

Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting

7-8 July 2015, Vilnius

In attendance: Steering Committee members - Krzysztof Bobinski, Andrei Yahorau, Lasha Tughushi, Plamena Borisova, Hovsep Khurshudyan, Daiva Kvedaraite, Mikayel Hovhanisyan, Sabit Bagirov

Absent: Oleg Shatberashvili, Ion Guzun, Viktor Taran

Iryna Sushko from the Ukrainian National Platform was replacing Viktor Taran.

Secretariat: Director of the Secretariat, Natalia Yerashevich (ex officio member of the SC) and Communications Manager Darya Mustafayeva.

Summary of discussion, decisions and conclusions

1. Selection process for the participation in the EaP CSF Annual Assembly

--During the meeting the final list of the delegates for the general assembly was composed based on the votes of the National Platforms, WGs Coordinators and EU Delegations. The final list includes 22 participants per EaP country + 3 funded observers (Ukrainian NP can have 15 observers as the country hosting the Forum) + up to 5 self-funded observers and up to 50 EU CSOs.

--Following the discussion at the SC meeting in an online vote the SC has decided that the applicants to the general assembly of the Forum, who are members of the EESC, a European Union institution, and who applied on behalf of the EESC or EESC and their own organization cannot be accepted as delegates with voting rights. The representatives of the EESC who applied to the Forum are welcome to attend the as observers.

--Possible **future procedures for the selection** of the participants were discussed, including whether NPs should be the only ones to select and whether there EU Delegations should vote (since sometimes their vote is inconsistent with the quality of work of the selected CSOs, however it was noted that his vote gives an indication of the EU assessment of certain CSOs). Due to the diversity of procedures for selecting participants at the level of NPs, it was decided to include the recommendation on the process of the participants selection to the best practises paper that will serve as a recommendation for NPs.

--It was decided that the Secretariat will follow up with the European Commission to clarify if EU Delegations will be taking part in the selection process in 2016.

2. Planning of the Annual Assembly in Kyiv

It was decided that the Annual Assembly will be held on **20-21 November** and attending the events dedicated to the Maidan anniversary on 22 November will be incorporated in the Forum's agenda.

The representatives of the Ukrainian NP has presented the preparatory activities that have already been done for the organisation of the general assembly.

A proposal on the revised Annual Assembly format was discussed by the SC. It was decided to make it more interactive with smaller more targeted sessions initiated by the participants rather than plenaries with participation of EU civil servants responsible for the 6 EaP countries and 5 thematic issues and national authorities from the EaP countries. WGs meetings will include brainstorming on priorities and action plans for 2016, while side events will comprise donor meetings and possibly re-granting presentations.

To make **voting on resolutions** less time-consuming the deadline for submission of amendments in advance of the Assembly will be set (2 weeks in advance suggested, written submissions only). Last minute resolutions and amendments can be submitted the latest by the end of the 1st day of the Assembly. One of the suggestions was that the author of an amendment should present the amendment and the author of the resolution should agree. It was also suggested to introduce an **award for the best project of the year** under the re-granting scheme. An idea for the prize to an EU leader who contributed to the EaP progress, as well as for a CSO from an Eastern Partnership country was supported. The Ukrainian NP is discussing participation in the Annual Assembly with the Heads of Verkhovna Rada Committees, as well as the EuroNest co-chair and the Presidential Administration. Ukrainian Government Office for European Integration agreed to take part.

There was a round of brainstorming for **potential titles for the Annual Assembly**. It was decided that within one week from 8 July the SC members and Secretariat should submit their ideas for the topics.

It was agreed to appoint **Iryna Sushko as a responsible person from the Ukrainian National Platform for the organisation of the annual assembly**.

3. Procedure for election/re-election of National Platform Coordinators

Since two coordinators of the National Platforms were not present at the SC meeting, possible sanctions (in case of an absence without a reasonable excuse) and rules on replacement (in case of repeated absences) were discussed. The Co-Chairs will reiterate in writing the importance of attending the SC

meetings. It was agreed that the Secretariat and the Steering Committee will develop regulations on who can replace the elected member of the SC in the SC in case of need and how that person should be elected to be offered for consideration at the general assembly. The suggested wording will be discussed at the next SC meeting in September in Tbilisi.

It was decided to make **an internal assessment of the situation in the National Platforms**. Secretariat will prepare a short survey for the member of National Platforms before the next SC meeting and present for the discussions.

4. Short updates from National Platforms

Armenian NP presented their policy of deprivation of right to vote of NP members in case of 3 absences at the NP meetings. The NP made their submission for the ENP review coordinated by 3 facilitators and the AM NP secretariat. The Secretariat has received from the EU Delegation for 2 years. Mikayel Hovhanisyan presented the situation in the country following the announced electricity price hike and the results of the advocacy meetings he had in Brussels with EEAS, EP and DG Energy on these issues.

During the selection procedure in the **Azerbaijani NP** 3 members were in charge of the selection process and 58 CSOs voted. The voting was conducted by secret ballot, while those abroad could vote by email (11 in total). The law on restricting funding for the NGOs remains in place seriously hampering the activities of the NGOs. Azerbaijani government recently identified 3 priorities for its cooperation with EU that include mobility, economic cooperation, and energy.

Belarusian NP held a meeting on 25 June where the future of the platform was discussed and a new coordination committee was elected. The NP will focus on 2 main dimensions: monitoring the state of civil society in Belarus and EU-Belarus relations monitoring. The revision of members will be conducted and the secretariat will be created with the attempt by the new coordination committee to register it. Andrei Yahorau presented the results of the Informal Ministerial Meeting and the meeting of the NP members with Commissioner Hahn held in Minsk on 29 June.

Georgian NP organised a discussion on visa liberalisation in the Parliament with government and MPs; a similar discussion with the Prime Minister is planned in 3 weeks. Systemic dialogue with the government based on signing a relevant memorandum on cooperation and trilateral platforms is a strategic goal for the NP. NP is actively involved in the process of the judiciary reform.

Moldovan NP Coordinator was absent.

Ukrainian NP representative draw attention to the risks of reforms being unfinished in the country and lack of NGO cadres and weakening of the NP as a large number of them has joined the Government and the Parliament. The NP representatives are currently taking part in the coordination committees created

in ministries. The NP contributed to the Ukrainian submission for the ENP review coordinated by the Renaissance Foundation. With the creation of the civil society platform under the AA the need of clearly specifying the goals of the two platforms is evident.

5. General discussion on Working Groups and NPs

The Steering Committee has discussed how the NPs and WGs and the Steering Committee with the Secretariat are interconnected and interdependent. It was decided to find out what is the exact cause of the lack of motivation in certain NPs and how to make the Forum more attractive for them. The assessment of the NPs will help gathering information for the analysis of the situation. It was suggested that the objectives and priorities of the CSF and NPs should be clearly formulated, taking into account both the regionalisation (WGs) and nationalisation (NPs) of certain processes.

The possibility of increasing the support to Working Groups and especially its active members was discussed. It was suggested to look for new funding and use the opportunities of the current grant to facilitate more activities of WGs and subgroups. It was mentioned that WGs and its subgroups can become a basis for the establishment of thematic networks.

It was suggested that the Forum should focus on advocacy opportunities in big EU Member States, as well as increasing synergy and solidarity among the participants.

6. Planning of regional activities for NPs

Lasha Tugushi presented the concept of the event for National Platforms that will focus on assessing the implementation of the first year of the Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The event will take place on **17-18 September in Tbilisi**.

Next SC meeting will be held on 15-16 September in Tbilisi.

Adopted on 21 July 2015