

Annual Activities Report 2015

WORKING GROUP 1

Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability Activity report for 2015



The Working Group 1 coordinators in 2015 were Krzysztof Bobinski, Unia & Polska, Poland (also the co-chair of the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum) and Volodymyr Kuprii from the CCC Creative Centre in Kyiv, Ukraine.

The coordinators would like to thank the CSF Secretariat in Brussels for its help with organising WG1 events and special thanks go to Tanya Basarab, the Advocacy Manager for much of 2015, for organisational, conceptual and reporting

input without which many WG1 activities described below would not have happened.

WORKING GROUP COUNCILS A NEW BUT IMPORTANT INSTITUTION

2015 was the first year in which newly established working group Councils were involved in the planning of Working Group events and activities. These Councils are composed of the working group coordinators from the National Platforms of the Partner countries. The WG1 Council was made up of:

EU: Krzysztof Bobinski

EaP: Volodymyr Kuprii

Armenia: Arthur Sakunts

Azerbaijan: Razi Nurullayev

Belarus: Petr Kuznetsov

Georgia: Irina Putkaradze

Georgia: Natia Kuprashvili

Moldova: Ion Manole

Ukraine: Iryna Sushko

WORKING GROUP 1 SUB-GROUPS

Apart from the WG Council, WG1 also had subgroups whose coordinators who were chosen at the Assembly in Batumi in November 2014. These people were supposed to keep an eye on what is happening in the sub groups during the year. These were:

Anti-Corruption: Arthur Artandilyan (Armenia)
Elections: Yury Hubarevich (Belarus)
Human Rights: Ivana Skalova (EU)
Judicial Reform: Ion Guzun (Moldova)
Media freedom and freedom of speech: Andriy Kulakov (Ukraine)
Minority Rights Group: ZsofiaFarkas (EU)
Public Administration Reform: Antonella Valmorbida (EU)
Regional Cooperation and Confidence Building: vacant
Security: Vera Rihackova (EU)
Visa facilitation: Iryna Sushko (Ukraine)

THINGS HAPPEN ONLY IF THE MEMBERS OF THE CSF PUSH FOR THEM

It is important to note that the CSF and the Working Groups are mainly a bottom up organisation. That means that little happens unless it is lobbied for by the National Platforms and the WG sub groups, as the WG coordinators have few organisational and financial means at their disposal. They can only help if an impulse comes from the civil society organisations, the sub-groups or the national platforms.

In 2015 only a few initiatives (but important ones, see below) came from the sub groups and the main activities during 2015 were those which were planned and budgeted – that is the meeting of the WG Council in Yerevan (15 – 19 March 2015) which took place together the annual Euronest meeting and the annual WG1 meeting in Brussels (8 – 9 June 2015). The re-granting exercise (allocations of EU funds for projects by WG members through the CSF) elicited a strong response from WG1 organisations -20 applications of which 6 were successful.



WORKING GROUP COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Priorities for the re-granting exercise were identified during the WG Council meeting in Yerevan. This meeting was unfortunately sparsely attended. This shows that the idea of the Council has yet to be fully understood in WG 1 at least. **Here it is important to stress that the WG Council is a key institution in the generation of activities of the WG and thus a key institution in the CSF.** Experience shows that sub groups are weak as the people involved in

the various areas of activity meet only once at the Assembly and do not have enough time to get to know each other, plan joint activities let alone identify sources of funding. They are also busy in their own organisations and have little time to spare to reach out to others. On the other hand the Council is made of representatives identified by the National Platforms and should in theory know what is happening in the NGO organisations in the WG and who they are. The people in the Council thus have the opportunity, if they put their minds to it, to give a strong structure to WG activities. The WG Council meeting also sets out a draft agenda for the annual WG meeting and decides not only on the subjects to be discussed but also the structure of the meeting. Most importantly it is the Council which is responsible for identifying the re-granting priorities for the year. These grants are the sole source of CSF related funds allocated directly to WG members.

We recommend that the WG 1 coordinators at the National Platform level be identified by the National Platforms at or just after the annual Assembly and that their names be passed to the WG coordinators and the secretariat as soon as possible. The first meeting or communication between the members should take place before or soon after the new year so that activities can be planned early leaving plenty of time for implementation in 2016.

‘BOTTOM UP’ EVENTS

The annual meeting of Working Group 1 (8 and 9 June 2015) in Brussels brought together 50 WG members and EU Commission, EEAS and European Parliament members and covered Human Rights issues, the role of women leading change in the EaP, reforms in the EaP as well as security issues and messages to EU decision makers. A detailed report of the meeting can be found on the EaP-CSF website at -

<http://eap-csf.eu/assets/files/WG1%20Annual%20Meeting%20Report%20June%202015.pdf>

Other WG 1 activities were possible because of strong interest from those subgroups which identified a topic and had the ability to implement the topic within the group. This was the case of the **Media Freedom Group** which organised the monitoring of Russian language domestic media in March 2015 and working together with Memo 98 from Slovakia produced a report on the results of the monitoring together with recommendations as to how to counter biased Russian language broadcasts. The report is on the EaP-CSF website at -

http://eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Monitoring%20report_executive%20summary.pdf

The report was funded by the CSF as well as the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and KRRiT, the Polish electronic media regulator. It was widely used by the EED in its feasibility study on possible responses to Russian propaganda.

SECURITY

The other WG1 project which saw strong lobbying from below was the idea of a conference on **security** in the EaP which was strongly supported by the Ukrainian National Platform. The conference was organised by our colleagues in Kyiv together with help from the Secretariat in Brussels. It took place on June 3 – 5 in Kyiv and produced recommendations which included the establishment of EU – EaP crisis management and prevention mechanisms as well as involving EaP countries in discussions on a new EU security strategy and the elimination of



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embargoes on military and technical cooperation. The conference programme can be found [here](#) and the resolution can be found [here](#).

VISA LIBERALISATION

The third subject which saw a great deal of sub group activity was **visa liberalisation and migration** with its coordinator Iryna Sushko and her Europe Without Barriers (EWB) with consistent banking from the Batory Foundation in Warsaw. Visa liberalisation has seen a success in Moldova with which the UE lifted visa requirements last year and towards the end of 2015 the group undertook a strong lobbying effort to attain the same result with Georgia and Ukraine.

AREAS WHERE MORE PROGRESS IS NEEDED

Whereas the monitoring of the Russian language media and the Kyiv security conference and the monitoring of EU visa policy can be assessed as WG1 successes so the record in other subgroups was bleak. Very important subjects like judicial reform evinced little interest at Batumi and no progress was made in 2015. Anti corruption also saw no activity although here it has to be said that most of the CSF member NGOs which are interested in this subject are linked to Transparency International (TI) and do most of their work within the TI framework. Public Administration Reform (PAR) remains the domain of the local government activists who tend to concentrate on local government issues while public sector reform and the training of cadres at the national level is left to a few individuals. Here the government administration reform 'leg' must be strengthened. However unlike justice reform which is the WG orphan PAR does at last have a strong ally in the local government sphere in the form of the European Association of Local Democracy (ALDA). Indeed ALDA appears to organise the work of the sub group. At Batumi, Miroslav Kobasa, a veteran member of the group noted that Belarus had failed to sign the European Charter on Local Self Government. Maybe the group could return to this subject at the assembly in Kyiv and propose a resolution calling on the government in Minsk to do so?

The minority rights sub group also appears to be the lonely sphere of activity of the Budapest based Minority Rights Group (MRG) whose activities match those of the group. Election monitoring saw little activity through lack of funds and the political atmosphere in Azerbaijan and Belarus, which staged national elections in 2015, suggested that as the results of the elections appear to have been fixed by the rulers of these countries monitoring by WG 1 would bring few positive results. An open letter was, however sent, to international monitors of the presidential election in Belarus asking them to give a fair appraisal of the process. The letter can be accessed [here](#).

Another area which remained untouched by WG1 was Regional Cooperation and Confidence Building which evoked a lot of enthusiasm when it was first suggested that such a group be established aimed at building confidence cross 'frozen conflict' boundaries. The WG should return to this very important area of activity. Human rights activities also appear to have been

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neglected at the WG level with civil society activists preferring to leave any issues which arose during the year to the Steering Committee level.

ALLOCATION OF GRANTS

Finally, there was the allocation of grants for EU funded projects. WG1 had an allocation of 70,000 Euro which could not be worth less than 10,000 euro and not more than 40,000 euro. The broad categories which were selected by the WG Council were:

1. Public administration, decentralization (fiscal, political and administrative) and Public service reform;
2. Analysis of the impact of visa liberalization in Moldova and recommendations for Ukraine and Georgia with regards to reform package required. Advocacy on visa liberalisation for Ukraine and Georgia. Advancing on visa facilitation and mobility partnerships with Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan;
3. Withstanding/combating Russian propaganda (use all regulatory mechanisms to defend customer from propaganda, set up a uniform mass media/TV channel for EaP countries broadcasting counter-propaganda);
4. Mapping out policies on transition from analogue to digital broadcasting and distribution of media channels for public use in EaP countries;
5. Analysing the link between democracy and elections in EaP countries;
6. Analysing the state of implementation of human rights mechanisms in EaP countries. Analysing electoral reform and pre-election process in Ukraine
7. Mapping out the role of CSO's in conflict (before –prevention, during –support, after –support and confidence-building)

In a long process which lasted from early April to the middle of June (with contracts signed in mid August) 6 projects were selected apart from the earlier grant which had been for the monitoring of Russian media. The selected projects covered:

1. An analysis of how EU assistance to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine is spent
2. A comparative report on progress of civil service reforms in the context of Association Agreements signed by Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine with the EU
3. An analysis of the role of Civil Society organisations in preventing electoral fraud
4. An analysis of reforms in migration management in Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia and raising public awareness of the necessary political reforms.
5. Support for investigative reporting on the way public money is spent in Moldova, Armenia and Georgia
6. Support for media NGOs to work for media freedom with recommendations for the EaP CSF to lobby for media freedom.

WORKING GROUP 1 REPRESENTED AT EaP GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WG1 was represented at several EaP Platform meetings which bring together government representatives from the EaP and EU member states and are chaired by the EEAS. These included the Platform 1 meeting in Brussels on July 1 2015 attended by Krzysztof Bobinski and



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Volodymyr Kuprii accompanied by Natalia Yerashevich, the head of the Secretariat. This gave your representatives the opportunity to point out that anger at widespread corruption in Armenia lay at the root of the demonstrations in the summer against electricity price rises. On June 4 2015 the Public Administration Reform sub group was represented by Samir Aliyev and Volodymyr Kuprii at a Platform meeting on the subject in Stockholm and the sub group was also present at another meeting on the same subject in Vilnius on July 3 2015 Khachik Haratyunyan represented the anti corruption sub group at a Platform meeting on the subject in Amsterdam.

Krzysztof Bobinski

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