

Annual Activities Report 2017

WORKING GROUP 2

Economic Integration & Convergence with EU Policies Activity report for 2017

THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- Providing input to the revised Joint staff working document “Eastern Partnership – focusing on key priorities and deliverables”, which mirrors the priorities of the EaP until 2020. Part of EaP CSF Analysis of the EU Paper on 20 Eastern Partnership Deliverables for 2020 was devoted to issues of Economic development & market opportunities.
- Input in the conceptual CSF EaP documents: Civil Society Declaration, Proposal of the EaP CSF Steering Committee on the organisational reform, Strategy of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum for 2018-2020.
- Functioning of Territorial cooperation programmes, which open an opportunity for EaP countries to identify and jointly address common challenges in their border regions towards sustainable economic and social development at local level. EaPTC comprises four areas: Armenia – Georgia, Azerbaijan – Georgia, Belarus - Ukraine and Moldova - Ukraine.

KEY TOPICS ON WHICH THE WG FOCUSED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED

EaP CSF Working Group №2 “Economic Integration & Convergence with EU Policies” deals with the main issues on the agenda of EaP Thematic Platform 2 of the same name. The following thematic sub-groups have been created within the framework of WG2 in order to coordinate the work in the respective areas:

- Agriculture
- Harmonization of Digital Markets
- Regional Policy, Territorial and Crossborder Cooperation
- Small and Medium Enterprises
- Statistics
- Trade and Trade Related Regulatory Cooperation
- Transport

Priorities WG2, as well as results, were discussed with working group members at the WG2 Council and WG annual meeting in Chisinau.

In 2017 Platform 2 predominantly focuses on horizontal issues and the main topic within this framework is skills for enterprise and entrepreneurship. WG2 members took part in the 17th Platform 2 meeting, which was focused on the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit.

During 2017 WG2 members made their input in different type events, such as: 12th and 13th Transport Panel, Expert Panel on Trade and Trade-Related Regulatory Cooperation, Panel on Agriculture and Rural Development, 5th meeting of the Statistics Panel on innovation, R&D and innovation statistics, Harmonization of Digital Markets Panel, Panel R&I Annual event, 2nd EaP Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy, workshop of Network EU4Digital: ICT innovation, Expert meeting on Preventing Facilitation of Irregular Migration, 7th CORLEAP annual meeting.

WG2 ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES IN 2017

Issues raised at EaP Platform and panel meetings and WG meetings/other events by WG members

WG2 members conducted meetings with stakeholders from European Commission, European External Action Service, EU4Business Secretariat, Committee of Regions.

Positions of WG2 were included in Civil Society Declaration, which cover three main areas: Regional Economic Integration, Small and Medium Enterprises, Harmonization of Digital Markets.



New challenges and potential responses associated with the further development Eastern Partnership till 2020 were presented by WG2 coordinator on the 7th CORLEAP annual meeting. The Committee of Regions continues to count on CSF support when it comes to further strengthening cooperation within the context of a more streamlined EaP architecture.

WG2 members worked out recommendations and took part in Analysis of the EU Paper on 20 Eastern

Partnership Deliverables for 2020. Priority I of this document is devoted to Economic development and market opportunities.

During WG2 annual meeting in Chisinau members of Steering Committee conducted meetings with Head of the European Union Delegation to Moldova Pirkka Tapiola, Moldovan Stakeholders and representatives of Moldovan business associations.

As economy and economic activities are of few areas where the EaP governments are more open and motivated to engage with the CSOs, so this opportunity should be further exploited by the EaP CSF and used to strengthen the role and influence of its member organizations. It

makes sense to organize in the future regional events with the focus on economic cooperation to share best practices and to prepare action plans.

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE WG (SUB-GROUPS):



In 2017 two projects covered SME priority of WG2 within the EaP CSF re-granting scheme:

- Benefitting from EU open market: SMEs practical guide to DCFTA learning from experience of Latvia.
- Enhancing the role of civil society and SME from Eastern Partnership countries in the implementation of European standards.

Some experience and practices related to National WGs.

In Armenia at meeting of the Armenian National Platform Steering Committee with the Armenian government representatives at the level of first Vice-Prime Minister and Deputy Minister of Economy, the priorities of EU-AM partnership were discussed. Namely, the following issues were raised in the area of economic cooperation and market development: SMEs, green economy, digital economy, agriculture and development of rural areas.

Situation in Azerbaijan has deteriorated and the operations of CSOs are very limited. There is a roadmap for the reforming of the financial sector, SMEs and other aspects of the economy. The roadmap includes main economic parameters that are also priorities of the WG2; the National Platform developed several recommendations and the government took on board some of them.

Belarusian NP WG2 has focused on expanding the membership. Priority of the BNP WG2 is to contribute to development of business environment and regulatory processes. There are currently two subgroups at BNP – on SMEs and e-government.

In Georgia 60 organisations are participating in the work of WG2 in Georgian National platform, carrying out research and participating in the events as well as in the meetings with the stakeholders. Meeting took place with the President and spokesperson of the Parliament where the proposed amendments of the Constitution were discussed. Furthermore, WG2 proposed to change legislation on cooperatives. In addition, a meeting of regional organisations took place in Kutaisi as well as an event on SMEs development.

There are many areas of WG2 interest in Moldova. Monitoring and joint work with the government – especially the ministry of economy, agriculture, and finance is envisaged. Another priority is the settlement of Transnistria issue, including the economics means. Third one is agriculture; a lot has been done in this area together with the ministry of agriculture: WG2 learned certain skills, proposed amendments to the legislative package and did monitoring.

In Ukraine WG2 works in three areas based on relevant topics and in line with the main trends of EaP policy. One of the areas is the regulatory environment and development of SMEs. Cross-border cooperation is another priority, as well as the harmonization of digital markets. WG2 has also prepared economic part of Expert review “Ukraine in the Coordinates of the Eastern Partnership 2020: between Ambitiousness and Achievability”.

Amount of members from EU side increased with broader geographical covering in 2017. Now EU member countries are represented on General Assembly by delegates from Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Belgium.

A work done up to now by the EC, EaP CSF Secretariat, CSF Steering Committee, National Platforms and CSF and NP WGs gave positive results and ensured a coherent action of EaP countries’ civil society. At the same time the past years revealed limitations which should be corrected in order to make CSF and NPs sustainable and ensure their influence grow. In this regard some CSF and NP regulations should be revised and some others developed. This relates to: the WG formation rules; CSOs’ participation; division of responsibilities among NP Chairs, WG coordinators and CSF country representatives; determination of thematic priorities; and financial support to NPs. Trends in EaP countries development should be taken into consideration while implementing the changes.

To improve WGs, National Platforms and CSF operations and enhance cooperation with stakeholders, suggestions on internal reform were created and discussed during WG annual meeting and Steering Committee meeting.