



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Working Groups first round of meetings in 2012 (Ukraine)

In the first half of the year there has been active communication both within the Civil society Forum Working groups and between them in Ukraine. Experts and civil society representatives from different regions of Ukraine were engaged in drawing up plans for the year, outlining the main challenges of European integration and developing communication channels with national governments and colleagues from other Eastern Partnership countries and European institutions.

Working Group 4 “Contacts between People”

A meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Working Group 4 “Contacts between People” took place on March, 10, in Lviv. The main topics covered included: cultural policy, educational projects, youth initiatives, as well as increasingly pressing visa issues.

In the area of culture, the participants suggested that it is absolutely necessary to hold **an annual forum on cultural policy reform in the Eastern Partnership countries**, with the participation of active EU actors. Such initiative would give a chance to exchange best practices of the countries involved, to develop and continuously update action plans in the area of cultural policy. It is planned to hold the forum on a rota basis in all of the Eastern Partnership countries, the main organiser being respective Directorates for Culture. In addition to the representatives of civil society the forum will involve institutes of culture and politics of different levels.

The provision of active citizenship position for young people became the keynote of the discussion on youth policy. In this context, as noted at the group meeting, it is vital to develop tools and create conditions for the implementation of specific programmes aimed at rural and urban youth, as well as to ensure the functioning of major international programmes in the Eastern Partnership region. In addition, civil society should lobby towards the introduction of the Eastern Partnership priorities into appropriate areas of youth policy in the development of bilateral agreements between the countries in the region, as well as in their agreements with the EU.

During the discussion on educational issues the participants raised an issue of non-formal education. In particular, they suggested pursuing the process of recognising non-formal educational initiatives at the legislative levels in the Eastern Partnership countries – allowing to license and accredit the activities of respective non-government organisations, with the view of eventually introducing state procurement order for the provision of educational services. It is worth noting, that in some countries this process has already started and requires close monitoring, and that it ensures the exchange of best practice.

The issue of foreign volunteers in the Eastern Partnership region was also raised at the meeting. This issue requires cooperation with governments to ensure that legislative provisions on long-term stay of foreign volunteers in the countries are in place. Another

recommendation to the Eastern Partnership and EU policy makers is to develop inter-governmental agreements in the area of international youth programmes, including volunteer programmes.

Finally, it is necessary to work towards effective implementation and monitoring of the adherence to the provisions of the EU Visa Code in the area of visa policy. It is just as important to monitor visa practices of the EU countries' consulates and diplomatic missions in the Eastern Partnership countries.

The discussion in Lviv was moderated by Yaryna Borenko (Training Group "Dialog"), speakers included Maryana Kuzyo (Civil initiative "Europe without Frontiers"), Oksana Bondar (Vinnitsa Regional Information Centre "Creative"), Andriy Kogut (Civic Assembly of Ukraine), Galyna Usatenko (Foundation "Europe XXI"), Iryna Magdysh (Coalition of Cultural Institutes "Creative Council Dialogue"), as well as a number of Ukrainian regional NGO representatives.

Working Group 2 "Economic Integration and Convergence with EU policies"

Working Group 2 "Economic Integration and Convergence with EU policies" meeting took place on March, 19, in Chernyiv. Experts on transport policy, cross-border cooperation, SMEs, and some other policies relating to the Eastern Partnership thematic Platform 2, outlined their work priorities for 2012.



Igor Kogut (Ukrainian National Coordinator of EaP CSF, Head of the Laboratory for Legislative Initiatives Council) made a report on the activities of the Ukrainian National Platform. He reminded the meeting that European integration implies, first and foremost, internal reforms in each of the EP countries. Therefore, the establishment and active participation of the National Platforms is perceived in the EU as a measure to strengthen EaP CSF in the region. In the course of last year the Ukrainian National Platform succeeded in building its own expertise, held active communication with the EU Commissioner S.Fule and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU member states, performed the assessment of the implementation of European Neighbourhood Policy by Ukraine, as well as evaluated the process of negotiations between Ukraine and the EU on the Agreement on Association. There are an increasing number of flagship documents and agreements within the framework of Ukraine-EU relations, implementation of which has to be monitored and evaluated by the National Platform experts. In particular, one example of such a document is the Eastern Partnership Roadmap.

According to I.Kogut, there are plans to institutionalise the Ukrainian National Platform in 2012. Despite a certain degree of formalisation, it remains “the most open space” for the cooperation of civil society organisations from all parts of Ukraine. Igor Kogut emphasised that “it will become a system of participation, not a system of membership”. The main task of the National Platform will remain the same – to ensure effective influence of civil society on the Ukrainian government policy in the area of European integration.

The moderator of Chernyiv meeting, **Andriy Kogut** (Civic Assembly of Ukraine) made a report on the achievements of Working group “Contacts between People” in Lviv.

To start the discussion **Yury Vdovenko** (Working Group 2 Coordinator) pointed out the fact that Eastern Partnership is, in its substance, a state policy, and Civil Society Forum with its working groups represents its auxiliary tools. The Working Group on “Economic Integration and convergence with EU policies” is the smallest one of the groups. At the last year’s Forum in Poznan Ukraine was represented in this group by only 3 organisations, 2 of which were trade unions. In addition, it was decided to create a Working Group 5 “Social Dialogue”, to include employers’ organisations and trade unions.

In their discussion of the Working Group 2 meetings, its coordinator emphasised their work to create free trade zones and transport corridors between the EU and EaP countries. The issues of small and medium business, sanitary control, liberalisation of regulatory environment and competition policies have also been discussed. The most significant progress, according to Yury Vdovenko, has been achieved in the area of regional policy – “the launch of a process for new cross-border cooperation programmes, directly related to the Eastern Partnership countries”.

Zinoviy Brojde (SSTC “Ecoresource”) presented a study on the establishment of Transport Platform within the Eastern Partnership. The European Commission report “**European Union and its neighbouring regions: updated approach towards cooperation in the Transport sector**” was published in 2011, its main goal being harmonisation of transport policies, as well as integration of the EU markets with those of the neighbouring countries. The document envisages significant changes that Ukraine must implement. According to experts’ opinion, Ukraine has not yet lost an opportunity to do so, however, the current transport policy does not give cause for optimism.

Vadim Pylypenko (International Association of Institutions for Regional Development) discussed the effectiveness of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, pointing out opportunities that it offers, including those for civil society organisations, and current projects within its framework.

Working Group 3 “Environment, climate change and Energy Security”

The scheduled meeting of the Working Group 3 “Environment, climate change and energy security” took place in Lviv. At the meeting the participants discussed their action plan for the year ahead and set their priorities.



Andriy Kogut (Civic Assembly of Ukraine) outlined the main aspects of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, as well as areas of activity within the framework of the Civil Society Forum and the Ukrainian National Platform. He pointed out “some challenges of multilateral cooperation” caused mainly by significant differences among the countries of the Eastern Partnership and difficulties in communicating with each other on their activities in respective areas. Therefore, issues of experience exchanges, and communication on the developments of initiatives are given high priority. At the end of the day, this was the main founding basis for this Forum. In addition, the Forum acts as an additional channel for direct communication between the Eastern Partnership civil society organisations and EU institutions.

In respect of the CSF Ukrainian National Platform, Andriy Kogut pointed out that it acts as “an official participant” of the Eastern Partnership Initiative, this status ensuring the UNP with unhindered communication with the EU delegation in Ukraine, and with the European Commissars. Despite the fact that the UNP is still in its developmental stages, it provides a platform for debate of various issues at an international level. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to develop cooperation in a trilateral format: civil society – government agencies – the EU institutes. Besides, such a format ensures the discussion of the issues that the government prefers to avoid.

Natalia Andrusevych (Working Group 3 Coordinator) confirmed that the EaP CSF is an effective powerful tool which must be used efficiently. As an example, she mentioned initiation of a Statement regarding international talks on climate change in Durban at the CSF meeting in Poznan. According to Natalia Andrusevych, the European Commission gives great importance to the issues of Common eco information system, “green economy” and sustainable environmental management within the agenda of Working Group 3.

With regards to the CSF agenda, Natalia Andrusevych talked about the six thematic areas, selected at the second Forum meeting in Berlin in 2010, on which the six discussion papers were based – environmental management, renewable energy, environmental security, climate change and natural resources, ecosystem services and waste management. Besides, a project to evaluate environmental management was implemented and the outcomes presented at the meeting in Poznan.

At the moment, the Working Group 3 activities focus on 3 areas: monitoring of the implementation of environmental and energy components of the Association’s Agenda; monitoring the progress of Action plans for the implementation of environmental and transport strategies; access to information on environment and the drafting of environmental policy.

Zoryana Mishchuk (“Mama-86”) made a presentation on the evaluation and monitoring of good environmental management. During the course of a project they assessed such areas as access to relevant information, environmental reporting, strategic environmental assessment, etc. According to experts, the analysis was carried out by analysts from 6 Partner countries of the Eastern Partnership, using a special grading system. The priorities included: the strengthening of their cooperation with the EU; the improvement of administrative structures and procedures; the development of environmental plans, strategies and programmes; the integration of environment issues into sector policies. The results were used to rate all of the Eastern Partnership countries; however, according to experts, this rating is somewhat subjective. Top three countries in this rating were: Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Zoryana Myshchuk also noted that reforms in the Eastern Partnership region are not consistent and lack efficient mechanisms, that would ensure public participation and access to information. There are insufficient efforts to integrate environmental policy issues into other sectors.

Another important conclusion is that of the correlation existing between a country’s strategic planning and the process of its negotiations: those countries most actively involved in the negotiations on their association with the EU show the greatest progress in the development of their National Strategies for Environmental Policy. Thus, the only area of assessment, where Ukraine came top of the list, was the development of strategies, plans and programmes.

Energy security Agenda of the Eastern Partnership and CSF National Platform was presented by **Vladislav Deyneko** (Analytical Centre for Regional Cooperation).



Natalia Andrushevych, Coordinator of the Working Group 3 “Environment, climate change and energy security” – On results for the year and plans for the future.

- The National Platform of the Eastern Partnership CSF and Working Group 3 has been operational for over a year. What has been achieved?

- In my opinion, it is important that Ukrainian environmental NGOs joined the process, whereas in the past they would not do so. Besides, they came to understand what Eastern Partnership stands for and the opportunities for activities within its framework. I also think that the idea of civil society inputs into the European Commission annual report assessing the implementation of the European Neighbourhood policy was a great success. In December our Working Group submitted their comments to the European Commission. It has also been a great achievement to get us involved in the process of developing the Eastern Partnership Roadmap, allowing us to attract public attention to environmental issues and priorities.

- Can you name any factors which had negative impact on your group’s activities?

- The problem we face is that we do not have sufficient volume of project work to raise the participants’ enthusiasm. Therefore, e.g., our request to prepare a Position Paper does not evoke much enthusiasm. Next year we would like to concentrate on specific activities. For example, on the monitoring strategy of the Ukrainian Environmental Policy. What I mean, is that it would be great to have one common goal that all NGOs could join efforts to promote and aim for.

- *Do you currently have any specific tasks for the future? Perhaps, any global goal?*

- Of course, we would like to attract maximum attention from state authorities. There are a number of global issues with regards to environmental management and environmental impact assessment, currently not addressed in Ukraine. We would like to put maximum pressure on our sector's Ministry to address these issues, to include taking advantage of the EU assistance, as it provides funding to a lot of technical assistance programmes.

Working Group 1 “Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability”

The most recent event of a number of the EaP CSF working group meetings took place in Kyiv on June, 2, 2012. Working Group 1 “Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability” discussed freedom of expression in Ukraine, freedom of information, human rights, administrative governance reforms, judicial reform and a number of other issues.



Igor Kogut (the EaP CSF Country Facilitator for Ukraine, Head of the Laboratory for Legislative Initiatives Council) described application procedures for the participation in the 4th Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. A number of meetings are scheduled to take place in the middle of July to coordinate the positions of the national platforms, working groups and the European Commission to select 23-24 organisations from each country to fully participate in the Forum for one year. These selected organisations will have an opportunity to build an on-going dialogue both with their colleagues from other Eastern Partnership countries and with the European Commission.

Igor Kogut pointed out some peculiarities of the Ukrainian National Platform – while other countries formed their platforms from the organisations selected to participate in the Forum, in Ukraine, the creation of the register of NGOs, sharing common values and having the capacity to work within the format of the national platform, came first. Currently, there are more than 150 such organisations. The greatest challenge for the Ukrainian National Platform at the moment is to increase its influence on the national Agenda. Besides, the National Platform and the Civil Society Forum must act as a kind of “information providers on europeanisation”.

Andriy Kulakov (Director of Programme activities, Internews-Ukraine) talked about the activities of Working Group 1, relating to media issues. The projects that the Group was working on were selected in the autumn of 2010. At the time, they identified the most problematic issues in the media environment of the Eastern Partnership: the creation of public broadcasting (administration and funding of such a mechanism), modernisation and transition to digital TV procedures. Resolution of these problems will prevent the threat of

monopolisation of media environment and the “extinction” of local media companies. Internet freedom and access to information are also among the most important issues.

According to experts, the Ukrainian participants were the first to implement a **media landscape** project – a thorough research was carried out, with participation from practically all media NGOs, and results were published in two languages. In addition, a similar research paper covering all Eastern Partnership countries was published preceding the 3rd Forum meeting.

According to Igor Koliushko (Chairman of the Board of the Centre for Political and Legal Reforms), the Ukrainian National Platform should adhere to the following principle – “civil society should stand for values, not persons”. It is necessary to continuously attract the EU’s attention to the precedents of misuse of Criminal Procedural Code, applied in contradiction to the principle of the rule of law.

Ukraine in the Eastern Partnership

Working Group 1 members also took part in the debate “Ukraine in the Eastern Partnership”, within the framework of the European town. Among other events of the European town was presentation of **Euro integration index of the Eastern Partnership member countries 2012** – research, initiated and implemented by the European programme together with the programme “East-East: partnership without frontiers” of the International Foundation “Renaissance” and “Open Society Foundation”.



In her presentation of the study **Iryna Solonenko** (Director of the European Programme of the International Foundation “Renaissance”) highlighted the fact that over 50 experts from all Eastern Partnership countries took part in its development. They used three key components of European integration as a benchmark: the depth and intensity of relations with the EU at various levels; internal transformation in Eastern Partnership countries, bringing the latter closer to the EU standards and practices; institutional support for European integration. According to the study, Ukraine is experiencing further deterioration in terms of democracy and market economy (in particular, in the business environment). The Index recorded similar levels of democracy for Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia, while Azerbaijan rates closer to Belarus. Moldova’s score is ahead of the rest of the countries in the region, both in terms of

democracy, contacts between people and in the context of institutional support for European integration.

Thus, as was pointed out by Iryna Solonenko, Ukraine is no longer a flagship country of the Eastern Partnership. Ukraine received the lowest score of all in relation to the independence of the judiciary and fight against corruption. In addition, Ukraine has not been partaking of the opportunities afforded by its intensive political dialogue and close economic cooperation with the EU. Thus, being the first to complete negotiations on the Agreement on Association and inclusive free trade area, at the same time, Ukraine has the worst business environment indicators in the region. In her commentary on the results of the study, Iryna Solonenko expressed her hope, that through such comparison (and a kind of competition) of indicators for the countries in the region the project will have a positive impact on the quality of reforms in each Partner country of the Eastern Partnership.

Based on papers by "European space" and Laboratory of Legislative Initiatives.