

Minutes of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee meetings, Brussels, 17-18 July 2012, and 30-31 October 2012

Summary of decisions and conclusions

Brussels, 17-18 July 2012

1. Registration of Secretariat

The registration of the Secretariat of the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum is now awaiting final publication by the Belgian authorities. The Steering Committee comprises the Board, the two co-Chairs serve as co-Presidents, and Victor Cotruta as Secretary. These office-holders' terms end as soon as their terms end on the Steering Committee. Marcos Da Costa of Office for Democratic Belarus, based in Brussels, was appointed external Treasurer given the need for someone familiar with accounting procedures in Belgium.

The job description for the Director and a draft budget were updated in line with the outline of functions set out in the Strategy Directions approved by the Poznan forum. It was agreed that a solid working knowledge of the Russian language should be included in the job requirements. The Call for a Director would be issued pending funding confirmation from different potential sources with a view to conducting interviews at the time of the Steering Committee meeting in October.

2. Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility funding application

The concept note submitted by REC Moldova to support the work of the Forum, primarily the national platforms, had been successful, and the full proposal was now being finalised.

3. Statement for the EaP Foreign Ministers meeting (Brussels, 23 July)

The statement, to be delivered by the co-Chairs of the Forum at the ministerial meeting, would include Forum monitoring of roadmap implementation, and a focus on monitoring elections in the partner countries.

4. Selection of candidates for Stockholm Forum

Based on the three selection lists – NPs/EU co-ordinators, WG co-ordinators, and EU delegations – the selection of participants was finalised. There were 583 applications to participate in the Forum, out of which 202 organisations were selected by the Steering Committee in line with the eligibility guidelines. The selection process included a goal of having 40 per cent new participants compared with the 2011 Forum. This was achieved - as 45 per cent of participants did not attend the 2011 event in Poznan. In addition, 34 per cent have not attended any of the three annual Forums to date. In the case of EU delegates, with an increase in applications, 50 per cent of those selected did not attend in 2011. The final list prepared by the Steering Committee was to be consulted with the European External Action Service (EEAS)/European Commission before publication.

5. Stockholm Forum

The Stockholm Forum, to take place on 29-30 November. A session would be added on the roadmap and on the EaP European integration index.

6. 2013 Forum event location

Discussions are underway with respectively the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova and the MFA of Lithuania with a view to agreeing on the host venue for the 2013 Forum annual event.

Summary of decisions and conclusions

Brussels, 30-31 October 2012

1. Co-Chairs' report on Eastern Partnership ministerial meeting

At the ministerial meeting in Brussels on 23 July 2012, the co-Chairs presented a statement on behalf of the Forum, focusing on the Forum's willingness to play a full part in monitoring implementation of the roadmap, as well as pushing forward with election monitoring and monitoring of human rights in the six partner countries. The meeting revealed a number of important forthcoming opportunities for the Forum to engage in the EaP roadmap process: (a) the EaP roadmap interim assessment planned for the May 2013 Euronest plenary meeting in Brussels, and (b) the comprehensive assessment planned for the November 2013 EaP summit in Vilnius.

2. 2013 Forum event

The Steering Committee met with Ambassador V. Verba of Lithuania, Mantas Jakimavicius of the Lithuanian representation to the EU, and Emil Dediu, Counsellor, mission to the EU of the Republic of Moldova. It was agreed that 2013 Civil Society Forum should take place in Moldova in October 2013, followed in November 2013 by the Eastern Partnership summit and a Forum side-event in Vilnius in November 2013.

3. Secretariat and Director

The registration of the Secretariat of the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum was finalised in August 2012. Following securing of an invitation for European Commission

funding from January 2013, the Steering Committee published an open call for the position of Director of the Secretariat with the intention of making an appointment and presenting the Director to the Stockholm Forum event.

The structure of the Secretariat, including the profile and appointment of a second person - will be decided by the director, once appointed, in consultation with the Steering Committee. The Office for Democratic Belarus, based in Brussels, took the initiative in securing the registration of the Secretariat and negotiating the EU funding. ODB will be a partner on the proposal, providing legal and financial advice, as well as budget savings through joint office costs.

Following an open call for Director, publicised on the Forum website, 37 applications were received. It was agreed that applications should remain confidential. Core criteria for assessing candidates for the position of director position were agreed:

- experience of working with EU
- knowledge/experience of EaP countries/projects
- project and staff management experience
- fundraising/proposal-writing experience
- strong communications skills (including English and Russian)

The whole Steering Committee went through the proposals, drawing up an initial shortlist of 15 applications. A sub-group narrowed this to six applicants, a selection approved by the whole Steering Committee.

Interviews were then arranged with those shortlisted. The interview panel comprised: Manana Kochladze, Yaroslav Bekish, Jeff Lovitt, and Olga Stuzhinskaya.

4. Review of Forum participant selection procedures

In response to questions from the Belarusian National Platform as well as a group of Forum participants from Azerbaijan and from other applicants on selection procedures of participants in Forum meetings, the Steering Committee noted that some responses propose giving more weight to the national platforms, others have proposed the opposite, and some have questioned the role of the shortlist from the EU delegations. The Steering Committee believes that the current three shortlists are in fact a useful check against each other – for instance, the need to look outside those making the selection in the national platforms, the need for focus on thematic expertise of the working groups, and the external perspective of the EU delegations. The Steering Committee does not support an increased weight to the shortlists from the national platforms.

The Steering Committee believes that it is necessary to strengthen the criteria to ensure that there is greater knowledge about the experience, national and international, and commitment to engagement and to enrich Forum activities, on the part of applicants, and that this be made available to all three parties drawing up the shortlists. Amendments to the application process will be managed by the Secretariat Director in conjunction with the new Steering Committee.

5. EaP European Integration Index

Open Society Foundations presented to the Steering Committee a proposal that the Forum could take responsibility for the European Integration Index from 2014 onwards. The index is scheduled to be launched in May each year to coincide with the publication of progress reports on the partner countries. It was decided to examine this invitation further.

6. Stockholm Forum event, 29-30 November 2012

The title of the Forum should be “Mapping the Future”. All elections should be conducted secret ballot. All elections, including working group co-ordinators and country facilitators, should be assisted by at least two independent scrutineers who will have a list of all participants eligible to vote and of those eligible to be candidates. The General Assembly should approve by acclamation the choice of working group chairs and national co-ordinators.

7. Euronest

The Forum is invited to provide input to the various Euronest reports and meetings, including on social affairs (to be held in Brussels or Georgia in February 2013), on regional security challenges, approximation of national legislation to EU legislation in economic field, on energy security and harmonisation, and poverty and social exclusion. Official participation of the Forum in the May 2013 Euronest plenary meeting in Brussels will also be proposed.
