



**10th Annual Assembly
of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF)**

Leading the Way Towards a Democratic European Future

10-12 December 2018

Tbilisi, Georgia

Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel, 1 Rose Revolution Square

Five Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine - and some European Union member states, are celebrating the 100th anniversary of their independence this year. Today it is still necessary to fight for the democratic aspirations of 1918. Curbs on political freedoms, disregard of the rule of law and freedom of speech and a repressive environment for civil society organisations continue to thwart sustainable democratic development in these countries. The symbolism of the 100th anniversary of national independence for five EaP countries prompts self-reflection and a re-evaluation of the future for both the Eastern Partnership and the European Union. This historical date is a litmus test for the systemic struggle in the Eastern Partnership countries which are locked between democracy and authoritarian regimes. At the same time, one year before the 10th anniversary of the initiative and the halfway stage towards the milestone of 2020 with its 20 deliverables, the time is ripe for the European Union to take a serious look at its policies towards the region. The principles underpinning the Eastern Partnership remain as relevant as ever, but today's geopolitical challenges require more ambitious approaches and greater engagement of citizens in securing the democratic rights and freedoms supported and promoted by the European Union.

Leading the way to achieving the democratic values and standards embodied by the European Union and its member states, civil society organisations continue to apply pressure to secure stable progress in political, economic and social reforms in the EaP countries. The "Velvet Revolution" in Armenia has opened the doors to hope that the ongoing reform process will not only lead to a better future for the Armenians but also could provide a model of peaceful change and reform for other countries of the Eastern Partnership. The Armenian case raises new questions as whether this is a one-off development or it can lead to change in other Eastern Partnership countries or, indeed, whether things will go back to business as usual, also in Armenia. Will what is happening in Armenia change the way we - the civil society - and our partners look at and work within the Eastern Partnership region?

Also we are entering a phase in the Eastern Partnership where populism and the threat of authoritarianism is rising in the European Union member states and the model of reform originally proposed by the European Union is no longer supported by all of the member states and not by everyone living in the member states. The elections to the European Parliament in May 2019 could witness a strengthening of populist forces, representing a stiff challenge to the European Union orthodoxy embodied in the



protection and promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy as embedded in the aspirations of the Eastern Partnership initiative.

Recent events in the EaP have thrown a new light on the 2020 deliverables programme with its focus on concrete changes in the way partner countries are governed in areas such as the rule of law and public administration reform. This year's Assembly will consider how the programme can be enhanced to tackle the heightened challenges of state capture, the security challenge in a region replete with simmering conflicts and the challenge of disinformation. Civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries needs to form a strong relationship with the European Union, its member states and other international actors that address these immense challenges and also to address cross-cutting themes such as gender issues, pluralism in the media and civil society involvement in transparent political decision-making.

This year's Annual Assembly will focus on how to proactively address the evolving political situation in the Eastern Partnership countries and in the EU. Civil society in the region, working with partners in the EU, will elaborate on how we can contribute to furthering sustainable democratic development, how we can maintain the EU's commitment to the Eastern Partnership, and how civil society can engage with citizens as a whole to counter the authoritarian backlash evident in parts of the European continent. Participants will further their campaigning and advocacy strategies to maximise pressure and constructive engagement to shape sustainable democratic political trajectories for all six Eastern Partnership countries. Participants will also explore how our countries historical experiences influences their future political trajectories.

Day 1

10 December, Monday

11:00-18:00 Arrivals and registration of participants

17:30-20:30 Kick-off session for all the participants (plenary room - interpretation)

The goal of the session is to set the tone for the by providing the context of the challenging environment in which the civil society of the EaP and, to the growing extent, of the EU is functioning. The session will start with the inspirational speech from the speaker having the first-hand experience with the civil-society-driven initiatives and actions having had a positive societal impact or with operating in a difficult environment in the EaP and the EU and the speaker focusing on 100th anniversary of independence of the five EaP countries and the influence it has on their political trajectories today. The session will proceed in a world café format with participants getting to know each other, the EaP CSF, and what will be happening at the Annual Assembly. The sessions will combine the interventions from the Steering Committee members and the Secretariat followed by the discussions in small groups led by experienced EaP CSF members. The selected activities of the EaP CSF will be presented in the interactive format by the members and the Steering Committee.. Presentation of the EaP CSF awards for the best re-granting projects implemented in 2018 and opening of the photo exhibition celebrating 100th anniversary of the independence of 5 EaP countries and the launch of the information campaign



#10yearstogether dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the EaP CSF and the Eastern Partnership in 2019 will crown the session.

20:30-21:30 Welcome reception (foyer)

Day 2

11 December, Tuesday

8:30-9:00 Registration of locally based attendees

9:00-9:15 Introductory word by Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee (plenary room)

9:15-10:00 Opening speeches (plenary room)

10:00-10:30 Presentation of the EaP CSF Pavel Sheremet Journalism and civil society activists Award (plenary room).

For the third time Pavel Sheremet Award will be granted this year during the Annual Assembly of the EaP CSF in order to recognize courage in journalism and outstanding achievement in the cause of media freedom in the Eastern Partnership region. Given the tragic death of Pavel Sheremet, who was killed in a car bomb explosion in 2016, it is of time to honour, once again, his contribution for promotion of human rights and freedom of speech and to continue his work by strengthening the role of free media in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Civil society organizations in the Eastern Partnership countries, being key drivers of reform and vocal defenders of democratic values, face numerous difficulties and an unfavourable working environment when delivering on their agenda. The outstanding and often courageous work of individuals and organisations from the Eastern Partnership region contributing to the political, economic and social development of their countries and defending the core democratic values should be recognised and serve as example and inspiration.

Therefore, for the first time, the EaP CSF Civil Society Award 2018 will be given to a civil society activist to recognise his/her outstanding work in the EaP region. The achievements of the nominee could be but not limited to defending democratic values, campaigning and monitoring the process of reforms implementation in the EaP countries.

10:30-10:50 Coffee break

10:50-12:50 High-level panel – Time of change in the EaP: are we coping? (plenary room)

The year 2018 has brought about many new developments in the EaP region meanwhile the EU EaP policy has been subject to evaluation and re-launch. The "Velvet Revolution" in Armenia opened avenues to the implementation of effective reforms that will put the country firmly on the path to democracy with an impact on the wider region. Georgia and Ukraine remain on reform path; the effectiveness of this process will be tested namely in the upcoming elections in Ukraine. Moldova has been backsliding in the rule of law area with serious consequences for the country's prospect and human capital. In Azerbaijan and Belarus, the situation remains more or less unchanged.



Are we – civil society, EU and EaP stakeholders coping with the change? How effective has been the reform of the EaP architecture? What have we learned from the implementation of 20 Deliverables for 2020 so far and what is the future of the EaP multilateral structure? What fresh ideas are on the table for the upgraded formats of cooperation and what can be offered as a new carrot to the best performing countries in the region?

The session will include reference to EaP Index results, to raise awareness among the audience and speakers about this EaP CSF product.

- 12:50-13:00 Order of the day (plenary room)
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch
- 14:00-15:30 Parallel WG meetings including external stakeholders – 4 rooms: plenary + 3 breakout
1. WG1 meeting
 2. WG2/WG5 meeting
 3. WG3 meeting
 4. WG4 meeting

30 mins introduction, getting to know each other, developing annual plan

The session will start with a short presentation (30 minutes) on the modalities of operation of WGs (PPP and guidance for WG operations, explanation of expectations on members, presentation of our contribution to Platforms and Panels, sharing of the calendar of Platform and Panels meetings), especially given that the cycle is longer because of the internal reform.

The session will include a structured-networking part meant to make sure that delegates get to know each other well and lay grounds for good cooperation all throughout the cycle.

Lastly, the goal of the parallel sessions moderated by WG Coordinators is for each WG to develop its Annual Action Plan. The AA Plan will detail how the group will be involved in the implementation of the 20 Deliverables for 2020, participation in EaP Platforms and panels, and participation in the EaP CSF re-granting scheme; it will also set out advocacy priorities while determining the objectives for its annual meeting.

- 15:30-16:00 Coffee break
- 16:00-18:00 Continuation of parallel panels (4 rooms): groups working on specific topics
- 18:00-19:30 Side events:
- 19:30-21:00 Networking reception
- 21:00-22:00 Night-owl session (plenary room)

Day 3

12 December, Wednesday

- 9:00-11:00 Plenary session: adopted reform and discussion + voting on the new EaP CSF Code of Conduct, election of arbitration body (plenary room); anniversary resolution



Delegates attending the AA2018 are the first ones participating in the reformed Forum. The session will be therefore used to present the main points of the reform and how it influences the work of the Forum.

In addition, the reform envisages adoption of a Code of Conduct, which will be presented and voted on during this session.

Lastly, under the reformed Forum a new structure – arbitration body – will become an integral part of the Forum. The session will be used to elect members of this new structure.

11:00-11:20 Coffee break

11:20-12:30 Panel discussion focusing on new approaches/political change/good governance (plenary room)

The panel will look at the spill-over potential of the recent developments in the EaP region. The problems in the area of rule of law and corruption are persistent in most of the EaP countries. After Ukraine and Georgia, civic activism has led to significant change in Armenia. How can we support citizens in holding their governments accountable and demanding a real change of policy practice? What new approaches can be designed to prevent backsliding? How can the whole region benefit from the lessons learned in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine?

12:30-13:00 Closing remarks (plenary room)

13:00-14:00 Farewell lunch