



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum

1st Steering Committee Report

**For the Eastern
Partnership Civil Society
Forum, Berlin 18th and 19th
of November 2010**



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum

Contents

1. Introduction

- 1.1 General consideration from the speaker of the Forum, p.3
- 1.2 Recommendations of 2009 and organization of the Steering Committee, p.4

2. Reports from WG coordinators

- 2.1. WG1, p.10
- 2.2. WG2, p.17
- 2.3. WG3, p.22
- 2.4. WG4, p.24

3. Reports from Country facilitators

- 3.1 Armenia, p.29
- 3.2 Azerbaijan, p.32
- 3.3 Belarus, p.33
- 3.4 Georgia, p. 39
- 3.5 Moldova, p.40
- 3.6 Ukraine, p. 43
- 3.7 European Union, p.44

4. Report from Steering Committee activities

- 4.1 Steering Committee meetings, p. 45
- 4.2 Lobbying activities, p.45
- 4.3 Information and communication activities, p. 50
- 4.4 CSF Flagship initiative, p. 51
- 4.5 Preparation of the Forum event in Berlin, p. 54
- 4.6 Concept for the CSF

5. Achievements and recommendations on future Steering committee, p. 57



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

1.1 General consideration from the speaker of the Forum

Dear friends,

The first year of our cooperation within Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership is drawing to an end. It was a true challenge for the civil society organizations in all of our countries and posed many questions for us to answer.

Are we ready to be on the frontline of engaging new countries in the European community? Do we have the experience to spread European standards in governance, energy efficiency, education and economic processes? Will we be able to maintain our commitment to human rights advocacy and defending the freedoms of our fellow citizens? And finally, what do we do to make our voices heard and our opinions counted with on the intergovernmental level? Evaluating these questions makes one realize just how highly we aim and how important the tasks we have set for ourselves are.

At the Brussels Forum of last year we have presented our vision for the course of development of the Eastern Partnership and the role, which civil society is to play in it. Sometimes very ambitious, these recommendations nevertheless set the criteria, be it a long term goal, by which the participation of civil society in the Eastern Partnership shall be assessed. We are all miles apart, all newcomers in the EaP, all struggling to build up relations with other subjects of the Eastern Partnership, many of whom are also new in the process. And one year is obviously a very short period of time to evaluate our practical achievements. But we need to know that we are moving in the right direction.

Throughout this year we were holding meetings within the four thematic platforms, participated in international events, devoted to Eastern Partnership, and developed national platforms. The next Civil Society Forum in Berlin is our chance to present this positive dynamics. Together, we can turn this event into a milestone in the course of engagement of the civil society in the Eastern Partnership, and the EaP itself!

Siarhiej Mackievic,

Speaker of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum



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1.2 Recommendations of 2009 and organization of the Steering Committee

The Civil Society Forum presented in 2009 the following recommendations to the Ministerial Meeting :

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM
(Brussels, 16-17 November 2009)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants of the Civil Society Forum believe that Civil society organizations should be treated as institutional partners of EU bodies, Member States and the EaP countries in the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of EaP programs, on both bilateral and multilateral levels.

For their part, the EaP countries must strive to fulfil the Copenhagen Criteria and the conditions and recommendations made by the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

I would like to stress at this point that the Forum strongly condemns the holding of political prisoners in some EaP countries and appeals for their immediate release.

The Eastern Partnership provides an opportunity for the partner countries to integrate with the European Union by developing stable democratic structures, and by enabling stronger participation of civil society in areas such as human rights, electoral standards, media freedom, combating corruption, training and the networking of local authorities.

WORKING GROUP 1: DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND STABILITY

1. The EU should encourage the authorities in EaP countries to introduce and strengthen democratic principles at national and local levels: it should encourage high standards of governance, supremacy of the law, effective civil controls over the implementation of laws as well as over prosecutors and the police. The EaP countries should strengthen judicial independence and ensure access to justice and effective mechanisms for combating corruption.

HUMAN RIGHTS

2. The EU should demonstrate the centrality of international human rights standards in its foreign policy and agreements with third countries by according human rights a distinctive space. Enforcing these human rights standards should be an integral part of the EaP. The evaluation of human rights in EaP countries should be treated as a basic criterion for the overall assessment of their democratic progress.

ELECTIONS AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS



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3. The EU should enhance effective assistance to the EaP countries to ensure free, fair and transparent elections. It is the responsibility of governments and parliaments of the EaP countries to ensure a proper environment for elections that safeguards equal access of candidates and parties to public media and equality in exercising citizens' rights.

MEDIA

4. The role of the Eastern Partnership is to support media independence, pluralism and diversity and to ensure the rights of journalists, guaranteeing their security so they can perform their professional duties.

SECURITY AND PEACE BUILDING

5. Stability and democratic change must be based on tolerance and security for all. A pragmatic approach aimed at conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution must not negate EU values, as our principle should be: "Democracy is the best policy for security."

* * *

Parallel to the peer review carried out on the basis of Council of Europe conventions, the Civil Society Forum should prepare country-specific NGO progress reports on democratic governance that will present an independent assessment of compliance with international standards and conventions in democratic governance.

WORKING GROUP 2: ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND CONVERGENCE WITH THE EU POLICIES

1. The Civil Society Forum supports the core objectives and program of work approved by the thematic platform for economic integration and convergence with EU policies. The program of work calls for Civil society organisations to be involved in the work of the thematic platform and of the panel on trade and trade-related regulatory cooperation linked to Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas.
2. The Civil Society Forum draws the attention of the EU and EaP countries to the necessity of including the following economic and social issues into the agenda of the Eastern Partnership:
 - a) Increasing the performance of social security and social protection systems and intensifying the fight against poverty;
 - b) Introducing the principles of sustainable development and adequate responses to climate change;
 - c) Facilitating labour mobility and flexicurity;
 - d) Supporting the efforts of those partner countries that are not yet members of WTO to become members;
3. Support for consumer protection organisations as an important player in the market economy should become part of the new national action plans.



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4. A new flagship initiative to put in place a program aimed at upgrading the support of business contacts, internationalization and market access, including the transfer of know-how from the Chambers of commerce and industry and the business associations of EU member states to their partners in the EaP countries should be developed.
5. The support for the social partners and for the social dialogue should become part of the legal approximation between the EU and EaP countries including the implementation of core labour standards.

WORKING GROUP 3: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY SECURITY

ENERGY SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

1. Shape an integrated sustainable energy policy for the EaP region, which takes into account national interests and aims to improve environmental protection (including biodiversity), energy efficiency, as well as the capacity to face climate change and to mitigate dependency on energy imports.
2. EU Member States and EaP countries to work together towards higher security of energy transportation. The European Initiative on Gas Transparency should be promoted as a pilot project within the Eastern Partnership, open to third countries as a mechanism for crisis prevention.

ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY, AND AGRICULTURE

3. Support the integration of environmental aspects into all national policies of EaP countries (e.g. industry, transport, regional development, budget, agriculture, forestry, EU acquis compliance), in particular through promotion of Strategic Environmental Assessment.

INFORMATION, EDUCATION, CAPACITY BUILDING, AND AWARENESS RAISING

4. Implement the principles of education for sustainable development in national educational systems; promote the transfer of knowledge from EU to EaP countries.

WORKING GROUP 4: CONTACTS BETWEEN PEOPLE

1. Promote and disseminate information on EU issues and the opportunities provided by the EU by developing an information society and by enlarging the network of European Information Points.
2. Address specific situations and levels of development of civil society in each EaP country, in particular through using existing leaders' networks (such as Eúclid Network and the Civil Society Leadership Network) for strengthening common understanding, sharing of values, and cooperation between NGOs from EaP countries and EU Member States.

VISA FACILITATION AND LIBERALISATION



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3. The EU and its Member states should offer all six EaP countries roadmaps towards visa free regimes and waive visa fees as soon as possible. As a first step simplify visa procedures and provide multiple-entry long term visas.

EDUCATION

5. Facilitate non-formal education and increase significantly funding for internships and volunteer opportunities, school exchange programmes and distance learning.

YOUTH

6. Enhance the active participation of young people in decision making processes at all levels and develop mechanisms for involving them in the achievement of the EaP goals. Develop special programmes for peace and intercultural education for young people in post conflict areas.

CULTURE

7. Foster cultural exchanges and cooperation between EU and EaP countries and encourage ratification/fostering implementation of the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* in the six EaP countries.

* * *

Participants of the Civil Society Forum clearly stated that the role of civil society should not be limited solely to making recommendations. The majority of participants see the Civil Society Forum not as a single meeting, but as an equal and active partner in the dialogue between national governments and the European Union.

In order to achieve this goal, the Civil Society Forum 2009 elected a Steering Committee, which consists of eight thematic platform coordinators and nine country facilitators. Its main mission is to provide further development and the implementation of an appropriate strategy for the participation of Civil Society in bilateral and multilateral relations within the Eastern Partnership.

Civil Society representatives expect a supportive and participatory approach to dialogue both from EU institutions and from national governments, which will help to include a broad range of interests and increase levels of support and understanding for the Eastern Partnership among citizens of EU and EaP countries.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

The Steering Committee is composed of

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum elected during the meeting on 16-17 November

Coordinators of the EaP CSF thematic working groups:

Group 1. Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability

1. **Siarhiej MACKIEVIC**, Assembly of Pro-Democratic Non-Governmental Organisations of Belarus (Spokeperson of the Forum)

email: s.mackievic@gmail.com

2. **Kristina PRUNEROVA**, European Partnership for Democracy

email: kristinaprunerova@eupd.eu

Group 2. Economic integration and convergence with EU policies

3. **Kakhaber GOGOLASHVILI**, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies

email: gogolashvili@gfsis.org

4. **Ivan VOLEŠ**, The European Economic and Social Committee

email: Voles@komora.cz

Group 3. Environment, climate change and energy security

5. **Mykhailo GONCHAR**, The NOMOS Centre

email: geostrategy@ukr.net

6. **Irene LUCIUS**, WWF Danube Carpathian programme & European Policy programme

email: ilucius@wwfdcp.org

Group 4. Contacts between people

7. **Natalia COJOHARI**, National Youth Council of Moldova

email: natalia.cojohari@cntm.md

8. **Ben RATTENBURY**, Euclid Network

email: Ben.rattenbury@euclidnetwork.eu

EaP Country Facilitators

9. **Boris NAVASARDIAN**, Yerevan Press Club, Armenia

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10. **Avaz HASANOV**, Society for Humanitarian Research, Azerbaijan

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11. **Ulad VIALICHKA**, International Consortium EUROBELARUS, Belarus

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12. **Tamar KHIDASHELI**, Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Georgia



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum

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13. **Sorin MEREACRE**, Eurasia Foundation, Moldova

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14. **Sviatoslav PAVLIUK**, PAUCI Polish-Ukrainian Cooperation Foundation

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EU representatives (including international networks)

15. **Iris KEMPE**, Heinrich Böll Foundation South Caucasus Regional Office

email: Iris.Kempe@boell.ge

16. **Antonella VALMORBIDA**, Association of Local Democracy Agencies

email: Antonella.valmorbida@aldaintranet.org

17. **Katarzyna PEŁCZYŃSKA-NAŁĘCZ**, Centre for Eastern Studies

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EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

2. Reports from WG coordinators

2.1 Report from Working Group 1 on democracy, human rights, good governance and stability

The meeting was held on October 7 and 8, 2010 in Brussels and over 60 representatives from both EU and EaP countries have come. The moderators Kristina Prunerova from European Partnership for Democracy and Siarhiej Mackievic from Assembly of Non-governmental organizations of Belarus have summarized at the beginning the work of the steering committee since the last meeting in Brussels in November 2009. The representative of the European Commission, Mr. Maciej Stadejek has welcomed the participants to the meeting and wished fruitful discussion. Representatives of national platforms have shortly informed about the activities of the various platforms.

The main objectives of the meeting were the following:

- To present the work of the WG 1 and its division into subgroups
- To present the intergovernmental platforms and panels and the state of the play of these meetings and how the CSF WG 1 can become involved
- To have separate discussions on subgroup topics, prepare recommendations and proposals and find possible cooperation among the organizations
- To plan the work program of the group and the subgroups for the next year, to plan the EaP CSF event in Berlin
- Open discussion about the role of EaP CSF and feedback from the participants

The work of the group should be based on 3 areas:

1. work program of the EaP Platform 1 for 2009 and 2010 (http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/platforms/docs/platform1_091009_en.pdf) - this is a general framework for the work of the Platforms and should be a general framework for the work of our group as well
2. Focus of this work program under the Democratic Governance:
 - improved functioning of the judiciary
 - public administration reform
 - fight against corruption
3. Recommendations of the CSF working group 1 presented at the Forum meeting in November 2009 (http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/civil_society/forum/working_group1_en.pdf)
 - these are areas that the civil society views as important within the democracy, human rights, good governance and stability

The working group will be working on all 3 levels. Based on initial assessment the coordinators have decided to divide the work of the group into the following subgroups:

1. **Judiciary reform** (based on the work program of the platform and other activities)
2. **Public administration reform** (based on the work program of the platform and other activities)



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

3. **Fight against corruption** (based on the work program of the platform and other activities)
4. **VISA facilitation group** (request from the participants of the Forum)
5. **Media** (request from the participants of the Forum)
6. **Human Rights** (request from the participants of the Forum)

Please see below more detailed reports from the subgroup meetings.

The main topics touched during the session on feedback about CSF were the following:

1. We need to improve the access to documents and information about intergovernmental meetings and we have to gain access to all relevant meetings in order to present our possible input
2. Added value of the EaP CSF can be seen as the following:
 - a. To make the Eastern Partnership process more transparent, visible and accountable
 - b. To encourage the pro-European approach of the EaP governments
 - c. To coordinate, well prepare and deliver the CSO input and participation into the process
3. The Belarusian government has several times expressed their reservation to the participation of CSF in EaP meetings so the Steering Committee should draft a letter to be sent on behalf of the CSF stressing the fact that all CSOs (not only Belarusian ones) are being excluded from the EaP process
4. At all CSF meetings there should be space for inviting government representatives (both from the EU as well as EaP) in order to show our openness towards cooperation and to have a possibility to give our opinion
5. The selection process to the Forum as well as to the National Platform should be well developed and followed
6. We were informed by the Commission that there will be no additional funding for the CSF so we need to devise a plan for fundraising

Conclusions and recommendations of the Anti-corruption subgroup

International support to fight against corruption in the EaP region is primarily based on the intergovernmental top-down approach. Moreover, support to fight against corruption is mostly donor driven as majority of the EaP governments do not have a genuine political will to combat corruption in their countries. Paper work and imitation of reform prevails. The EaP Platform 1 anti-corruption activity is not seen to be an exception from this set.

Whereas the government ownership of the reform is weak or nil, there is a need in a broad public ownership of the anti-corruption reform, especially taking into account that public acceptance of corruption in the EaP countries remains one of the main obstacles to decreasing the levels of corruption. As an overall goal, we should aim at inclusion of CSOs into anti-corruption policies and activities at the EaP multilateral and bilateral levels.

Trying to answer the question what role the EaP CSF should have in the anti-corruption area, three **general objectives** have been defined:

- 1) Joint and regular monitoring of anti-corruption policies and the state of corruption in the EaP6 as a form of civil society contribution to the EaP anti-corruption activities.
- 2) Strengthening cooperation between EaP and EU CSOs. We think this should be implemented through developing common initiatives aimed expertise and other capacities building of CSOs in the EaP countries and experience transfer between the EU CSOs to the EaP countries.
- 3) Developing a dialogue with international donors to anti-corruption and in particular with European donors aiming at change of donor policies. In particular, EaP CSF will advocate for CSOs inclusion at



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

the policy planning and implementation of foreign aid to AC.

Next steps for the Berlin CSF and further:

- 1) Create a network of CSOs interested in the topic not limited to the CSF participants. This network shall serve as hub of expertise on the anti-corruption in the EaP countries and EU countries. Compiling the data base of contacts, using Transparency International contacts.
- 2) Establish communication with the anti-corruption expert panel (the coordinator and EU MS representatives which revealed the interest).
- 3) Define and declare one year common goal in AC (e.g. declaration of assets and properties by public officials, the petition system functioning or any other topic in which all EaP6 have an interest). To achieve the goal, we will elaborate a project and seek for funding to achieve this goal that would include research, monitoring, advocacy, experience transfer activities at the EaP level and all the EaP 6 countries.

Prepared by: Natalia Shapovalova, FRIDE, Spain

Recommendations of the subgroup on Public Administration Reform

Vision

Efficient public administrations should put the citizen into the center of their functioning. Citizens should be seen as the end customers of public administration; the public administration reform must ensure that citizens have easy and equal access to civil services, and that the services are efficient, affordable and timely.

It is essential to ensure the transparency of governance at all levels in order to ensure full accountability and prevent corruption. Decentralization should be a key focus of administrative reform. The development of local communities is the core of sustainable society.

For reforms to be successful, they must be implemented with the strongest possible involvement of society. Experience shows that no institution will ever reform itself unless pressure is applied externally. Civil society institutions can provide crucial input and ensure an unbiased approach to the elaboration of reform strategies.

Proposed lines of action

- Encourage governments of EaP countries to adopt and implement National Strategies for Local Self-Government and Public Administration Reform in consultation with civil society organizations;
- Encourage the governments of EaP countries which have joined the European Charter on Local Self-Government to implement it, and Belarus to join it; ensure the implementation of subsidiarity principles;
- Encourage governments of EaP countries to disseminate information and raise awareness about reforms, good practices and country situations in the sphere of public administration reform;
- Ensure independent monitoring of public administration reforms and European cooperation projects including those funded under budget support and CIB;



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

- Encourage governments of EaP countries to decrease the administrative burden on taxpayers; reduce bodies with overlapping functions;
- Involve civil society in the decision-making process whenever governments negotiate with EU for support or propose projects and strategies, including twinning programs, in the sphere of public administration reform;
- Create another track within twinning programs that will enable local civil society to manage quick efficient expert exchanges and training for local self-administration; organize training and education of public officials and local self-government officials based on a set of values and training needs assessment;

Prepared by: Svyatoslav Pavlyuk, PAUCI, Ukraine;
Nina Iskandaryan, Caucasus Institute, Armenia

Recommendations from Judiciary reform subgroup

Representatives of the subgroup provided short presentations about state of play in the area of the judiciary in the countries present. The members specifically referred to the monitoring reports/analysis prepared by the civil society organizations in the area of the judiciary reform.

Based on the comprehensive discussion, sub-group members agreed that although there are a considerable differences in the member states of the EaP in the area of the judicial reform, the set of the issue can be identified towards which joint assessments can be carried out and respective recommendations be advocated vis-a-vis state authorities and EU institutions in the light of the EaP process.

Specific issues identified are *inter alia*, following:

- **Independence and impartiality of the judges** (corruption, pressure from the Executive, “trend to support prosecution”)
- **Appointment system** (transparency, independent from the Executive and efficiency)
- **Access to justice** (Efficiency of the delivery of the free legal aid; Quality and level of access for the most vulnerable part of the society);
- **Transparency of the justice** (especially in the area of usage of the pre-trial measures)
- **Role of the judicial bodies in the area of the covert investigative measures;**

“Procedural” recommendations for the process

- Increase of the transparency of the EU funding of the justice sector for the countries in concern;
- Creation of the specific platforms for the civil society engagement in the reforms planning and implementation from the side of the authorities (example of the Georgian Inter agency reform council and EU budget support program);
- Necessity to provide more specific and explicit recommendations with regard to the policy/legislation and practice in this area from the EU, in its Action plans, reports, assessments;
- Necessity for the creation of the expert group(s) for the assessment of the enforcement of the national legislation vis-a-vis to the international and European standards;
- Creation of the periodic system for the **joint** (EU, participation country authorities and Civil Society representatives) follow-up with regard to the implementation of the recommendations to the government presented by the EU;



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- Support for diversification and increase in the level of the funding for the civil society organizations working in the area;
- Increase of the engagement of the representatives (experts) from the civil society organizations in the activities under the EU support programs diverted towards the authorities;
- For the WG – to prepare joint set of the recommendations for all 6 thematic sub-groups; which should be submitted to the Berlin forum; discussed and further advocated towards the EU institutions; Three members of this sub-group agreed to elaborate the set of the recommendations before the Berlin forum and submit to the WG coordinator.”

Prepared by: Giorgi Chkeidze, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

Report from the meeting of the Visa Liberalization subgroup

Civil society in all EP countries is very much interested in the subject, but the biggest challenge for the NGOs dealing with the issue remains the unwillingness of the governments and well as of the European Commission to share any visa related information.

In the second part of the meeting we touched upon:

1. Synergies with other Working Groups and Platforms

Visa issues touch upon a number of derivate problems and thus is dispersed among various groups therefore it is necessary to:

- to follow the work of others groups that deal with cross-thematic issues like academic exchange and migration but also human rights or anti-corruption;
- reinforce our actions through linkage and emphasis on visa-related problems with other areas
- introduce new arena for discussion of cross-sectional issues

2. Differentiation of the message in regard to the addressee type, i.e. different aspects of the issue have to be highlighted when:

- talking to the representatives of EaP countries – emphasis on technical and legal compliance
- talking to EU – as the decision of whether or not to launch visa facilitation is purely political, plea not to apply double standards to countries who are equally prepared for the visa facilitation/liberalization process
- talking to the EaP public – focus on the fact that the facilitation/liberalization (VF/VL) process is time-consuming, ergo they need to do be more patient. Additionally, the message has to be clear that VF/VL does not equal a total freedom of movement

3. Convince both sides (EaP governments and the EU) that visa liberalization has the potential to become success story:

- for the EU to be perceived as more open (no more “Fortress Europe”)
- for the EaP governments to show their citizens tangible results of their approximation to the EU

4. Work plan of the WG



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- monitor the implementation of introduced or promised VF processes (the outcomes of the PASOS project on visa liberalization may come handy, especially the website for the remaining EaP countries on visa issues www.novisa.eu link it with the CSF website (January 2011)
- track the application of funds earmarked for VF/VL projects, i.e. to see how money was spent on the project they were meant for
- continuation of the Visa Working Group will be ensured by Coalition for Visa-free travel meeting in format Forum+ (including all organizations participating in the Visa sub-Group and others interested in visa subject).

5. Ideas for the II CSF recommendations:

- General recommendations shall be elaborated by specific recommendations appended in the attachment
- Decouple the technical from the political: more funds to be assigned for technical assistance: trainings for those involved in VL, trainings for journalists
- Request the EC to make the VF/VL road maps/action plans public
- Appeal to the member states not to forsake the issue of VL, especially in the light of dropping the issue from the forthcoming presidencies' agendas

*Prepared by: Maria Staszkiwicz, Association for International Affairs, Czech Republic;
Anita Szymborska, Stefan Batory Foundation, Poland*

Summary of the debate of the Human Rights subgroup

Creation of the human rights group has been already mentioned at the Forum in Brussels last year. A "baseline" product should be a periodical monitoring of human rights situation and important events from all 6 EaP countries, put together bi-yearly in March and September (roughly one month before the intergovernmental Platform 1 meetings).

We believe this smaller report is very important to WG1 and the CSF on the whole as it allows, on the one hand, the organizations from EaP6 countries to cooperate on a regional level, and on the other hand, to have something tangible, a practical outcome of these meetings. We keep referring to the recommendations for the European Commission. This monitoring report would be a practical basis for us to ground our recommendations on, at least within human rights sphere.

This report will build on existing reports from the six countries, which will be provided by selected human rights subgroup members (1-2 pages plus 3-4 bullet point recommendations from each country) and then put together by group coordinator under one format.

The section on each country will dwell on five areas:

1. Freedom of expression
2. Freedom of assembly
3. Freedom of association
4. Other human rights issues relevant for the country
5. Electoral processes (if the elections are taking place in that particular country)



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

The report from each country will be tailored according to the situation in this country. In some the concerns will mainly be caused by the freedom of expression, in other by freedom of assembly and in some, by other human rights. We provide these four areas as general guidelines.

The final part of each section would be recommendations to the European Union of what to look into when having talks with each particular country/suggestions for questions.

The submissions should be sent to Marek Svoboda and Katerina Przybylska. First deadline is January 31, 2011. More details will be discussed in Berlin.

Other topics to focus on:

- Lobbying the issue of human rights to be included in the agenda of the meetings
- Monitoring how the issue of human rights is included in the agenda of the intergovernmental meetings and how it is taken into consideration while deciding on bi-lateral projects
- Monitoring of how governmental declarations on the progress with human rights actually look on the ground.
- Or, even, defining criteria of progress, once we are considered a more relevant partner for the commission.

This subgroup is not exclusive and if during the Forum or even now we have people willing to join, please contact the coordinators Marek Svoboda and Katerina Przybylska. In the subgroup on the monitoring during the SCF we will present this idea, where people could also join the team.

During the month our group will concentrate on setting some more or less clear objectives, indicators of success – to know where we are heading and to be able to define how successful we are. These objectives would be revised during the upcoming Forum and during next Forums as a one year evaluation.

*Prepared by: Marek Svoboda, People in Need Czech Republic
Katerina Przybylska, Robert Schumann Foundation Belarus*

Report from the meeting of the Media subgroup

The participants of the Media subgroup lead by Mr. Boris Navasardian (Armenia) discussed the media situation in their countries (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine) focusing on the developments in the fields of public TV broadcasting, digital TV, and Internet freedom as well as defamation, access to information, and self-regulation of media outlets. The participants concluded that to some extent the above-mentioned issues are highly prioritized in the media development agendas of all countries. Media subgroup suggested its recommendations to the Civil Society Forum (being conceived both as the annual event and as permanent activities of the participants in line with EaP priorities) within the 3 levels: realms of activities, forms of activities, and proposals of the particular projects to be implemented.

Media group suggested to closely monitor the state-of-play of Public Broadcasting System functioning in the EaP countries focusing mainly at administration of the system and funding. Also it was proposed to develop expert recommendations based on the monitoring to be delivered to the national governments and the European Commission. The same mechanism of work could be applied to civil society activities related to the Internet freedom. Expert attention and watch-dog methodology are to be focused on the



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

threat of controlling of the web by public authorities in EaP area. The following forms of civil lobbying concerning the defamation were proposed by the group: exclusion of the criminal prosecution from the national legislations and erasing the possibilities to bankrupt media companies based on defamation. As for the access to the information media experts suggested implementing of the corresponding laws and harmonization of the national legislations on access to information with the EU standards. The group also recommended media expert community is to pay particular attention to the possible threats made by digitalization of TV in EaP countries. Monopolization of media sphere and disappearing of small local TV broadcasters could seriously threaten media plurality and diversity.

At the level of forms of activities it was suggested to create Media Sub-Groups at the national level within the EaP platforms and finally of the Network of such groups. Annual Public Hearings on Media Freedom in a particular country from the EaP area resulted in resolution papers was considered as an example of joint work to be done by the newly-created Network. Also the group participants agreed to provide the Second Civil Society Forum to be held in Berlin with the informational support by encouraging the national journalists to cover the Forum.

The Group outlined the ideas for future projects to be implemented. It was proposed to launch information campaigns promoting of the essence and goals of EaP at national levels with the regular sociological surveys to measure the public opinion in dynamics. The group suggested creating the interactive web-portal aiming at the description of the media landscapes of EaP countries based on the common methodology and indicators. Also it was proposed to hold civil society monitoring of the relations between the EU and EaP countries by means of in-depth journalistic investigation program based on multilateral media cooperation.

As a recommendation for the European Commission the participants of Media Subgroup suggested to include the media issues into official agenda of Platform 1 to be discussed on intergovernmental level. Also the group defined its top priority – to adapt of national media laws to the EU standards.

*Prepared by: Boris Navasardian, Yerevan Press Club, Armenia;
Andriy Kulakov, Internews-Ukraine, Ukraine*



2.2 Report from Working Group 2 on Economic integration and convergence with the Eu policies (period November 2009-November 2010)

2.2.1 What has been done (achievements and difficulties)?

2.122 Communication about working group activities and participation in events related to the activities of the working group

Among the achievements of the working group was the publishing of **two information bulletins**, which cover both the outline of the actions made and the information about the discussions at the EaP Platform 2. This has enabled the members of the working group to have knowledge about the subjects discussed in the platform.

Achievements WG2 Coordinators and participants took part in **number of the seminars and workshops** in the EU member states and back home at the Eastern partner countries to promote the role of the EaP and opportunities for economic growth, better regulations, social and health safety standards. The workshop on the **“EU Ukraine relations: the role of the civil society” (25-26 March, Kyiv)** with participation both civil society and the officials directly addressed in its conclusions the issue on more active involvement of the civil society into the EaP and regular consultations with civil society on future DCFTA.

In conformity with the recommendations adopted by the WG 2 at the Civil Society Forum in November 2009 to put it as the priority the WG2 presented the **draft concept of the Eastern Partnership Business Forum** at the beginning of the 2010 to consideration of the European Commission and the SC members, the online discussions were opened in both English and Russian and the updated information was presented by the WG2 Coordinator Mr. Kakha Gogolashvili at the Platform 2 meeting on 7th May in Brussels.

The practical implementation of this idea turned to be very difficult. A meeting was organised with representatives of different DGs of the Commission, together with representatives of the OECD to coordinate our proposal with other initiatives prepared by several institutions and organizations. The trade panel of the intergovernmental platform came with the idea of business to business meeting, which will be organised in November in Brussels but will include only Chambers of Commerce and employers organisations. The OECD has prepared a special project for the Eastern countries that includes the organisation of Forum of entrepreneurs. Under the SME flagship initiative launched by the EC that includes the EastInvest programme regular business conference will be organized. Since there was no perspective to get funding for our proposed EaP Business Forum and to avoid any overlapping with other activities the members of the working group have decided not to push forward the idea at this moment.

As the second priority recommended by the Working group 2 an outline for the **study on the Social Dialogue in the Eastern partner countries** was prepared by the Georgian member of the WG 2 Eurasia Partnership Foundation.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

A financing to conduct such study was very difficult to find as well as partners in all EaP countries, who could contribute with valuable information regarding the implementation of social dialogue.

Despite the efforts of the members of the group, the study on social dialogue has not been realised.

Members of the working group were also active in the work of the existing national platforms.

WG2 coordinator on March 22 organised the meeting of Civil Society representatives with the Government of Georgia. The Government representatives reported to the Georgian Civil Society about their EaP work and plans for the future. The meeting had as an objective to make civil society better aware about the developments in the field Eastern Partnership and establish direct contacts and cooperation with those representatives of the Governmental bodies, responsible for the respective policy making and decisions. At the meeting the decision on the regular framework was established. The second meeting of the Civil society with Government of Georgia, dedicated basically to the economic cooperation (Platform 2) issues – Government will be held in November 2010. The report of the above mentioned meeting was send to all WG2 representatives. The coordinators of the WG2 expect from the group members to take as an example and establish a proper cooperation framework with their respective governments.

As in other groups the main difficulty that we faced during the last period was the limited possibility to interact with the official platform and panels. WG2 Coordinator participated at the Platform 2 meeting (May 7, 2010) only for one session, to report about the activities and plans and discuss with the officials the role of the civil society. However he was not invited to other discussions dedicated to the Trade policy and cooperation in the field of SMEs, although there is obvious interest from the WG2 participants to be more involved. WG2 representative also was not allowed to participate at the Trade Panel meetings (last meeting held on October 19-20, 2010).

2.2.3 Working group 2 meeting on 1 of October

The meeting of the WG2 on 1st of October monitored the progress achieved in the implementation of the recommendations adopted.

During this meeting, the Commission made a presentation on SME Flagship Initiative and the programmes related to this initiative.

Representatives of BusinessEurope and Eurochambers also presented the policies of their organisations related to EaP countries.

The European Commission presented ongoing and newly opened negotiations on DCFTAs between the EU and Eastern Partner countries. These presentations gave a basis for a discussion regarding the recommendations that should guide the work of WG2.

During its meeting on 1st of October 2010 the WG2 members expressed their disappointment regarding the fact that their representative is not invited to participate at the official platform to the European Commission. The Commission promised that the representatives of the group will be invited to the SMEs Panel, consequently the invitation was already extended. Until now, the members of the working group



have not received information if they would be invited to participate in the Business to Business meeting organised by platform 2 in November.

The WG2 members have been pushing forward to prove that civil society, in particular WG2 and its participants can provide the added value and valuable expertise even to the technical discussions under the Trade panel and other related panel of Platform 2.

Perspectives

The members of the WG agreed that concerning the future working group 2 should have balanced composition and include all actors of civil society (NGOs and social partners) in order to be able to elaborate recommendations which take into account all socio-economic implications in the EaP countries. The group should prepare a regular bulletin on its activities and create a real network for exchange of information. Members of the group who will not be present in Berlin should continue to be active and participate in the work of the group.

The members also agreed to provide as a basis for the work of the next WG2 the following conclusions, which they consider important for the work of the Eastern Partnership initiative in 2011 in the field of economic integration and convergence with the EU policies.

	Recommendation
1.	Reiterate the demand to include the representatives of civil society as permanent participants in the EaP intergovernmental platforms, panels and other related programs.
2.	Recall that civil society should be included in the monitoring of EaP through existing or future national platforms and insists that these platforms should have balanced representation and include representatives of social partners (employers' organisations and trade unions) °
3.	Recall the importance of visa facilitation and visa free regime to enable mobility and business contacts:
54	Welcome the achievements in the framework of the SME flagship initiative and stresses the interest of civil society to be included in the development of this initiative and in the programs implemented. Demand that the civil society and especially business organisations are included in the business meetings foreseen by Platform 2 trade panel.
65	Insist on the necessity to develop comprehensive institutional building programmes for civil society –NGOs and social partners on issues related to European integration and the approximation to the EU regulatory framework in order to enable them to play effective role in the EaP. Ask in particular for assistance to the partner countries civil society to monitor the implementation of antimonopoly legislation, progress in government procurement, protection of Intellectual Property Rights and other trade related regulatory areas, fight against corruption and for support to consumer protection organizations to enable them to play effectively their role in ensuring product safety and for enforcement of technical and sanitary standards legislation.
76	Ask for the organisation of seminars/conference for civil society on DCFTA and its impact on business/trade and employment.
87	Demands 'for the inclusion of consumers' issues and consumer protection in the work of the thematic programs. Insists that partner countries should adopt appropriate legislation on fair



	competition and fight against abuse of dominant position.
98	Ask for support for elaboration of a study on social dialogue in partner countries, which will elaborate recommendations for the improvement of social dialogue in these countries

2.3 Report from Working Group 3 on Environment, climate change and energy security

EaP CSF Working Group 3 “Environment, climate change and energy security” deals with the main issues on the agenda of EaP Thematic Platform 3 of the same name. It has also been involved in the Multilateral Environmental Panel under Platform 2.

The Working Group has approximately 25 member and is open to participation of colleagues from Working Group 2 “Economic integration and convergence with EU policies”, as both Working Groups (and respective Thematic Platforms) deal with sustainability issues such as Green Economy. The Group elected the two co-chairs Michael Gonchar (Centre for Global Studies “Strategy XXI”, Ukraine) and Irene Lucius (WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme, Vienna). Michael Gonchar resigned after some months due to new professional commitments and a replacement was not possible according to the rules of the Steering Committee.

Our main objectives

At the first Working Group meeting in November 2009, the following content related aims were agreed:

- 1) Energy security and climate change: shape a complex integrated sustainable energy policy for the EaP region, which takes into account national interests and aims to improve environmental protection (incl. biodiversity), energy efficiency, as well as the capacity to face climate change, and to mitigate dependency on energy imports or on one energy carrier
- 2) Environment, biodiversity, and agriculture: support the integration of environmental aspects into all national policies of EaP countries (e.g. industry, transport, regional development, budget, (organic) agriculture, forestry, EU acquis compliance), in particular through promotion of Strategic Environmental Assessment
- 3) Information, education, capacity building, and awareness raising: implement the principles of education for sustainable development in national educational systems, promote the transfer of knowledge from EU to EaP countries, and conduct a broad public awareness raising campaign on energy efficiency and renewable energies

Participation in the EaP process and information activities

The first opportunity to influence the governmental EaP process along those lines was our participation in the EaP Panel on Environment and Climate Change on 23 March 2010 in Brussels. The Panel aims at fostering cooperation and knowledge exchange on environmental governance issues, climate change, and green economy.

Anna Golubovska-Onisimova of the Ukrainian NGO MAMA-86 and the CSF WG 3 co-chair Irene Lucius were invited to participate throughout the meeting. Anna’s nomination and the main points the group wanted to



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

raise at the meeting were agreed beforehand through e-mail exchange with all WG participants. Main topics of the meeting were Green Economy, Climate Change and eco-innovation. In the afternoon, the EaP Flagship project on Governance was launched, aiming at improving capacity in the field of environmental monitoring and setting up an environmental information system.

The two WG 3 representatives got involved in discussions and highlighted the added value of civil society participation in the issues on the agenda. The European Commission noted that there is the possibility to address the next platform meeting with the request to make CSF representatives also full members. The Commission furthermore stated its intention to have CSF representatives be invited to seminars and other events of the Panel. The two CSF participants informed colleagues after the meeting through a detailed report with references for further reading. All in all, the spirit of the meeting, its content and the way the CSF was treated was positive and encouraging.

On 20 May 2010, the two Working Group 3 chairs were invited to participate in the EaP Platform 3 meeting, but only for half an hour in order to summarise our recommendations and discuss them with governmental actors. As we were not involved in the preparatory process and were not invited to observe longer sessions of the meeting, we had only limited possibilities to make a meaningful contribution or receive new insights we could pass on to colleagues of WG 3.

The last invitation to an EaP event was received in October for a climate change seminar in Brussels on 4 November. Two WG 3 colleagues were identified, names who participated and enriched the debates with our ideas and questions.

While Michael Gonchar was Steering Committee member, he published several issues of a bulletin on energy issues in the EaP region.

Results of our WG meeting in between Forum events

On 10 September, WG 3 came together to draw some interim conclusions and refine recommendations towards the governmental EaP process. Although most participants represented Working Group 3, interested WG 2 members were also invited as environment is a cross-cutting issue.

Purpose of the meeting was to update WG members on EaP developments, discuss topical issues, and plan upcoming work. Four representatives of DG External Relations, DG Environment, and DG Energy shared information about recent EaP developments and engaged with CSF members in discussions, both content related and about the role the EaP CSF does and could play. Some CSF representatives voiced deep frustration about the limited and seemingly declining influence we have on the EaP process. During discussions, we collected some ideas how our role could be strengthened, e.g. through the establishment of an EaP CSF Secretariat with professional staff, greater access to (non-confidential) information, or voicing our demands more clearly in form of letters to decision makers

During the meeting, we also conducted two working group sessions, one on environment and climate change adaptation, the other on energy and climate change mitigation. As a result, we defined a list of issues that are linked to the governmental agenda of the EaP process, but in our view are not sufficiently covered. In order to prepare effective results at the upcoming EaP CSF Forum event in Berlin, we identified



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

lead authors of discussion papers and started the process of developing them with the help of a virtual discussion platform. The topics are:

- How to improve participation of CSOs in decision making, e.g. through an earlier start of all components of the EaP Environment Panel flagship initiative “Governance”
- Promotion of the recycling, reuse and prevention of waste, thereby contributing to a more resource efficient economy, reducing costs and preventing pollution (contribution to the Environment Panel topic “Green Economy”)
- Promotion of the valuation of ecosystem services and the integration of results into cost-benefit analysis of governmental programmes and projects (also related to “Green Economy”)
- Making natural resource management climate resilient through integrated water management and wise land use (contribution to Environment Panel topic “Climate Change”)
- Making Platform 3 (energy) projects transparent
- Promoting sustainably produced renewable energy trade as a contribution to Platform 3 discussions.

General conclusions

During the first year of existence, WG 3 members have been invited to participate in one Platform 3 meeting for a 30 min time slot and in one Environment Panel meeting for the whole one-day session. Access to preparatory or follow-up documents of the official EaP process has been very limited. This has not been enough to gain sufficient insight into the process, come to know the key governmental players and contribute with targeted, timely inputs from the side of the CSF members working on the issues of environment, climate change and energy security. These deficiencies, however, were partly compensated through some briefings received by European Commission staff. It is clear that the CSF is not yet regarded as integral part of the EaP process.

Even if information flow will be improved during the second year, efficient work is hampered by a lack of resources. WG coordinator(s) are stretched as their function is voluntary and very time consuming. The group also missed support from an effective information sharing platform of the type which is planned for future years. Last but not least, strong links and cooperative structures within the CSF across borders require more face-to-face meetings, at least in the initial phase of the CSF, for which resources were missing.

On a positive note, WG 3 brought together some very dedicated and knowledgeable CSO representatives that have enjoyed working together and created new professional relationships future work can build on.



2.4 Report from Working Group 4 on Contacts between people

I. Third meeting of the EaP Platform 4 “Contacts between people”

The WG4 coordinators, Ben Rattenbury and Natalia Cojohari, were invited to the meeting of the intergovernmental platform 4 which was held on 27th of May, 2010 in Brussels. It was the first time that civil society representatives had been invited to Platform 4.

The coordinators were given a 30 minute slot to present the 16 recommendations agreed during the WG 4 sessions at the first Civil Society Forum event in Brussels in November 2009.

(http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/civil_society/recommendations_en.htm).

The accent was put on one general recommendation: “Reduce barriers and develop effective contacts between people by enabling the full participation of citizens of the EaP countries in the EU programmes on youth, media, culture, research and education”.

The coordinators also described how, in order to further promote contacts among CSOs, the EaP CSF Steering Committee proposed a flagship project which would include exchanges for civil society leaders within the EaP countries, and also between civil society leaders in the EaP countries and their peers in the EU member states.

The impact of the project would include increased knowledge and skills among the participants, improved cross-border links, a solid foundation for regional and pan-European networking, and crucially a sense that the CSF and wider EaP is delivering concrete benefits to civil society in the region. This last point addresses the potential frustration felt by many civil society actors in the region that the CSF is losing momentum and not of practical benefit.

The participation of civil society in the Platform received an almost unanimously positive response from the Platform members. Representatives from Lithuania, Sweden, Poland, Germany, Moldova, France and the Council of Europe all vocally supported the involvement of civil society being present. They noted that the Platform is already working towards most of the 16 recommendations that were presented, which shows that we are in broad agreement on the principle issues. However they also made very clear that in order for the CSF to be effective it must make recommendations that are more specific and practical.

The one formal objection to presence of the civil society representatives was from the Belarusian contingent, which argued strongly that civil society cannot bring a ‘notable contribution’ to the practical discussions of the Platform, and should not be involved. In the coffee break after the meeting further words of support and specific advice were received from a range of other participants, including representatives from Slovenia, the UK, Committee of the Regions and the European Commission.

II. Working Group 4 meeting, 3 September, Brussels



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

The meeting of WG4 took place in Brussels on 3 September. 33 members of the WG attended, though only two of them were from EU Member States. (This low attendance from the EU was probably connected to the fact that their expenses would not be reimbursed, unlike for participants from the EaP countries.) The busy agenda included updates from the European Commission on the various funding available connected to the CSF, especially in the field of culture. Then there was an open discussion about the aims of the second CSF event, in Berlin in November 2010. Participants agreed that the focus on 'recommendations' should be changed to agreeing 'objectives' for the WG, and these objectives should focus on specific areas. The meeting ended with a "World Café" discussion about how new projects and initiatives could be developed between the participants from different countries. In fact the cross-border networking was regarded by many as one of the most useful aspects of the meeting.

Developing project ideas and recommendations

Participants gathered in four groups to discuss specific projects that they would like to develop, or existing projects that they may be able to synergize.

A. Education and research

Developing project ideas in education and research:

1. The cooperation between universities and employers should be developed through bilateral communication and creation of a platform for exchange of information in order to foster the improvement of professional education. (Galina Martsinkevich)
2. European simulations of decision making process of EU/ simulation games (Nino Lapiashvili)
3. Vocational Education Programs in EU. Develop Erasmus Mundus, and Muskie type educational programs for vocational education. Identify marketable vocations and have an exchange program in Vocational Education and Trainings. (Ivan Gereevich)
4. Informal education among government officials (ethical norms) (Vache Kalashyan)
5. Developing career centers in the universities (Vache Kalashyan, Galina Martsinkevich)
6. Developing sets of indicators to monitor the development of the Prague declaration (research) (Vache Kalashyan)
7. EU skills development (Nino Lapiashvili)
8. Distance learning (Vache Kalashyan)
9. Courses on cultural tolerance (starting from the young ages) in the multi-ethnic regions. (Olga Dikhnich) – Save the Children's project. For more information - http://www.ciet.org.ua/eng/_jointprojects/culture/index.htm
10. Info days on FP7, research on environmental safety. (Olga Dikhnich)
11. Database on labor market indicators for EaP countries (Ucha Vakhania)
12. Forecast tendencies and analyze reforms and structural changes. Studying EU systems (Ucha Vakhania)
13. Professional training and retraining and TOT (Ucha Vakhania)
14. Databases of potential partners for various consortiums (Nino Lapiashvili)
15. Developing concepts of the role of the education in the conflict resolution (Ucha Vakhania)
16. Online training modules on policy analysis and research to be developed by the EU experts for the university students and recent graduates. Consequently, organizing public policy essay competition for the training participants. Send the most successful participants for internships with research centers and think tanks in the EU. (Gursel Aliyev)



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

17. Provide fellowships to western educated (or EU educated, at the graduate level) people from EaP countries to develop curriculum and teach courses in their countries. OSI's Academic Fellowship Program model (or the US State Departments SCOUT Program model) to be developed and funded by the EU in all EaP countries. (Gursel Aliyev)

B. Youth

Selected priorities of youth field:

1. Mobility of youth
2. Exchanges within youth NGO's of different countries
3. Research of youth
4. Youth participation in decision-making
5. Promoting of the volunteering

C. Culture

Discussion and proposals on Culture

By Tatiana Poshevalova, Tsveta Andreeva, Andriy Kohut, Tevan Poghosyan

The Discussion in the subgroup on 3rd September produced several concrete ideas in two directions: policy proposals – facilitating the draft recommendations for Berlin meeting (which will be addressed at EU level), and concrete cooperation projects. An overarching proposal has been shaped: WG 4 shall develop a Road Map for carrying out the participation in the Eastern Partnership in the areas covered by its mandate. Road maps should be elaborated for every country identifying the specific needs and drafting policy proposals.

These Road maps may facilitate all advocacy activities at the different levels:

- National level (government)
- EU level (EC, EP and the Council)
- Civil Society level (in terms of awareness raising)

1. Strengthening cultural cooperation between EU and EaP countries, as well as within EaP:

Policy proposals:

- Creating a system for feedback on behalf of the CS Forum on the implementation of the program in the countries;
- Strengthening the dialogue and exchange between civil society actors in EaP with the local EC delegations;

Concrete actions of cooperation in different cultural sectors:

- 1.1 Cultural heritage protection and sustainable management for contributing to the local and regional development: synergising with other existing initiatives (e.g. Kyiv Initiative, UNESCO world heritage activities etc.)



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

- 1.2 Facilitating setting up a collaboration network among cities in EaP countries
 - 1.3 Support to literature translation and publishing in the EaP languages via participation in forums, book fairs, festivals etc.
 - 1.4 Enhancing cultural and creative SMEs.
- 2. Strengthening the capacities for studying and analysis of cultural policies, cultural policy development.**
- 2.1 Enhancing the feasibility studies/mappings;
 - 2.2 Collection and dissemination of good (& bad) practices
- 3. Synergizing with other initiatives in the EaP region (Kyiv Initiative in the field of Cultural heritage; synergies with Agenda 21 for Culture for cultural development of cities).**

Proposals on 'Culture'

Former text:

13. Foster cultural exchanges and cooperation between EU and the EaP countries
14. Encourage ratification/fostering implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in the six EaP countries.

State of affairs:

- UNESCO Convention (2005) has been ratified by all EaP countries; therefore the text should be amended in a way to address directly the implementation: cultural policy analysis and development, capacity building, strengthening and multiplying instruments for supporting diversity.
- EaP Culture Program has been elaborated by the EC as a major instrument for implementation of the European Agenda for Culture: focused on capacity building and policy development; this instrument will bring fruits in the years to come.

New proposals on 'Culture'

- Developing Road Maps for carrying out cooperation and advocacy activities in each of the EaP countries (in the framework of the Eastern Partnership). The Road Maps shall identify specific needs and draft policy proposals, thus facilitating advocacy at different levels;
- Encourage systematically the effective implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in the six EaP countries;
- Strengthening the capacities for studying of cultural policies:
 - Enhancing the feasibility studies/mappings for informing policy solutions;
 - Collection and dissemination of good practices;
- Foster cultural exchanges and cooperation between EU and the EaP countries in different areas:
 - Cultural heritage protection and sustainable management for contributing to the local and regional development;
 - Facilitating setting up a collaboration network among cities in EaP countries
 - Support to literature translation and publishing in the EaP languages via participation in forums, book fairs, festivals etc.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

- Creating synergies with other EU instruments and supported action in the EaP countries, as well as with intergovernmental and CS initiatives in the field of culture.

The proposals in the field of culture are in line with the European Agenda for Culture adopted by the EU Council of Ministers on 16 November 2007 (Priority 3: Promotion of culture as a vital element of the EU's external relations).

The conclusions of the WG meeting based on the objectives of the meeting were:

- ❑ Participants were informed about the progress of the Platform 4 and of the Steering Committee, as well about the funding opportunities for CSOs (culture-related programmes under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, Development Cooperation Instrument)
- ❑ Participants discussed the structure of the second CSF event and agreed on the main outcomes of the event
- ❑ The successful lobbying activities towards national EaP and EU national governments and EC were discussed.
- ❑ Participants had the opportunity to develop project ideas and to establish cooperation.

For more information about the meeting, including the minutes and presentations on funding opportunities, visit the WG4

Google Group: <http://groups.google.com/group/people2people-eap-csf>

III. Contribution to the National Indicative Programme 2011-2013 for Belarus

The members of the WG4 developed and provided a valuable set of recommendations for the Concept notes of the National Indicative Programme 2011-2013 for Belarus. The concept notes present the approach suggested by the European Commission and outline a number of possible areas of intervention. The contributions were related to two main points: co-operation priorities which should be supported until 2013 through the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the role of civil society organizations in achieving the cooperation objectives.

IV. Cooperation and communication among the members of the WG4

The WG4 consists of 33 member organizations from EaP and 17 organizations from EU member states. The permanent communication is done via Google group where the members of the group share project ideas and events - all related to the EaP Civil Society Forum. The members also provided their perspective on the selection process of the participants for the next Forum event. The WG4 meeting is foreseen for the September 2010.

Here are some of the ways that WG4 members contribute to the EaP Platform 4 "Contacts between people":

- enriching the governmental track of the EaP by providing a civil society perspective, notably through the regular provision of relevant and untapped expertise in the fields of youth, education, culture, research and media



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

- by disseminating information about the EaP and the EU to the grassroots in both groups of countries.
- by participating in the implementation process of the Work Programme 2009-2011 of the Platform

3. Reports from Country facilitators

3.1 Armenia

In December 2009 an Initiative Group (IG) involving the delegates of the First Edition of the Civil Society Forum (CSF) was formed. The IG has been engaged in the works regarding the launch of the CSF Armenian National Platform (ANP), setting out a working plan, as well as in elaborating the ANP founding documents (the regulations, the selection procedure, the concept, etc). The IG was chaired by the CSF National Coordinator in Armenia, President of Yerevan Press Club (YPC) Boris Navasardian. Respectively, the YPC took the role of a facilitator of the CSF related processes in Armenia.

Since January 2010 YPC started issuing a special weekly electronic newsletter (in Armenian) on developments in the EaP and the CSF. The newsletter is being distributed among more than 700 subscribers. In March 2010 the book, entitled “Collection of Documents of the EaP Civil Society Forum”, was translated and published. Also briefings for media on respective developments were regularly organized by YPC. The above mentioned book was presented at the first such briefing on March 31, 2010. To raise public awareness on CSF 4 talk-shows have been aired on “Yerevan” and “Yerkir Media” TV companies (the latter has also been aired in the Armenian regions through “Hamaspur” network).

In March-November, 2010 a monitoring on the coverage of European Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership by Armenian print media has been implemented by YPC. The results of the monitoring, among other issues were discussed in two seminars “EU-Armenia Cooperation: the Present and Perspectives” for media professionals and NGOs organized in the regions of Armenia. One took place in Gyumri on May 28-30 and the other in Kapan on October 13-15, 2010. Another important event was organized on a regional level on September 2-3, 2010 in Tbilisi: the working meeting, “Democracy Promotion through EaP”, where the representatives of Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani NGOs discussed the methodology of a possible monitoring on the implementation of the EaP priorities. The meeting, also attended by experts from Belarus and Poland, was organized by Yerevan Press Club and South Caucasus Office of Heinrich Boell Foundation.

The announcement for joining the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform was disseminated on April, 2010. This was followed by the submission, classification of the applications. The Founding Meeting, to which the 145 of applied CSOs were invited, took place on June 7, 2010 at the conference hall of the Congress Hotel in Yerevan. The meeting was attended by 138 of the 145 NGOs, registered as ANP members. The Founding Meeting endorsed the Regulations of the National Platform, besides the four CSF ANP working groups were formed, and the ANP Coordination Council was formed. 20 from the 50 candidates, who received the majority of votes, were, elected as members of the CSF ANP Coordination Council. Under the Regulations, adopted by the Founding Meeting, Boris Navasardian, the EaP CSF Armenian National Coordinator also became ex officio the member and the Chairman of the Coordination Council of the Armenian National Platform.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

The ANP Founding Meeting was attended and greeted by H.E. Mr. Raul Luzenberger the Head of the European Commission Delegation to Armenia, H.E. Mr. Hans-Jochen Schmidt, Ambassador of Federative Republic of Germany to Armenia, Mattias Jobelius, South Caucasus Regional Director of Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Naira Zohrabian Chairwoman of Parliamentary Standing Commission on European Integration. Among the honourable guest were: H. E. Mr. Charles Lonsdale, Ambassador of United Kingdom to Armenia, H.E. Mr. Crina Prunariu, Ambassador of Romania to Armenia, H.E. Mr. Giedrius Apuokas, Ambassador of Lithuania to Armenia, Sylvia Zehe, CoE Secretary General's Special Representative in Armenia, Andrej Didenko, Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Carel Hofstra, Deputy Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, James Macbeth Forbes, Country Director of German Technical Cooperation, representatives from the RA Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economy, journalists and others.

In July 2010 the announcement for applying for the second meeting of EaP Civil Society Forum, to be held in Berlin November 18-19, 2010, was disseminated among Armenian CSOs. 63 applied for the participation in the Forum and 25 were selected by the CSF Steering Committee. However, the selection process raised a conflict within the Coordination Council (CC) of ANP. Some of the CC members voiced their dissatisfaction regarding the selection results. As a result, on August 13, 2010 Boris Navasardian, EaP CSF Armenian National Coordinator announced about his withdrawal from the Council.

On September 8, 2010 in Yerevan the briefing of Boris Navasardian, EaP CSF Armenian National Coordinator, YPC President, and Karine Danielian, Chairwoman of the Association for Sustainable Human Development, member of the ANP Coordination Council, took place. The briefing was dedicated to the selection results of the participants for the Second Edition of EaP Civil Society Forum in Berlin. Boris Navasardian reaffirmed his decision to resign as ANP Coordination Council member. He explained his decision with destructive attitude of some of the ANP Coordination Council members towards the selection process of the participants for the CSF event in Berlin. At the same time, Boris Navasardian had announced that he will continue carrying out his duties of the CSF National Coordinator and CSF Steering Committee member for the preparation of the Berlin meeting and for ensuring efficient participation of the Armenian delegates. In this regard he had expressed his readiness for restoring a constructive cooperation with the Coordination Council.

On August 27, 2010 Levon Barseghian, Chairman of "Asparez" Journalists' Club of Gyumri also announced about his withdrawal from the ANP Coordination Council, noting that his decision is reasoned by his disappointment with the activities of ANP and the Coordination Council, particularly: the conflict around the selection of participants for the Berlin Meeting. Later, the representatives of nine more NGOs also withdrew from the Coordination Council.

On September 16 the ANP Coordination Council made decisions on passing a non-confidence motion to Boris Navasardian as the National Coordinator and on announcing an extraordinary meeting of the ANP and on the recruitment of new members. This decision was followed by the statement of Boris Navasardian, where the decisions of CC were characterized as groundless and illegitimate. The latter position was supported by the majority of the Initiative Group of ANP (delegates of the First Edition of CSF) and a group of ANP members.

The following recommendations were made in the statement (October 21) of 26 ANP members: 1) To form an organizing committee, involving the Armenian delegates of the EaP First and Second Civil Society Forums, which will be engaged in the organization of the works of the Armenian National Platform,



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

including the upcoming regular meeting; 2) To summon the Second Session of the CSF ANP within December 7-10, according to the ANP Regulations; 3) To announce the recruitment of ANP new members after the ordinary session - according to the aforesaid Regulations.

In response Viktor Yengibarian, the Acting Chairman of the ANP Coordination Council, announced that to overcome the critical situation, the ANP Coordination Council has decided to temporarily suspend the recruitment of ANP new members and to conduct the next ANP meeting in the terms envisaged by the above mentioned regulation. Thus, the recent developments in the ANP promise that the Armenian National Platform will return to a constructive route.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

3.2 Azerbaijan

Activity of Azerbaijan National Platform

Azerbaijan Civil Society members of EaP CSF initiated many important meetings and conferences recently. Among them, organization of round table by Ecolex Environmental Law Center, Azerbaijan National Committee for European Integration and Azerbaijan National Platform of the EaP CSF on “Position of Civil Society on issues related to utilization of alternative and renewable energy sources and energy efficiency” which took place on September 14, 2010 was particularly remarkable.

In the end of July, 2010 Entrepreneurship Development Foundation, in cooperation with Azerbaijan National Platform held a conference on "Development of small business in Azerbaijan" at Park Inn Hotel. The conference was attended by members of Parliament, representatives of the Government, foreign embassies, international organizations, local experts and mass media. The event was financed by Center for International Private Enterprises and Open Society Institute in cooperation with EU Delegation in Azerbaijan.

Participants from the Civil Society of Azerbaijan, diplomats of foreign countries and international organizations, representatives of Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Azerbaijan State Oil Company and mass media discussed the issues of utilization of renewable energy and energy efficiency, necessary economic and legal instruments for achieving it, participation of small and medium-sized enterprises and role of the civil society in realization of energy efficiency.

Since September 2010, the National Coordinator of EaP CSF started discussions about prospects of EaP and development of vision of Azerbaijan NGOs on this issue at national level. One of the meetings with participants from National NGOs Forum of Azerbaijan, which took place on August 2010, it was decided to start discussions at national level on the prospects of including Azerbaijan and Civil Society to EaP process and increasing public awareness in the Azerbaijan society.

Cooperation with the EU delegation in Azerbaijan was continued at different levels through both inviting representatives of the delegation to the conferences of Azerbaijan members of EaP CSF and consultations on issues such as how to make CS participation effective in EaP issues. After discussions with Rector of Khazar University, the National Coordinator decided to initiate opening of EU information Center for students of Khazar University as well as other universities. The Center provides young people and researchers with modern books, periodicals and other resources on EU, as well as, with computers and Internet access. This center, partially with the support of the EU Delegation, can become a very important tool in raising the awareness of the citizens in Azerbaijan, particularly young citizens on a vast array of issues, including democracy, good governance, transparent economy, etc. and contribute incredibly to the political and socio-economic development of Azerbaijan.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

Also formulation of National Platform is going. Today NP received 126 application from different NGOs in Azerbaijan and we prepare our vision to Berlin meeting of EaP CSF on November 2010.

3.3 Belarus

What has been done?

Since April 2009 some organizations and experts in Belarus involved into discussion about EaP perspective expected that raising interest of Belarusian civil society toward this pro-European program will lead to some consolidation effect. Pro-active and coordinated participation of Belarusian organizations in the first Forum in Brussels in November 2009 has proved that it is not just a dream.

During year 2010 series of activities initiated by civil society actors have been initiated. Among others it worth mentioning several round tables and consultations for CSOs – both that are selected as CSF participants for the first and the second Civil Society Forum and those who are actively involved into setting EaP agenda and perspectives at Civil Society level.

At one of the meeting of CSF participants from Belarus and other interested NGO actors of Belarusian civil society, which took place on January 29, 2010 it was decided to further develop the National platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum as an instrument of a permanent public communication and dialog with the aim to raise the effectiveness of activities within the Eastern Partnership in Belarus.

To make the next key step in this direction a Conference of the National Forum of Belarus' civil society was held on July 5-6th, 2010. Establishment of the National Platform is an important part in the overall mechanism of civil society participation in the Eastern Partnership initiative was announced at this event. It has been designed to bring together and consolidate civil society positions at the national level, to elaborate the general strategy for the participation of Belarusian civil society representatives in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and to advance substantive proposals on taking this initiative further. Additionally, the National Platform is entitled to recommend organizations for participation in the general Civil Society Forum to be convened on 18-19 November, 2010 in Berlin. Belarus has become the second after Armenia member-country of the Eastern Partnership that has shaped a relevant national platform for civil society.

The Conference "Eastern Partnership: Road Map for Belarus" focused on the comprehensive evaluation of the EaP initiative progress, the current role of civil society, as well as its forthcoming tasks. It was underlined a generally successful (and rather speedy, at least, by EU standards) EaP evolution and active civil society engagement in the process. At the same time, several negative points still disturb, such as the lack of contacts with Belarus' government officials, insufficient public awareness of the EaP initiative, and inadequate resource base of CSF structures.

As an immediate objective of the development of the Civil Society Forum Belarusian CSOs seek to create mechanisms for including civil society in the process of laying out the Eastern Partnership "road map". This mechanism should be set up as programme monitoring, i.e. as organisation and public presentation of the general picture of the programme's advancement based on unified criteria.

What has been achieved?



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

Civil Society representatives from Belarus agreed on the topical objectives of Belarus' civil society and set forth the substantive priorities for work in each thematic area of the EaP. These priorities will serve as reference points for the "road maps", which will be further worked upon. The deliberations concluded that Belarusian civil society is only mastering the competencies required for joining the intergovernmental dialogue on an equal footing. Meanwhile, work on "road maps" is not only an indispensable component of preparation for the CSF in Berlin, but it is also stimulating growth and development of civil society itself.

Proceeding from the results of deliberations in the four working groups that correspond to the four EaP National platform representatives of Belarusian CSOs agreed on supporting the following conclusions and suggestions.

With reference to platform "Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability":

1. A system of legitimate and effective local self-government should be introduced in Belarus based on the principles and norms of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. As a primary step and in order to eliminate Belarus' lagging behind the other Eastern Partnership member states it is proposed that:
 - a) Belarus initiates drafting of a country report on the state of local self-government;
 - b) Belarus signs and ratifies the European Charter of Local Self-Government.
2. Cooperation between state and civil society is necessary in order to enhance good governance practices. Lifting the ban on the activities of unregistered organisations is the first step in the systemic reform of the legislation. It is essential to create and support the mechanisms for participation of civil society institutions in decision-making at the national and local levels, including the provision of equal conditions for all civil society organisations, as well as creation of appropriate conditions for civil initiatives development, growth of civil society, voluntary movement and charity work.
3. It is necessary to initiate reform of the judicial system, particularly seeking to provide for effective guarantees of the independence of judges and lawyers.
4. Removal of the State monopoly on the mass media is one of the main conditions for ensuring Belarusian citizens' constitutional right of access to information and its dissemination. It is necessary to establish mass media system in the Republic of Belarus in line with European norms and standards. With this objective in view it is proposed:
 - a) to ensure equal economic opportunities for the mass media of various types of ownership;
 - b) to ensure equal access to information for the citizens of the Republic of Belarus;
 - c) to bring Belarusian legislation provisions on the mass media into compliance with international norms and standards;
 - d) reorganise the state-run TV and radio broadcasting system in Belarus into public television and radio.
5. To facilitate the introduction of a ban on all types and forms of discrimination particularly based on sex, race, age, religion, social position or status, disability, political convictions by reinforcing in the law its comprehensive definition and introducing directly applicable prohibitive norms, as well as by providing effective procedural mechanisms for their implementation.
6. To call to notice the necessity to ensure legislative and practical opportunities for individual and joint profession and proliferation of religions and beliefs, including the introduction of education and training standards based on the principles of tolerance and non-discrimination.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

7. To facilitate removal of the existing barriers for citizens' mobility (such as visa barriers and other restrictions).
8. To initiate discussion of the issues of achieving gender equality, particularly by developing an effective national gender policy.
9. To facilitate the shaping of the industrial relations system in the Republic of Belarus in full compliance with ILO Convention No. 158 concerning the "Termination of Employment at the Initiative of the Employer" while preventing signing unjustified annual labour agreements (contracts).

With reference to platform "Economic integration and convergence with EU policies":

1. To promote the development of small and medium-size enterprises by supporting joint programmes and projects of business structures and civil society organisations focusing on social spheres and sustainable regional development.
2. To promote educational projects and programs for small and medium businesses to instruct them on fair governance principles, business ethics, the principles of transparency and subsidiary. To promote greater involvement of European companies working in Belarus in these projects and programmes through participation in business alliances.

With reference to platform "Environment, climate change and energy security":

1. To consider creation of effective mechanisms for public participation in significant environmental decision-making.
2. Acknowledging problems of receiving information about programs and projects submitted by state agencies within the framework of the third platform, we suggest introducing transparent public review procedures for the relevant programmes, the results of which should be taken into account in the final decision-making.
3. To consider the necessity to use the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) mechanism for developing programmes and projects within the Eastern Partnership framework.
4. In view of the plans to construct several nuclear power plants in the region, we suggest initiation of monitoring procedures over their construction and operation.
5. It will be worthwhile for non-governmental experts and expert groups to consider drafting national reviews and evaluations of energy security status and trends within the framework of the third thematic EP platform, and prepare recommendations on the harmonisation of the corresponding policies of partner countries and the EU in order to strengthen regional energy and nuclear safety regimes.

With reference to platform "Contacts between people":

1. To enlarge access to participation of the Eastern Partnership countries in European programmes in the following spheres: contacts between people, education, intercultural dialogue, information society, scientific research (particularly students' and research exchange programmes, youth, educational and other programmes - Tempus, Jean Monnet, Erasmus, Youth in Action Programme, Grundtwig, etc.).
2. To promote wider awareness of opportunities to participate in EU programs in the Eastern Partnership countries.
3. To provide information support for promoting Eastern Partnership countries, their science, culture, arts, as well as their prominent representatives in the European Union by means of translations, presentations, festivals, conferences, information campaigns, etc.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

4. To facilitate removal of the existing barriers for citizens' mobility (such as visa barriers and other restrictions).
5. To promote inclusion of the Eastern Partnership priorities and support of the EaP processes (especially the platform "Contacts between people") in the priorities of other EU programs, such as NSA-LA, EIDHR, etc. It is necessary to support the quantity and intensity of contacts between citizens within the framework of the EU programmes, particularly by providing access to the exchange programs for the citizens in rural areas and for socially excluded groups.
6. To promote institutional framework for dealing with the issues of education, culture, youth, etc, based on the principles of dialogue between various stakeholders and, in particular, through additional discussion platforms on thematic priorities in the format of a structured dialogue as a special mode of communication among stakeholders, as well as by providing opportunities to monitor the efficacy of EaP programmes implementation.
7. To consider development of regional ties in the Eastern Partnership region and synchronization of work on all thematic EaP priorities.
8. To facilitate the development and strengthening of representation, as well as protection and promotion of civil society interests in Belarus within the EaP framework.
9. To facilitate the introduction of unified standards for implementing programmes in the area of information protection, document management and adoption of the necessary regulatory policies and laws.
10. To initiate the process of Belarus' joining the European Declaration on e-government.
11. To promote improvements in the quality of decision-making in the area of Internet governance based on an increased participation of civil society representatives.

On the basis of this vision some expert groups and civil society activists developed several pilot road maps related to providing changes in particular thematic spheres such as local self-government, culture, freedom of conscience, development of scientific researches etc. These road maps will be presented at the second Civil Society Forum in Berlin.

What obstacles or failures did take place?

The Belarusian civil society today is operating under unfavorable conditions which do not allow the former to represent an equal party in a dialogue with the government. Existence of criminal punishment for activities on behalf of unregistered initiatives, unjustified denials to register public associations and other types of non-profit organisations, ignorant approach towards already existing platforms for dialogue by the government demonstrate its top-down approach towards civil society in Belarus. This situation cannot be seen as complying with European norms and principles that govern relations between the civil society and the state; it certainly requires changes that would allow enhanced capacity for a constructive dialogue on equal terms.

Civil society representatives estimated Belarusian State activities and concrete steps within the framework of the EaP initiative as insufficient. Unfortunately, Belarusian government officials have been the only ones who declared lack of interest to involve Civil Society Forum representatives into intergovernmental dialogue on the EaP issues.

On October 22, 2010 the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum received a joint address by representatives of the Civil Society Advisory Council under auspices of the Presidential



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

Administration of the Republic of Belarus expressing its willingness and interest of Council's members to join the activities of the EaP Civil Society Forum.

The participants of the National Platform of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum welcome this intention and are open for a discussion regarding Council's participation that needs to be in compliance with norms and principles of the Forum despite the fact that the Civil Society Advisory Council is not considered as a civil society body in Belarus.

What is a perspective?

Representatives of Belarusian National EaP CSF platform consider the nearest development aim of Civil Society Forum is establishing and practicing mechanisms of including civil society into identifying “agenda” or “road map” of EaP progress. To facilitate preparation of such ‘road maps’ for thematic platforms the ‘Open Method of Coordination’ can be employed, which has proved to be efficient in the European Union. This method would allow evaluating the degree of approximation of each country and the whole region to the EU common space through the strategy of soft governance, based not on sanctions, but on regular estimates and monitoring, study of best practices and public representation of evaluation results. There is an assumption that road map work and Open Method of coordination as implementation methodology could become common instrument for work of all 6 EaP countries to keep dynamic of the program and create joint tools for synchronizing and comparative analysis.

Internally one of the key perspectives is development of a dialogue between civil society and authorities in Belarus. This process requires continuation of step-by-step discussion and harmonisation of the positions at expert and public level. This dialogue could be only built on principles of “bottom-up” self-organisation, inclusiveness, transparency, publicity and subsidiarity. Initiatives, rejecting these principles, will be destructive for the very possibility of a dialogue between the government and civil society.

Ulad Vialichka, Country facilitator on Belarus



3.4 Georgia

On 7 May 2009 the EU launched the Eastern Partnership – a new form of partnership with six Eastern European countries: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

In November 2009 the European Commission initiated the creation of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (CSF). CSF consists of representatives of the CSOs from the EU, the six partner countries and the international organizations.

The Commission elaborated the CSF Concept paper where it listed four main goals the CSF targets at:

- i. Civil society involvement in the EaP;
- ii. Cooperation among CSOs of six EaP countries;
- iii. Civil society dialogue with government;
- iv. Cooperation among CSOs of the EU and the six partner countries.

For the better achievement of CSF goals on the partner country level, CSOs in each partner country were recommended to create its Civil Society National Platforms for the Eastern Partnership.

The head of the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Ms. Tamar Khidasheli, was elected as the National Facilitator for Georgia at the first CSF in Brussels in November 2009.

Preparatory Activities

In the first half of 2010 GYLA engaged in preparatory consultations with the Georgian CSOs and got acquainted with the on-going experience of other EaP countries related to the creation of National Platforms. The closest contacts have been established with the Belarusian and Armenian National Facilitators.

In the beginning of summer 2009 GYLA drafted the selection criteria for the CSOs that wish to become members of the Georgian Civil Society National Platform for the Eastern Partnership (Georgian NP), based on the best practices of partner countries. At the same time, GYLA elaborated a draft concept paper for the Georgian NP.

Working Group

In order to make the process more participatory, on 22 July 2010 GYLA invited all participants of the first CSF from Georgia to plan the preparatory work for the Georgian NP. It was agreed that all Georgian participants of the first CSF together with the National Facilitator will form the Working Group that will be tasked with the preparation of the first meeting of the Georgian NP.

The Working Group undertook the responsibility to carry out the following activities: invite Georgian CSOs interested in European Integration for the participation in the Georgian NP, adopt selection criteria, adopt draft Concept Paper for the Georgian NP, elaborate draft rules of procedure of the Georgian NP, draft



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

recommendations for the second SCF, elaborate draft appeal to the Government of Georgia, the European Union Delegation in Georgian and the European Commission.

Draft Concept Paper of National platform

The draft Concept Paper adopted by the Working Group underlines the aims of the NP and lists the activities the latter should carry out for the achievement of these aims. It was agreed that the Georgian NP will be divided into four working groups according to the four EaP thematic platforms. The Coordination Council will be created to manage the work of the Georgian NP. The Council will be composed by the four representatives of four different CSOs from four working groups. The Council will represent the NP in relations with the third persons.

Alongside with the active civil society engagement, the function of the Georgian NP will be fostering regional integration among six partner countries, improving the cooperation with the Georgian public authorities, establishing strong network with the EU-based CSOs and facilitating communication with the EU institutions and the EU local Delegation. The recommendations elaborated regarding the implementation of the EaP will become a significant aspect of the NP's work.

Call for Expression of Interest

Call for the expression of interest to become a part of the Georgian NP was issued by the beginning of August. The first deadline was set for 15 September, 2010; however, later it was extended to 10 October 2010. The organizations have been asked to provide the following information: name of the organization; date of the registration; contact information; main activities; brief description of the projects related to platform activities including experience with EC projects; motivation for becoming a member of the Georgian NP.

By now around 70 CSOs submitted application. The organizations vary from watchdog NGOs, Think Tanks and International Foundations registered in Georgia to Trade Unions and grass root organizations.

In order to make the process inclusive and participatory, the Working Group decided to invite all CSOs that expressed the interest to be involved in the process to the launching of the Georgian NP. Moreover, it was agreed that the National Platform will work according to the open door principle. Accordingly, its membership will not be limited to the organizations that managed to express the interest before launching of the Georgian NP.

Launching of the Georgian National Platform

The National platform will be launched on 13 November 2010, just before the second CSF meeting in Berlin. According to the envisaged agenda, the National Platform will adopt the Concept of the NP; will agree on the rules of procedure for the future operation of the National Platform, including election of the Steering Committee; will adopt the recommendations for the CSF in Berlin; will prepare an appeal to the Government of Georgia, EU Delegation in Georgia and the EC; will agree on the future strategy.

The launching of the platform is financially supported by the Open Society Georgia Foundation (event venue, simultaneous translation) and the Heinrich Boell Foundation (material for the meeting). The preparatory work for the platform has been carried out by the National Facilitator, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and the organizations forming the Working Group on the voluntary basis.



3.5 Moldova

Political Developments

Moldovan government is preparing for yearly parliamentary elections after less than a third of the electorate participated in the September 5, 2010 Constitutional Referendum, rendering the plebiscite invalid. The four-party administration, the Alliance for European Integration (AEI), had called the referendum to change the constitution so the President would be elected via direct vote rather than by parliament. Only 33 percent of the electorate needed to vote for the referendum to be deemed valid, but just 30 percent turned out. The Governing Alliance announced that the current parliament is dissolved and new parliamentary elections will be held on November 28, 2010.

In July 2009, the Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party, Democratic Party and Our Moldova Alliance joined together in the AEI to establish a parliamentary majority, pushing the Communist Party into the opposition. Since then, the 48 Communist Member of Parliament have repeatedly blocked the new government's choice for President and left the country without a full-time head of state.

Perceptions of the Eastern Partnership in Moldova

The Moldovan political elite expected that the Eastern Partnership (EaP) would provide Moldova with a clear European perspective. Instead, the EaP has set up new far-reaching objectives, but only within the legal and political framework established by the Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Nevertheless, a number of the civil society experts believe that this new initiative does bring new opportunities for deepening partnership relations between EU and Moldova.

In this context, they point out to several important objectives of the EaP, including:

1. Negotiating new contractual relations with Moldova in the form of Association Agreement that will create close political connections between the country and the EU;
2. Promoting the economic integration with EU by implementing the necessary reforms and eventually concluding the so called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, something that will entail mandatory harmonization of the internal regulatory framework with the *acquis communautaire* in trade-related fields;
3. Continuing cooperation in the area of justice reform, democracy promotion and human rights;
4. Starting visa liberalization dialogue that is outlining the necessary conditions in order to facilitate the circulation of Moldovan citizens in the EU;
5. Strengthening the cooperation on energy security;
6. Increasing the financial assistance allocated by the EU to Moldova and EaP regional projects.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

The Moldovan Government seems to have similar position on the EaP initiative and is using the momentum to advance on these issues as the most important priorities in the area of European integration.

Moldovan Civil Society's response to the EaP

During the last year the dialogue with civil society has been noticeably improved and measures have been taken to increase access to information and ensure the transparency of public decision-making process. This positive trend was possible through the government's new approach toward engaging civil society.

This way, at the initiative of the Moldovan Government, cooperation with civil society was strengthened by establishing a permanent platform for dialogue and consultation called National Participation Council (NPC), which is composed of 30 non-governmental organizations working in various fields. According to the Government decision by which the NPC was created, the council should have two main objectives:

1. Ensure the participation of civil society and private sector in the development, implementation, monitoring and revision of the public policies; and
2. Promote the strategic partnership between central public authorities, civil society and private sector in order to strengthen participatory democracy in Moldova, by facilitating the dialogue between various stakeholders and the government.

According to the same Government decision, the NPC chair has the right to attend all meetings of the Moldovan Cabinet of Ministers and to voice there the NPC position on governmental draft decisions, laws and policies. Before every sitting of the Cabinet, the NPC members receive the draft agenda of the meeting and the content of the decisions to be made. Moreover, important draft decisions are sent to the NPC for potential legal and policy input. In parallel, the NPC members have been included in the process of governmental decision-making in the Collegiums of the Moldovan ministries and agencies, which are the main administrative internal monitoring bodies of those institutions. In this way, the Moldovan authorities have increased the level of transparency of governmental institutions and, most importantly, strengthened the watchdog possibilities of non-governmental organizations. The establishment of National Participation Council is in line with the Law on Transparency of Decision Making Process approved in late 2008 and gives civil society organizations new tools for citizen oversight over the necessary reforms to be made for the European Integration of the country.

Currently, the majority of the NPC organizations are members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and, in the same time, the NPC Chair is a member of the Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum. This way, the Council members are playing an important role in advancing the Moldovan civil society goals within the Eastern Partnership dimension. The next step, which is currently under implementation, is to connect the NPC with other interested civil society organizations in order to widen the constituency base and to have a bigger impact on governmental decision making.

Sorin Mereacre, Country Facilitator for Moldova



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

3.6 Ukraine

National CSF EaP platform in Ukraine is just beginning to form. Development of this structure is happening in special conditions – such a platform will become just one of the already existing pro-European platforms and groups in the country. With this regard, several associations are considering to restructure their work in line with the 4 EaP thematic platforms.

Through 2010 year Ukrainian members of CSF focused on practical work in all four working groups inside and outside of the country.

Main areas of the activity were:

- visa free regime research, study and promotion
- Energy security and efficiency
- Environment
- Public administration reform

Members of the CSF initiated the internship program for NGO leaders from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Belarus. 20 leaders used the opportunity to spend 2-3 weeks with the NGO partners in the other countries to study the available experience and plan the future joint activities.

Ukrainian NGOs started a project of public monitoring of EU-Ukraine Association Agenda. Two reports on the progress of AA were released



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

3.7 European Union

In the Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership, the European Union is considered ambitiously as a 7th state, balancing on the western side the partnership. However, as it is easily understandable, this is hardly the case. The numbers of NGOs involved in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum from the EU are much fewer than those coming from the EaP countries. On the other hand, they are often quite focused on the EaP areas with specific geographic coverage of their activities or interest.

The EU area, as such, was not considered by the Steering Committee members as an area where to implement specific activities. As a matter of fact, no specific task was assigned to the Steering Committee members (in the first session of the Steering Committee in Brussels) to follow the area in particular. It shows indeed a real focus towards East. The EU coordinators did not plan, for instance, to have a “EU platform” as it was quickly intend to be for the Partnership Countries. Indeed, the work of the EU coordinators were mostly oriented to lobby (see lobbying activities) in the institutional and European platforms and forum. On the other hand, each working group had a representative from the EU co-chairing the group. And therefore a thematic work has been implemented throughout the years by them.

It would be likely interesting to constitute a EU NGO platform in the upcoming year in order to raise the attention and to debate the issues of the Civil Society Forum.

A special attention on the Forum has been shown by NGOs from Germany and from Poland.



4. Report from the SC subgroups

4.1 Steering Committee meetings

The steering committee meetings were held :

First Brussels on 21 January 2010

Second, Kiev, 24th of March 2010

Third Brussels, 26-27 July, 2010,

Forth : Tbilisi, 23 and 24th of September 2010



4.2 Lobbying activities

Considering the function of the Civil Society Forum and its mandate to influence the political path of the official Eastern Partnership process, the lobbying activity was one of the crucial task assigned to the Steering Committee and in particular to some of its members (after the decision made during the first meeting in Brussels in January 2010)¹.

The lobbying activity was implemented and coordinated by the Lobbying group but always on behalf of the Spokesperson, M. Siarghej Mackjevic. His letters are with a protocol number and registered.

The result of this exercise is a certain – even if not sufficient – visibility of the existence of the Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership.

The lobbying activities implied a sense of identity of the Steering Committee, which is self organised and without a hierarchy or identified chair. It was therefore necessary to create a logo and a voice expressed officially by the Spokesperson. The decisions and opinions were all taken in a collegial way.

The lobbying initiatives regarded :

- a) EU institutions
- b) governments and institutional organisations
- c) direct participations to events and meetings
- d) promotion of documentation

a) Lobbying as for the EU Institutions

The Steering Committee addressed immediately the **European Commission** and the Chair of the official four platforms to be able to participate in the meetings. All the working group coordinates were therefore accepted to take part in these events, even though only on an ad hoc (and not fully informed yet) basis. Their participation could have lacked of specificity and contents (since the information received were not sufficient to have a real policy impact) but certainly they raised the attention of the participation as for the role and existence of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

The preparation of the Forum 2010 implied also continuous contacts with the EU institutions and contacts were made with the office of the Vice President Lord Ashton and with the President, M. Von Romuy.

¹ The components of the Lobbying group were Antonella Valmorbida (lobbying group coordinator) Ivan Voles, Kristina Prunerova, Sorin Mereacre and Irene Lucius



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

As a matter of fact, it was noticed that often the existence of the Civil Society Forum is considered an achievement *per se*. **The wish of the Steering Committee is to make progress in this role and assume a better position of expertise and policy makers.**

The participation for *ad hoc* meetings seems not to be as satisfactory as we could have expected. Indeed, it was asked an permanent observer seat but this objective could not be reached, in particular for the impediment of one of the Eap countries. A further progress in that sense could be obtain maybe in the second year, based on the development of the EaP. **A potential in this sense could be given to the Eap Countries which are closer to the Civil Society action and which could influence the process of participation of the CSF representative in the official work.**

Recently, however, while several initiatives are taking place in correspondence to the real launch of the activities of the Eastern Partnership, the Civil Society Forum representatives have been often invited (like in the Economic and Trade events or recently in the Anti corruption programmes and Monitoring programmes too). **In the future a further effort could be made to work on a single voice coming from the CSF Steering Committee and to have a system of reporting of the events attended to all the Participants of the CSF.**

In several occasions, the representatives of the Steering Committee attended events of the **Committee of the Regions** that dedicates several items of this Civex commission to Eastern Partnership. In these occasions, the Steering Committee representatives have approached the members of the CoR and the experts to indicate them the work of the CSF for their opinions and recommendations.

The work of the **EESC** is accurately followed and informed by the representatives of the Steering Committee, since one of them is there on EESC's behalf. An exchange of communication took place as to define the role of the Social partners in the Civil Society Forum.

Recently, the Conclusions on Eastern Partnership of the Council of the European Union (25th of October) mentioned the work of the Civil Society Forum.

Point 14. (...) The Council supports the further involvement of civil society in the work of the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership through the Civil Society Forum (...)

b) Approach to governments and institutions

The lobbying group were very active in approaching governments and their representative sitting in the official platforms and that could influence our role as civil society representatives.

All the main **Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU** were approached with a letter asking political support for the civil society approach and for a common lobbying for our presence in the official platforms. The official letters were generally appreciated and the responses positive from an EU point of view.

Single contacts were taken with the Permanent Representations in Brussels too and with the officers who sit in the EaP platforms.

A special approach was dedicated to the **Council of Europe**, which is officially sitting in the Working Groups I and IV. The officers of the Council of Europe were briefed and informed regularly by the Lobbying Group and they supported our approach. The representatives of the Steering Committee were twice invited to present their work to the **Democracy and Civil Society Commission of the Conference of the IONGs** of the Council of Europe, while raising the attention on the work of the Civil Society Forum.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

A specific contact was made in Czech Republic and the CSF is invited to take part in a conference in Prague on local authorities and the Eastern Partnership in November 2010.

The preparation of the **Civil Society Forum for 2010** was in itself a strong activity of lobbying since it requested from all the members an active work of contacts. The high level of representatives attending the Forum 2010 is the results of this work.

c) Meetings and specific participations

Most of the Steering Committee members attended several meetings in Europe to promote the work and the objectives of the Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership. They therefore used their network and their contacts to disseminate the information.

A first, uncomplete list of meetings is following

Who	where	day	what
KP	Madrid	27/28 January 2010	Presentation of the work of the CSF at Spanish Presidency event
IK	Berlin	Heinich Bool	Contact Minister foreign Affairs
IV	Bxl	3rd February	Informing about the CSF recommendations EC and OECD
		4th March	Round table organized by CEBRE (Czech Business Rep.)
			attended by Commissioner Füle and MEPs
		25th March	Seminar on EU-Ukraine and civil society - promotion of CSF
AV	Strasbourg	February 2010	Meeting with the Conference of the non governmental organisations, promotion of the EaP CSF
			Presence of siarhiej Mackievic
BR	London	11th of February 2010	contacts with UK governments in London
AH	Vilnius	8th March 2010	European integration and EU institutions
IV	Brussels	7th of March 2010	Eastern Partnership with commissioner Füle, Czech business representation in the Eu
AV	Strasbourg	8th of March 2010	Letters for observer statut of the Working group coordinators to Working group platforms



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

KP	Brussels	9th March 2010	Meeting with Bruno Dethomas concerning participation at platforms and other involvement
AV	Strasbourg	February 2010	Meeting with the Conference of the non governmental organisations, promotion of the EaP CSF Presence of siarhiej Mackievic
AV	Strasbourg	march 2010	meeting with the ambassador of Italy and ask for support
AV	Brussels	march 2010	List of the contacts in the embassies dealing with Eastern Partnership
AV	Strasbourg	march 2010	Meeting with Italian Ambassador, Strasbourg
AV	Strasbourg	march 2010	invitation to Mrs Ashton and M. Fuele
AV	Strasbourg	march 2010	invitations to different Ministers in Europe
KP	Prague	march 2010	Identification of the contact people at the EU and in the Ministries Meeting with the Czech MFA regarding the EaP and Platform 1, letter to minister Kohout
AV	Strasbourg	invitation Siarghei to General Assembly ALDA	
AV	Strasbourg	Discussions with the Council of Europe representatives	
IL	brussels	march 2010	info on the Environmental panel
KP	brussels	ibor Roucek, one of the MEPs responsible for EURONEST	
AV	brussels	meeting with Danish Permanent representation in Bxl, 13th of April 2010	
BN/KP	Brussels	meeting PR - UK and Poland, 14th of april 2010	
AH	Baku	meeting of civil society forum 26th of april	
UV	Minsk	setting up the National platform	
AV	brussels	meeting Slovak representative	
KP/SM	brussels	plattform official 29th of April	



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
Civil Society Forum

KP	brussels	plattform official 7th of May	
AV	Strasbourg	information on participation of Working Groups representatives II for tomorrow meeting	
AV	Strasbourg	information of the wg III - 20th fo May	
AV	moldova	consultaiton on belarus - working group IV	
AV	Strasbourg	consultation on Belarus -	
AV	Strasbourg	Exchanges with EESC	
AV	Strasbourg	LETTERS TO employers and to trade unins	
AV	Skopje	meeting with antonella presenting the csf	
BR	Sweden	Contacts for flagship programme	
KP	Poland	Event on CSF organized by the Institute for Public Affairs	

Legend

AV : Antonella Vamorbidia
 KP : Kristina Prunerova
 BR : Ben Rattenbury
 IK : Iris Kempe
 SM : Siarghei Mackevic
 UV : Ulad Vialichka
 IL _ Irene Lucius

d) Promotion of documentation

Two newsletter (produced with the contribution of ALDA²) were produced and disseminated.

² www.alda-europe.eu



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

4.3 Information and communication activities

The EaP CSF Steering Committee set up a sub-group dedicated to communication related activities. The main task was to contribute to the development of a website and to publish two issues of a newsletter.

Website

DG RELEX and DG AIDCO invited the Steering Committee to develop a draft EaP CSF website structure and Terms of Reference for the Contractor which started to work in September 2010. The Steering Committee also discussed a new logo with the Contractor. The whole process involved very constructive (though time consuming) interaction with DG RELEX, DG AIDCO and the Contractor through telephone, e-mail and face-to-face interaction.

Newsletter

Due to the initiative of a Steering Committee member, a newsletter was launched and two issues were published to keep the EaP Civil Society and its stakeholders up to date. As an important by-product of this process, a logo was designed and used not only for the newsletter, but also for the letter head of the Steering Committee.

Conclusions

Although the results of this work are respectable and all involved parties have cooperated very well, the process would have profited from professional support from an early stage onwards (e.g. the involvement of a professional, paid editor).



4.4 CSF Flagship initiative

Members of the sub-committee

- Ben Rattenbury (co-coordinator, WG4)
- Sorin Mereacre (national coordinator, Moldova)
- Natalie Cojohari (co-coordinator, WG4)
- Kakha Gogolashvili (co-coordinator, WG2)

Introduction

The flagship initiative came from the idea that as with the broader Eastern Partnership (EaP), which has five multi-million euro flagship initiatives, the Civil Society Forum (CSF) needed a (more modest) flagship project. This flagship project would promote the aims of the CSF, further stimulate the development of civil society and European integration in the six eastern partner countries, and show those involved in the CSF that besides what many see as endless talks, meetings and ambitious rhetoric, concrete measures are being taken to provide them with tangible benefits, connected to the EaP process.

The members of the steering committee (SC) agreed that a multi-level engagement project, involving support at the national level and facilitating exchanges between countries, would be the most practical and cost effective way to provide such benefits, as it would enable a wide range of individuals to participate. Therefore the SC agreed on actions at:

1. National level
2. Regional level (i.e. across the six EaP countries)
3. European level (i.e. between the EaP six and the EU 27)

More specifically the Flagship initiative sought to work in the following ways.

1. National Level

At the national level support would be tailored to the supporting the CSF's **national platforms** through addressing the specific national needs and requirements of the country coordinator. The support at this level would be modest and largely **logistical**, providing support to pay for meeting rooms, travel for participants from different regions, and communications functions such as a small website for each national platform.

The overall aim of this element of the project is to enable a viable national platform to exist in each of the six EaP countries, in order for them to participate fully and actively within the CSF framework. The impact would be:

- Increased knowledge of the EaP and CSF processes within the civil society of each of the EaP six
- Greater ability of civil society in the EaP six to participate actively within the EaP and CSF
- Improved networking and coordination among civil society within each of the EaP six
- The potential basis for a permanent national platform for civil society in each of the EaP six



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

- Inclusion of civil society to process of EaP and the creation of good cooperation with government of each countries

2. Regional level

At the regional level, exchanges would be run among civil society leaders³ in the six EaP countries. These exchanges would be strictly directed towards the development of concrete cooperation and joint projects in areas closely related to the CSF's working groups as well as national EU integration agendas issues.

Each exchange would last **one week**, and involve 'twinning' leaders from different EaP countries. This twinning would entail both 'job shadowing', i.e. working alongside the host leader to understand how they run their organisations and deal with the specific challenges they face (many of which will be common to leaders in other EaP countries), as well as attending events and arranging meetings with other civil society actors in the host country. The exchange would then be reciprocated, with the host becoming the visitor, and vice versa.

The exchanges would be run in **cohorts**. Each cohort will include one person from each of the five EaP countries beside the host, each of which will travel to the same host city for their week's exchange. This would allow the five exchangees to learn from one another, both about how they are benefiting from the exchanges as well as how they work in their home country and what possible cooperation they might undertake.

The project would be further facilitated by a range of **online tools** and which would enable the participants to continue their dialogue and record their progress.

The impact would be:

- Improved networking and coordination among civil society among the EaP six
- Increased knowledge and skills of the participants as civil society leaders in the EaP six
- Concrete cooperation and projects, in line with the EaP and CSF, utilising these new links among civil society in the EaP six

3. European level

The European exchanges would function in the same way as the regional exchanges, however the exchange would only be one-way, with the leaders from the EaP countries travelling to be hosted in an EU city.

The European exchanges will also involve **cohorts**, however with the European exchanges each cohort will include one person from each of the six EaP countries. As well as meeting with civil society representatives

³ The focus on leaders, rather than organisations, is an important strategic choice. The reason for this is that networking and cooperation rely on personal links, and the reciprocal nature of the exchanges means that involving the same individuals in both parts of the exchange would have a much deeper impact than having different individuals involved with the different elements. The organisational links would also be fostered and encouraged, but through these personal links, in the first instance. By empowering individuals connected to active organisations can be achieved. Also the term 'leader' is applied loosely, referring not purely to the most senior member of staff (though this would often be the case), but also potentially to senior managers or influential decision makers within the organisation.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

during their exchange, the civil society leaders from the EaP six will also meet with relevant **public officials** including, where possible, European officials, in order to better understand the wider institutional framework for civil society in the host country.

Finally, both the regional and the European exchanges the participants will be required to deliver a brief presentation to their national platform upon their return, outlining the main learning points and stimulating further cooperation among a wider range of civil society organisations. This will ensure a very clear and direct **multiplier effect**.

The impact would be:

- Improved networking and coordination among civil society between the EaP six and the EU 27
- Increased knowledge and skills of the participants as civil society leaders in the EaP six
- Heightened knowledge of EU structures and processes, at national as well as European level, for civil society leaders from the EaP six
- Concrete cooperation and projects, in line with the EaP and CSF, utilising these new links between civil society in the EaP six and the EU 27
- Enhanced connections to government officials in Member States
- Greater likelihood of cooperation among civil society in EaP countries

Achievements

Despite initial interest from a number of EU member states, it was finally decided that the initiative would not be supported in 2010. This came as a disappointment to the SC as it meant that there would be no concrete initiatives under the CSF in its first year, besides the planned Working Group meetings.

The Flagship initiative was discussed at the Working group 4 meeting in early September, where there was significant enthusiasm and support for the project. It will be discussed at the WG4 sessions at the annual CSF event in Berlin and we hope that the initiative can be further developed and implemented in 2011.



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

4.5 Preparation of the Forum event in Berlin

Why Berlin? The Civil Society Forum 18.-19. November 2010.

People looking at the European Union from the six countries of the Eastern Neighborhood, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia often focus on its unity, on its transnational institutions and its administrative center, Brussels. They see how European nation-states, starting with six but now including 27, have pooled their resources and sovereignties to bring about tangible improvements in the lives of EU citizens across the continent. From the Union's beginnings in the European Coal and Steel Community, it has been a project aimed at transcending the limits and overcoming the perils of nation-states. With a Commission that is meant to represent the best of Europe as a whole, and a Parliament that legislates for all member states, the EU offers prospects that go well beyond national borders. Even, or perhaps particularly, the Union's detractors see it as a centralizing behemoth, producing regulations that force conformity on everything from lawnmower noise levels to the amount of curve permissible in a banana. For the Union's neighbors, the common realm of freedom is one of its greatest attractions, as is the Union's commitment to human rights that can force even national governments to change how they treat their citizens.

Focusing on Brussels, however, misses a significant part of how EU policy is made, particularly policy on external relations. For at least the last 15 years, national governments have taken a greater share of the initiative in shaping EU policy. In relations with countries beyond the Union's current borders, the role of the national capitals is even more important. The 250 selected participants in the Civil Society Forum may understand the difference almost instinctively. Just as they choose to focus their efforts on civil society organizations instead of working for official institutions, so too the member states are a broader and more diverse set of groups than the Brussels institutions. And just as state changes need support from the surrounding civil society if they are to be sustainable, EU policies need support from the member states if they are to have lasting effect.

For the Eastern Partnership, and the Civil Society Forum that accompanies it, to have sustainable effects on European policy, it must have support in the governments of the member states. Nor will just any member state do. The Partnership was first elaborated as a Polish initiative and rapidly drew support from Sweden, following up on numerous EU initiatives toward its new neighbors after the 2004–07 enlargements. Eastern policy has since gained significant support in Germany, and that is a key reason why the Civil Society Forum is taking place in Berlin.

Greater openness to the Eastern Partnership countries will require support from both old and new EU member states. The new members have been among the strongest supporters of the Eastern neighbors both because their historic experience is closest and because of geographic proximity. Civil society actors as well as officials have closer knowledge of the Eastern neighbors, and will also benefit most from the neighbors' integration with the Union. As the Franco-German dynamo has been the motor for the European Union's most important initiatives, German-Polish cooperation is a key driving force for EU policy along its eastern border. Indeed, the second Civil Society Forum is planned for Poland. Because of German experience with both the EU and the Eastern neighbors, building support for the Partnership among old EU members starts with German engagement.

This dynamic works in the other direction as well. The Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum is pleased to hold the second Civil Society Forum in the German foreign office in Berlin because it signals Germany's engagement with all of the countries beyond the Union's Eastern borders. It shows that no single country is paramount from Germany's point of view. Further, hosting the Forum demonstrates



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

German commitment to working with groups beyond governments, to dealing directly with the civil societies in the EU's new neighbors. This engagement, and the exposure to EU norms and habits that organizations in the neighboring states gain through participating in the Partnership and the Forum, will both advance democratic reform in these countries and prepare them for closer cooperation with the European Union. Furthermore the Steering Committee decided to hold the Forum in Berlin to highlight the importance between Warsaw and Berlin being a joint driving force to shape the strategic future of Wider Europe by engaging for democratic civil society actors from the very beginning.

Why Berlin? Because it is a key stop on the neighbors' road to tighter integration across Europe. Why Berlin? Because it signals the old member states' desire to open up to all of the new neighbors. Why Berlin? Because it is the nexus of old and new, and where both have the best opportunity to shape a common future for the European Union and its neighbors in the Eastern Partnership.

Iris Kempe

Heinrich Boll Stiftung South Caucasus - Director

4.6 Concept ideas on further development of CSF

Within the Steering Committee there has been organized special work (and even sub-group) on conceptualizing CSF experience and further development. The idea behind that was to reflect the present concept (developed by the Commission in combination with CSO innovations during the first Forum in Brussels in 2009) with wider scope of CSF strategic development as equal and respective stakeholder of EaP processes.

Unfortunately during the first year of CSF activities most of the attention of Steering Committee has been given to organizing basic processes and mechanisms of CSF work. Therefore it was difficult to find enough opportunities to make concept development one of key priorities among other Steering Committee responsibilities. Despite this fact there is extremely high interest to further conceptualization of CSF both among participants and among other stakeholders of the Eastern Partnership.

Within SC there have been 3 concept proposals developed (Ivan Voles, European Economic and Social Committee; Iris Kempe, South Caucasus office of Heinrich Boell Foundation,; Tatsiana Vadalazhskaya and Andrei Yahorau, International Consortium EUROBELARUS – Centre for European Transformation). **It is possible to read these inputs on CSF website.**

All three inputs expanded the frame of concept vision also taking into account a set of vital aspects for strategic thinking:

- Eastern Partnership as an instrument of Wider Europe
- Political background for the involvement of the civil society in the Eastern Partnership
- Democratic civil societies in the neighboring countries and establishing CSF National Platforms
- The potential of the Lisbon treaty and the impact of the member states
- Role of the civil society in the bilateral and multilateral track of the EaP



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

- Strategic CSF contribution to the EaP: “road map” format in combination with transparent monitoring procedure
- Actual EaP CSF achievements and problems
- Framework and principles of EaP CFS development
- The vision of the CSF and organizational aspects
- Facilitating Cross-Country Input and Communication Strategy

Because of crucial lack of time it was impossible to provide expanding discussion on the proposed ideas even within the Steering Committee, that is why by the second Forum in Berlin there is no any discussed and unified concept proposal to present it as complete output on behalf of SC. At the same time the best solution to continue this work is to involve many other organizations - CSF participants to provide their input and reflection on the CSF concept development. This could become one of key priorities for the next year of CSF internal work.

A set of key organizational problems and challenges well-seen from the first experience of CSF activity and SC work is already described in Chapter 1.3 of this report. To make the next step forward in the direction of improving CSF conceptualization it was proposed to organize communication on strategic thinking and CSF concept development within one of the sub-groups during CSF even in Berlin among those participants who would like to be involved in this discussion. This meeting could give a chance to have more inputs from CSOs, present more details about existing approaches and obstacles in further development of CSF and possibly could help to organize some special task-force group within CSF that can work more regularly to push the conceptualization process forward.

Ulad Vialichka, SC sub-group on concept development



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

5. Achievements and recommendations on future Steering committee

(content of the letter addressed on the 15th of November to HE Baroness Catherine Ashton
European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
European Commission Vice President for External Relations
and to HE Mr Stefan Füle Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy)

Achievements reached :

1. Institutionalising the EaP CSF.

The central event is the annual CSF summit. The first summit was organized by the European Commission in November 2009 in Brussels. The second one (co-organized by the Forum members) took place in Berlin on 18–19 November 2010, and the third is planned to take place in Poznań in 2011 – during Poland’s EU presidency.

Four thematic CSO working groups corresponding to four EaP intergovernmental platforms were created. Sub-groups were formed with special focus on priority issues (such as respect for human rights or liberalization of the visa regime). The activities carried out in the individual partner states revolve around the national CSF platforms currently being established. The 17- strong Steering Committee, elected during the annual CSF summit, coordinates the whole array of Forum activities.

The creation of these permanent structures is a major step towards enabling civil society organizations to assume responsibility for the functioning of the EaP CSF and providing it with a base for launching resourceful and effective activities.

2. Fostering knowledge of the goals and activities of the EaP CSF.

A CSF on-line newsletter was created and the Forum’s website is in the final phase of preparation.

3. Stimulating public debate over the non-governmental aspect of the EaP.

Members of the Steering Committee and many Forum participants, remaining in touch with the EU Commissions, co-organized and attended a number of international seminars and other meetings dedicated to this issue which took place both in their respective countries and in EU member states.

4. Influencing the governmental track of the EaP.

The Forum 2009 participants prepared a set of recommendations for the EaP intergovernmental thematic platforms. They were presented during the EaP Foreign Ministers Summit in Brussels on 8 December 2009. The CSF Working Group representatives took part and contributed to several Panel discussions organised in the scope of existing Flagship Initiatives.

While appreciating these achievements, the Forum has also faced several obstacles which could hamper the further development of this initiative. First of all, CSF representatives have had very limited access to



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

information regarding the activity of the thematic platforms. This significantly curtailed cooperation with the governmental track of the EaP. Secondly, despite having undertaken repeated attempts, the representatives of the Forum have so far failed to ascertain funds for the project aimed at deepening the contacts and cooperation between the organizations involved in the Forum. Finally, the activity of the Forum was limited by the lack of a professional technical and logistic base.

Therefore, however significant the CSF achievements have been, they are just the beginning of the implementation of an extremely ambitious initiative, namely, an effective and well-functioning Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The aims of the initiative were defined in the concept paper prepared by the European Commission last year as follows:

“enriching the governmental track of the EaP by providing a civil society perspective, notably through the regular provision of recommendations, including input in the work of ministerial meetings and multilateral platforms”;

sharing experience in the European integration processes in EaP countries; building capacity of civil society organizations in the partner states and contributing to the strengthening of their dialogue with the authorities.

We believe that only this strategic vision of the Forum’s functioning can bring real effects and stimulate a fully-fledged civil society dimension of the EaP. We are well aware that the success of the CSF will depend above all on the energy, creativity and cooperation of civil society organizations. The Forum activities carried out so far have proved that its participants are willing and able to become successfully involved in this initiative. At the same time, the experience gathered in the past year clearly shows that without further support from EU institutions and the necessary cooperation between the EaP intergovernmental structures and the initiative’s civil society dimension, no full and comprehensive implementation of the project would be possible.

In reference to the above it is requested to consider the following proposals:

1. Encourage the platform participants to invite the CSF representatives to all the meetings of intergovernmental thematic platforms, panels and conferences.
2. Ensure that CSF representatives receive minutes from platform meetings and are informed of planned activities in advance, so that they have a chance to prepare themselves for a constructive and substantial participation in platform operations. In formulating this proposal we would like to stress that the CSF carries out its operations observing the full transparency principle: the CSF is ready to make available all materials relating to the reports from the meetings of the thematic groups, the Steering Committee and other bodies to any individual or institution who would request such access.
3. Enable EaP civil society organizations to initiate, develop and carry out multi-country projects corresponding to the adopted CSF goals and to meet more regularly for information and experience exchange.
4. Install a permanent, professionally staffed secretariat with an operational budget. So far this role has been played by the Steering Committee of 17 volunteers from 11 countries, which has its obvious limitations. This solution cannot guarantee efficient operation of the Forum over the long term and threatens to hamper further development. The Secretariat should administer a budget for expert analyses to support the working groups and enrich the debate in the Eastern Partnership countries.