

Working Group 4 “Contacts between people”

To: The Eastern Partnership Platform 4 “Contacts between people” participants

Dear participants of the Platform 4,

We appreciate the invitation and opportunity to express our opinion regarding new EU Programmes in the 7th meeting of Platform 4 “Contacts between people”.

The participants of Working Group 4 “Contacts between people” of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum come up with several recommendations related to:

- I. The Programme Creative Europe 2014-2020 – we see this programme as an opportunity to improve cultural cooperation between EU and Eastern Partnership countries and as an important step towards building open and democratic societies in the EU Neighbourhood. It should contribute also to working dialogue for cultural policy reform for releasing the socio-economic potential of cultural development and cooperation. **We call on EU and on the EaP countries to remove the obstacles for international cultural cooperation**, and in particular:
 - To conclude as soon as possible Memoranda of understanding for enabling cultural sectors from Eastern Partnership countries to take full part in Creative Europe;
 - To address the needs for structural reforms and capacity building in both EU and EU Neighbourhood. This includes support for networking, best practice exchange and peer education;
 - Recognize the benefits of culture as crucial to sustainable socio-economic development and make sure that the different EU policies and instruments are aligned;
 - Lower the minimal own contribution of the (often small and independent) NGOs in the EU Neighbourhood countries to 20% of the project budget for grants;

We would like to raise the awareness of the European Commission on the difficult situation of the independent sector in Belarus, where basic democratic principles are not respected. This situation should not impede Belarusian NGOs from taking part in Creative Europe programme.

We align with the statement on Creative Europe by the TANDEM project participants (48 cultural operators EU, Moldova & Ukraine) and take into consideration the position of the European Cultural Foundation (member of WG 4).

- II. The Programme Erasmus for All, should have:
 - A clear orientation on Active Citizenship and, participatory learning and European values needed.
 - Keep and develop operational grants for European umbrella associations.
 - Systemic, organizational and individual impact valued to enable small and medium size organizations’ participation.
 - the initiative of forming mutually beneficial partnerships between higher education institutions and businesses, or also known as ‘Knowledge Alliances’, should be promoted in the EaP countries. This might provide cash-strapped universities with additional source of much needed funding. The Commission along with the interested parties should help in establishing such partnerships through workshops, seminars and awareness campaigns.

The Working Group 4 “Contacts between people” believe that the Eastern Partnership countries would be part of the process of implementation of the new EU programmes.

Best regards,

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