

Report on the activities of the Steering Committee and Secretariat of the EaP CSF November 2013 - November 2014

The outgoing Steering Committee of the EaP CSF took over the office from the previous Committee after the elections held during the 5th EaP CSF Assembly on 4-5th October in Chisinau. During the period in office the Steering Committee has met four times to discuss the pertinent issues for the countries of the EaP and develop strategic direction for the Forum's activities. Throughout the year the activities of the Steering Committee supported by the Secretariat can be divided into the following categories.

1. High-level meetings and events

The Steering Committee has been active in addressing the following high level audience and participating in high level meetings related to Eastern Partnership:

Within the frames of the SC meeting the members of the SC **met with the former European Commissioner Stefan Füle** on February 4, 2014 and discussed the situation in the region in the wake of Euromaidan, information campaign in those EaP countries that were about to sign the Association Agreements, the necessity of budget monitoring by the civil society among many other issues.

In the margins of the same SC meeting, the members from the EaP countries have **addressed representatives of COEST (diplomats from the EU Permanent Representations in Brussels responsible for dealing with EaP countries)** with proposals focusing on regional security. Within regular intervals the updates on 6 EaP countries were sent COEST members.

On 11 February, *Jeff Lovitt and Leyla Alieva*, WG1 Coordinators addressed **EURONEST Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy**.

On 12 February, the Secretariat has organised **an expert discussion at the European Parliament focusing on the future strategy for European integration in the Eastern Neighbourhood**, challenges and lessons learnt. The speakers included high officials - Henri Malosse, President of the EESC, Philip Mikos, Head of Unit, Regional Programmes Neighbourhood East, DG Europe Aid and representatives of the Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum - *Jeff Lovitt, Jan Peiklo and Leila Alieva*.

On 13 February, *Jan Peiklo* addressed the **EURONEST Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society**.

The Steering Committee has **addressed the EU Council on 10th of February 2014 in a statement** calling upon the Council to commission a strategic review of the implementation of

the EU's policies towards the Eastern Partner countries, consistency in observation and promotion of human rights, proposing Civil Society Forum as an active role in such a review, including providing its expertise, analysis, and monitoring, e.g. of the use of EU funding, and of the observation of human rights. [CSF statement ahead of EU Council meeting on 10th of February 2014](#)

Early April, the Steering Committee members **took part in the consultation process with EEAS on support measures to Moldova and Georgia** that would contribute to the signature of AA and right after it.

On 10 April, the Secretariat of the EaP CSF has organised **the event on Security Challenges for the EaP countries in the new geopolitical context: civil society perspective at the European Parliament** that allowed for exchanging views of the EaP civil society representatives on the newly arising regional security threats as well as the venues for the EU engagement in resolving the conflicts in the EaP region where Steering Committee members *Oleksandr Sushko, Vano Chkhikvadze, and Boris Navasardian* addressed the audience of Brussels policy-makers together with *Rebecca Harms*, Co-Chair of the Greens/European Free Alliance, at the European Parliament, and *Arnoldas Pranckevicius*, External Policies Adviser to President of the European Parliament.

On 24th of April the Steering Committee **released a policy memorandum** addressed to the EU and NATO decision-makers **calling upon NATO and NATO members to respond with maximum speed and urgency to the security threat** facing Europe through the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Full [Policy Memorandum](#)

The Steering Committee presented **its proposals of the EaP Civil Society Forum to the Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting** in Brussels, Belgium, 22 July, including appointment of European Commissioner for Civil Society and Human Rights, immediate release of all political prisoners in Partner countries, strong support for unity of Ukraine against Russian interference and aggression, greater defence and security co-operation, including joint energy security policy, between EU and Partner countries. *Leila Alieva* voiced the message to the high-level audience. Full proposal

The proposals were also outlined and addressed end of August **to the European Council Special Meeting to institute a new European Commissioner for Civil Society and Human Rights. Full proposal**

Co-chair of the Steering Committee of the EaP CSF, *Vugar Bayramov*, delivered a speech in Baku on 9th of September **at the informal ministerial meeting of foreign affairs and energy ministers of the EU and Partner Countries**, in which he addressed the high officials on the importance of the EU engagement in the regional security, human rights and common approach to EU-EaP energy security. [Full speech](#)

Natalia Yerashevich, Director of the Secretariat met with advisers of the former Commissioner Fule Iwona Piorko and Magdalena Grono to update them on the developments in the Forum. She also met with representatives of the Council of Europe in Brussels to discuss the possible assistance of CoE in Ukraine and presented at the session of International NGOs of the Council of Europe on involvement of the civil society in decision-making. On 30-31 March Natalia Yerashevich presented the experience of the EaP CSF during the session on the future form and essence of the structural dialogue in the South and shared experiences of the Forum at the training for EU Delegations representatives on mainstreaming civil society on 3 April. She also discussed the programme of the Latvian Presidency with representatives of the Latvian permanent representation and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. The members of the EaP CSF took part in the following high-profile meetings in the frames of the Eastern Partnership:

13 May	Eastern Partnership Platform 2 meeting
27-28 May	3rd workshop of the Eastern Partnership Energy Regulators, London
03-06 June	EaP Platform 2 seminar on Resource efficiency in the framework of the Green week events, Brussels
11 June	EaP Platform I
23-24 June	11th meeting of the EaP Platform III on energy security, Brussels
8 July	Eastern Partnership 6th Panel meeting on Fight against Corruption.
29th July	Workshop on Harmonisation of Digital Markets, Brussels
8th - 19th September	Trade Facilitation Training for Young Customs Managers, Poland
16 October	7 th Panel on Public Administration Reform, Tbilisi Georgia
23 October	Eastern Partnership – 12th Meeting of Platform 3, “Energy Security”, Brussels
23/24 October	SME Panel in Kvareli, Georgia
5 November	Euronest PA - SOC Committee meeting
12 November	12th MEETING OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM 2:

11 November 3rd meeting of the Eastern Partnership Panel on Agriculture and Rural Development, Brussels

3. International awards and nominations

The Steering Committee has nominated a political prisoner Anar Mammadli, former Working Group 1 coordinator and member of the Steering Committee from Azerbaijan for a Vaclav Havel prize by Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which he was awarded on the 29th of September on the opening day of the autumn plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

4. Steering Committee meetings

The Steering Committee had four meetings in the reporting period: in Brussels, where it met with Commissioner Stefan Füle, representatives of the European External Action Service, and European Commission (EuropeAid); in Prague (April), while combining with participation in the conference devoted to the fifth Anniversary of the EaP; in Berlin (June), where it met with the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organised an advocacy event devoted to the security in the EaP region and the future of Eastern Partnership; and in Warsaw (October), where it met with the officials of the Administration of the Polish Government and co-organized an advocacy event together with PISM. More info on each of the meetings is available in the minutes:

[The minutes of the fourth Steering Committee meeting](#) - 2-3 October 2014 Warsaw, Poland

[The minutes of the third Steering Committee meeting](#) - 29-30 June 2014, Berlin, Germany

[The minutes of the second SC meeting](#) - 24-25 April, Prague

[The minutes of the first SC meeting](#) - 3-4 February, Brussels, Belgium

5. Applications for the Forum

In March 2014, the call for applications for the Forum 2014 was launched with an improved electronic submission of applications. Based on the three selection lists – National Platforms/EU coordinators, Working Group co-ordinators, and EU delegations – the selection of participants was then finalised. The final list prepared by the Steering Committee was consulted with the European External Action Service (EEAS)/European Commission before final publication at the website of the EaP CSF.

563 applications were submitted to participate in the Forum (454 - in 2013), 583 - in 2012), out of which 225 organisations were selected by the Steering Committee in line with the eligibility guidelines (drawing on shortlists by the country coordinators in conjunction with the national platforms, the working group coordinators, EU facilitators, and the European Union delegations in the six Eastern Partnership countries). According to the Forum's regulation at least 40% of the participants should be new. 54% of the selected delegates coming to Batumi have not attended the annual event in Chisinau in 2013. 55% of the attendees from the EaP countries and 53% of the attendees from the EU member states have not attended the previous Forum.

To improve the quality of submitted applications, the Steering Committee came up with ways to amend the application procedure: firstly, to tighten the requirements for the filled in applications to eliminate applicants that fail to complete the application forms in their entirety and fail to provide exhaustive answers. The requirements on filling in the application form will be clearly articulated during the next application process. The Secretariat will be responsible for identifying organisations that have not fulfilled the minimal requirements in filling-in the application.

Secondly, it was decided that independent and external evaluation of the applications may could be helpful to avoid the perception of influence on the participants in the forum. The dilemma for maintaining independence through the exclusion of GONGOs vs. the need for openness to include new organisations was acknowledged.

Advocacy

The Steering Committee has conducted a number of advocacy campaigns through dissemination of statements among EU institutions, Member States governments and parliamentary bodies of the Council of Europe (PACE) and National Parliaments both EU member state international institutions, as well as raising awareness campaign among the general public.

The advocacy efforts were focused on the deteriorating situation of the civil society in Azerbaijan, prominent leaders of which are facing trials and undemocratic limitations of NGO activities in the country. The Steering Committee also produced a number of statements on the situation in Ukraine and various issues related to the current security architecture concerning the EaP region vis-a-vis Russia.

Selected Statements adopted by the Steering Committee in the reporting period:

Statement: EaP CSF condemns arrests of internationally respected civil society leaders in Azerbaijan 6 August 2014

Proposals of the EaP Civil Society Forum Steering Committee to the Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting in Brussels 23 July 2014

EaP CSF Statement on arrest of Hasan Huseynli, the head of Intelligent Citizen Enlightenment Center Public Union, Azerbaijan 15 July 2014

[Statement: Civil Society Forum calls for immediate release of Anar Mammadli, respected monitor of elections and nominee for Václav Havel Human Rights Prize](#) 3 June 2014

[Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum releases Policy Memorandum on NATO security policy concerning Russian military intervention in Ukraine](#) 24 April 2014

[Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on extended arrest of Anar Mammadli](#) 19 March 2014

[Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on Russian military intervention in Ukraine](#) 4 March 2014

[Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on political repression in Ukraine](#) 20 February 2014

[Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on NGO law amendments in Azerbaijan](#) 31 January 2014

[Statement of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on European integration aspirations in Ukraine](#) 17 December 2013

[Statement of EaP Civil Society Forum on arrest of Anar Mammadli, who led election monitoring of Presidential elections in Azerbaijan](#) 17 December 2013

[The Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum condemns the continuing crackdown on independent media and human rights advocates in Azerbaijan](#) 26 November 2013

[Statement of the Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum on the situation in Ukraine ahead of the Vilnius Summit](#) 25 November 2013

[Statement of EaP Civil Society Forum to Eastern Partnership Summit, Vilnius, 29-30 November – ‘A democracy roadmap from Vilnius to Riga’](#) 15 November 2013

Decisions of the Steering Committee on the CSF strategy and internal structure

Strategy

In late 2013 and early 2014 the Forum working groups and national platforms have been submitting the strategy proposals, which have been incorporated into the proposed Strategy proposal for 2015-2017 to be voted during the Forum: [Full text](#)

The current SC has developed and proposed reform of composition of steering committee and governing structure of EaP CSF that give more weight on a streamlined, 8-member (versus currently 19-member) Steering Committee to the EaP national platforms, combined with EU representation directly connected to the Working Groups, while creating five Working Group Councils, each with representation from every EaP country, strengthening co-ordination and inclusivity in the operations of each Working Group. Each Working Group council will also have an EU co-ordinator.

The 8-member Steering Committee would focus on governance of the Secretariat, and setting strategic priorities, driven by the country priorities of the national platforms, and WG-driven advocacy co-ordinated by the two EU Advocacy Co-ordinators. The Steering Committee would elect a Chair or co-Chair, and would meet three times per year between the annual Forum events. They would also work by skype between meetings.

Flagship initiatives

The activities under flagship initiatives in the areas of election monitoring, independent media, and anti-corruption were successfully conducted.

The members of CSF have monitored this year's elections in Ukraine. The presidential election in Moldova this November is also on the radar of the Forum. The members of the election monitoring subgroup will be producing an analysis of the elections in the EaP region between 2013 and 2014.

The EaP CSF members are involved in producing [Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index](#) and Visa Liberalisation Index for the EaP countries <http://monitoring.visa-free-europe.eu/about>

EaP European Integration Index

The Forum took over the responsibility for the European Integration Index from 2014 onwards and has produced a short version of the new Index for the General Assembly in Batumi that will be further expanded and the full version will be presented in each of the EaP countries and Brussels. The project is funded by SIDA.

Funding

In 2014 the annual Forum event, as well as annual meetings of Working Groups are continued to be funded by the European Commission.

The Forum continues to benefit from the EC-funded (Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility) project on Strengthening National Platforms implemented by REC Moldova that started in early 2013 and that will run until mid-2015.

In the spring 2014 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic has allocated over 140,000€ for small projects with focus on priorities of the 1st and 4th Working Groups of the Forum.

The operational costs of the Secretariat of the CSF, as well as expenses for the organisation of four Steering Committee meetings per year are currently covered by the European Commission with co-funding from SIDA on a yearly basis.

Publications:

The following research and policy papers have been commissioned by the Forum and produced by Forum's experts or external researchers.

1. How can the EaP CSF strengthen its advocacy function? Natalia Shapovaliva, FRIDE – in progress
2. Security in Eastern Partnership region and civil society's role, Hennadyi Maksak, Polissa Foundation for International and Regional Studies, November 2014
3. "Taking Stock of EU Civil Society Funding in EaP Countries", Vera Rihackova, EUROPEUM, August 2014 <http://eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Europeum%20report%20on%20CSO%20funding%20in%20EaP%20countries.pdf>
4. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum four years on: progress, challenges and prospects - Hrant Konstanyan, CEPS, February 2014

Cooperation with EU Russia Civil Society Forum

Several informal meetings with the EU Russia Civil Society Forum took place in 2014. It was agreed that CSF-EaP working groups and sub groups might look for areas of common interest in fields such as media freedom or the legal environment in which civil society in post-Soviet countries has to operate with the EU-Russia forum with a view to joint projects. It was agreed by the SC that the project-driven level is where co-operation might be most fruitful, but there is no need for formal relations at the whole Forum or Steering Committee level.

"Strengthening Non-State Actors' Capacities to promote reform and increase public accountability" project

Members of the Steering Committee took part in several meetings and are involved in shaping the realisation of the project "Strengthening Non-State Actors' Capacities to promote reform and increase public accountability" implemented in six EaP countries by Konrad Adenauer Foundation that includes five major components: mapping, capacity development, ad-hoc support, and communication. Members of the National Platforms took part in a number of capacity-building trainings carried out within the project.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat operates within the outlines developed by the CSF and fixed in its [statute](#). It currently has two full-time staff members – Director and Communications Manager, as well as part-time Financial Manager.

Starting from January 2013 the Secretariat supported the activities of the Steering Committee, facilitated Forum representatives' participation in the official EaP Platforms, panels, and meetings, as well as channelled the Steering Committee's opinion at relevant points to the EU institutions in Brussels. In general the Secretariat is serving as an information and coordination hub of the CSF for the stakeholders in Brussels, EU member states, as well as EaP Governments. The Secretariat is working to increase Forum's visibility and is publicising the Forum's activities through the Forum's website, facebook, twitter, monthly newsletter (distributed to approx. 2,000 addressees) and other channels; it organised advocacy events for National Platforms and Working Groups in Brussels. The new version of website of EaP CSF has been launched, at the same time the Assembly website has been created as one-stop shop for the information on the event <http://eapcsf-assembly.org/> The Secretariat supported the organisation of the annual Assembly of the Forum, annual Working Group meetings and Steering Committee meetings and ensured that the delegates' selection process is carried out according to the procedures developed by the Forum. The Secretariat coordinated the process of the new strategy development and produced handbook for the members of the Steering Committee specifying and putting in writing already existing practises within the Steering Committee and outlining the roles of the members of the SC based on the discussions conducted at the SC meetings in 2014.

Next Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

The decision on the 7th Assembly will be made during the meeting of the new Steering Committee in Batumi, Georgia.