



**10<sup>th</sup> 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  
Parliament of Georgia, 8 Shota Rustaveli Avenue*

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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

The 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.

### Day 1

#### 10 December, Monday

*Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel, 1 Rose Revolution Square*

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

17:30-21:00 **Kick-off session for delegates (Plenary, Ballroom 2 & 3)**

*The goal of the session is to set the tone for the 3-day event 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 of Haykuhi Harutyunyan, EaP CSF Steering Committee member, having the first-hand experience with the Velvet revolution in Armenia. The session will proceed in a world café format with participants getting to know each other and the EaP CSF.*

21:00-22:00 **Welcome reception hosted by Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia ("Filini" Restaurant, 1st floor – Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel)**

Opening remarks by:

Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia

Carl Hartzell, Head of the EU Delegation in Georgia

Moderator: Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Co-Chair of the EaP CSF Steering Committee



**Day 2**

**11 December. Tuesday**

*Parliament of Georgia, 8 Shota Rustaveli Avenue (until 1 PM)*

- 7:45 Departure from the hotel to the Parliament of Georgia
- 9:00-9:10 **Introductory word** by Co-Chairs of the EaP CSF Steering Committee – Krzysztof Bobinski and Aleksandra Kalatozishvili
- 9:10-9:40 **Opening speeches (Parliament of Georgia)**
- Speakers:  
Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia
- Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Enlargement Negotiations and Neighbourhood Policy, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, DG NEAR (via a video address)
- Thomas Buchsbaum, Special Envoy for Eastern Partnership, Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria
- 09:40-11:00 **Panel discussion – *how to combat corruption and violations of human rights in the EU and EaP countries?* (Parliament of Georgia)**
- Speakers:  
Bill Browder, Financier, Economist and Human Rights defender (via a video address)
- Matthew Caruana Galizia, Reporter
- Harry Hummel, Senior Policy Advisor, Netherlands Helsinki Committee
- Alexandra Stiglmayer, General Secretary and Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI)
- Moderator: Iskra Kirova, Senior Policy Analyst, Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI)
- 11:00-11:20 **Presentation of the EaP CSF Pavel Sheremet Journalism and Civil Society Activists' Awards (Parliament of Georgia)**
- The EaP CSF Pavel Sheremet Journalism Award recognising courage and outstanding achievement in the cause of media freedom will be presented by:*
- Matthew Caruana Galizia, reporter and Laura Dittel, EaP CSF Steering Committee member



*The outstanding and 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 will be recognised by the EaP CSF Civil Society Award 2018, presented by:*

Mikalai Kvantaliani and Ana Otilia Nutu, EaP CSF Steering Committee members

11:20-12:50 **High-level panel discussion – *the EaP in the time of change* (Parliament of Georgia)**

*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 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?*

Speakers:

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Armenia

Vakhtang Makharoblishvili, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georgia

Darius Skusevicius, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lithuania

Roman Romanovsky, Head of European Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belarus

Lawrence Meredith, Director, Neighbourhood East, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, DG NEAR

Lasha Tughushi, EaP CSF Steering Committee member

Moderator: Jeff Lovitt, Chair, New Diplomacy

12:30-14:00 Registration of locally based attendees at the hotel

12:50-13:00 Order of the day

13:00 Departure back to the hotel

13:00-14:00 Lunch (Foyer)

14:00-18:00 **Parallel Working Group meetings**



- WG1 “Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability” meeting, Stakeholder: Sinziana Poiana, Policy Officer, Civil Society Support, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, DG NEAR **(Plenary, Ballroom 2 & 3)**
- WG2 “Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies” and WG5 “Social and Labour Policies and Social Dialogue” meeting **(Ballroom 1)**
- WG3 “Environment, Climate Change and Energy Security” meeting, Stakeholder: Maia Javakhishvili, Deputy Head, Environment and Climate Change Department and Tamar Aladashvili, Director, Environmental Information and Education Centre, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia **(Meeting Room 5)**
- WG4 “Contacts between People” meeting, Stakeholder: Marta Wytrykowska, Policy Officer, Eastern Partnership Division, European External Action Service, EEAS **(Meeting Room 6)**

*The session will present the modalities of operation of WGs and include a structured-networking part. The members will exchange opinions with the stakeholders and develop the EaP CSF contribution to the EaP events happening in 2019.*

**18:00-19:00 Reflexion on the centenary of independence of the EaP countries (Plenary, Ballroom 2 & 3)**

*The session will remind of the establishment of independent governments in 1918 in five out of six current EaP countries, their aspirations and what legacies they have handed down to the current independent states of the EaP.*

Speakers:

Beka Kobakhidze, Georgian Studies Fellow, Oxford School of Global and Area Studies

Natia Kuprashvili, Chair of Georgian National Platform of the EaP CSF

Moderator: Leila Aliyeva, Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften Fellow, Vienna Institute

**19:00-20:30 Networking reception (“Filini” Restaurant, 1<sup>st</sup> floor – Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel)**

**20:30-22:00 Parallel night owl sessions**

- **Implementing Open Government Partnership in EaP countries – civil society perspective (Ballroom 1)**

*This panel discussion will provide a platform for CSOs from all EaP countries to exchange research findings and experience on the nexus between open government, accountability and good governance, facilitated by the results of the EaP CSF re-granting project “Civil society for combating corruption and promotion open governance in the EaP countries”.*



*What results have the CSOs achieved in opening governments and anti-corruption efforts within the OGP multistakeholder approach?*

Speakers:

Elena Fileeva, Lawyer, Article 42 of the Constitution, Georgia

Svitlana Shevchenko, International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS), Ukraine

Gubad Ibadoghlu, Chairman, Public Initiatives Centre (PIC), Azerbaijan

Moderator: Giorgi Kldiashvili, Founding Member and Executive Director, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), OGP Steering Committee member, Georgia

▪ **Post visa-free agenda of the EaP countries for better civil society cooperation in justice, freedom and security (Meeting Room 6)**

*The event will focus on the achievements, challenges and lessons learned during the visa liberalisation process and will focus on how to strengthen the civil society efforts to make the reforms in justice, freedom and security stable and to provide effective implementation the criteria under post liberalisation monitoring in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.*

Speakers:

Gogita Gvedashvili, Director of the EU Programs, Georgian Center for Security and Development (GCSD)

Iulian Groza, Executive Director, European Integration Policy Moderator, Institute for European Policies and Reforms (IPRE), Moldova

Alexandra Stiglmayer, General Secretary and Senior Analyst, European Stability Initiative (ESI), Germany

Iryna Sushko, Executive Director, Civic Organization “Europe without Barriers”, Ukraine

Moderator: Krzysztof Mrozek, Coordinator, Stefan Batory Foundation, Poland

▪ **Гендерный мейнстриминг в деятельности ФГО ВП – Gender mainstreaming in EaP CSF (in Russian, Meeting Room 1)**

*The aim of this session is to provide an overview of gender aspects of the Forum's activities: looking for opportunities and identification of challenges:*

- *Presentation of intermediate results of investigation on the role of National Platforms within National Gender mechanisms*
- *Identifying person or organisation concerned with gender mainstreaming within National Platforms Joint development of action plans on gender mainstreaming within National Platforms*
- *Expansion of National Platforms' gender experts network (GenNET) with further formalisation of this experts' network*



**Day 3**

**12 December, Wednesday**

*Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel, 1 Rose Revolution Square*

9:00-10:45 **Plenary session – *the EaP CSF in a time of change***, moderated by Goda Neverauskaite, EaP CSF Steering Committee member (**Plenary, Ballroom 2 & 3**)

*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. The reform envisages adoption of a Code of Ethical Conduct, which will be presented and voted on during this session. Lastly, under the reformed Forum a new ombudsman-type structure will become an integral part of the Forum. The session will be used to elect its members. The presentation of the EaP CSF awards for the best re-granting projects, implemented in 2018 will crown the session.*

10:45-11:00 **Presentation of the Centenary Resolution** by EaP CSF Steering Committee Co-Chair, Krzysztof Bobinski (**Plenary, Ballroom 2 & 3**)

11:00-11:15 Coffee break (Foyer)

11:15-12:30 **Panel discussion – *elections in the EaP: what is at stake?*** (**Plenary, Ballroom 2 & 3**)

*With elections that have recently happened or will be happening in 2019 in four EaP countries, the panel will discuss what these elections might bring. What role has been played or can be played by the civil society? What are the priority areas of reform right after the elections? What new approaches can be designed to prevent the EaP countries from backsliding?*

**Speakers:**

Radoslaw Darski, Deputy Head of Division, Eastern Partnership Division, European External Action Service, EEAS

Arsen Kharatyan, Former Advisor to the Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan

Mikheil Benidze, Executive Director, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, Georgia

Denis Cenusa, Associated Expert, Expert-Grup, Moldova

**Moderator:** Ketevan Khutsishvili, Director, Open Society Foundation, Georgia

12:30-13:00 **Closing remarks** by Ina Coseru, EaP CSF Steering Committee member

13:00-14:00 Farewell lunch (Foyer)