Business Support Services (TAM/BAS) programme of the EBRD. Panel on SME Policy met in Prague on 15th and 16th May, 2011 in the framework of the joint project of the EC and OECD on the SME policy promotion in the partner countries.

Since the Platform 2 established a special panel to cover also the issues of environment where the CSF WG 3 participated there is a need for coordination between WG 2 and WG 3. The common interests between our two WGs are represented in the issues like the Green Economy , energy efficiency etc.

In May 2010 **cooperation in the field of Transport** was launched, focusing in particular on road safety. WG 2 has a big interest in this field with strong emphasis especially on the issues of interconnection between the EaP and EU networks

A regional conference on “**Trends and Challenges of Labour Market and Employability in the six EaP Countries**” was organised in Odessa by the European Commission and the European Training Foundation (ETF) in October 2010. Participants included senior officials from relevant ministries of all EaP countries, experts from several member States and international organisations, as well as representatives from international social partner organisations concerned with the subject. The need to strengthen the cooperation in the field of labour market and social policies was confirmed by the agreement to establish a special panel on labour and social issues.

WG 2 members were informed about the ongoing activities through the direct mailing and through the web page of the CSF. The WG met on 31st October to review the previous activities and to debate the draft recommendations for the Poznan CSF meeting. The recommendations include support to the establishment of the social dialogue platform within the CSF and extension of the cooperation between the EU member states and partner countries in the field of cross border regional cooperation focusing on the innovation and transfer of technology.

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