

Steering Committee proposal for voting on

INTERNAL REFORMS OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

Why the reform is proposed?

The discussions of the Steering Committee, the debates at the annual Working Group meetings and within the National Platforms, the surveys of the EaP CSF members, as well as the assessment of the implementation of the 2015-2017 strategy of the EaP CSF revealed that internal processes of the Forum often become a limitation rather than facilitate achievement of the ambitious goals that the Forum has set for itself.

The expectations of the Forum as a 9-year-old entity are growing. The EaP CSF is expected to be a trusted partner, which has a broad range of expertise that covers four EaP Platforms and its Panels, and operates in a democratic and transparent manner on all levels.

Therefore, the Steering Committee proposes to vote for the following detailed version of the holistic reform – the basis of which has already been presented to participants of the Annual Assembly (AA) in Tallinn in 2017. The reform proposal, elaborated on further, is offered for voting to the current EaP CSF delegates (those who attended the AA in 2017 in Tallinn).

The reform will allow to build, maintain and use the expertise of the Forum members for the prolonged period of two years, which will result in a more effective participation in all formats of the EaP. The proposed 2-year cycle will also help with strategic planning and more rigorous implementation, allowing to take more consistent steps towards its goals by the second year of the cycle, without the disruptive change of members every year. Instead of one AA, the delegates will attend two AAs, which will become more content-focused – due to time freed by the shift of election matters to both Working Group (WG) and National Platform (NP) meetings. The reformed delegate selection mechanism will empower the NPs, allowing them to use their first-hand knowledge of the applicants and ensure the inclusion of the members with expertise in all fields and themes of work. The adoption of the EaP CSF Code of Conduct and establishment of the Arbitration Committee will result in new mechanisms for ensuring the value-based operation of the EaP CSF at all levels.

Where to find more information about the reform?

Given the utmost importance of the internal reform, there will be many occasions to familiarise yourself with the proposal and ask any questions about it:

- You can consult the proposal at the dedicated page on our website at: eap-csf.eu/reform
 - On the page, you will be able to watch a video presentation of the reform
 - You can download the text of the reform or the ppt presentation
 - You can consult a quick FAQ about the most popular/important questions

- If you have any further questions about the reform, please send them to EaP CSF Secretariat at support@eap-csf.eu by **5 October**.

Online voting

Voting on the proposal will open on 15 October 2018 – closing on 30 October 2018 (final deadline). The reform proposal is voted on as a package with eight areas of reform.

To vote on the document, on 15 October you will receive an email with a link to cast your vote. Voting is personal and anonymous, which means the system will recognise if you have voted, although the way you voted will remain secret. Only one representative per organisation who is currently a participant will be able to cast a vote. Lastly, please note that you will be able to vote only once.

You are strongly encouraged to vote, as in case of absence of the quorum (2/3 of the delegates), the voting process will be considered invalid. Your vote is essential.

In case of a positive outcome, the reform will come into power as of 1 November 2018. The new cycle (starting with AA 2018 in Tbilisi) will therefore be the first (and transitional) cycle of the reformed Forum.

Reform proposal

1. Moving to a 2-year cycle

Characteristics
<p>Delegates (AA) and all bodies of the EaP CSF (SC) will be elected for the period of two years.</p> <p>This will allow for better planning and implementation: the same people work together for two years ensuring the continuity and the results. Biannual change of delegates (now on a yearly basis) will ensure the accumulation of the knowledge and better understanding of the complicated architecture of the EaP, which the Forum is part of. This will increase the efficiency of the work of both: the Steering Committee and the Secretariat, allowing to focus more on the content work rather than on internal processes. A 2-year cycle will give the delegates and all bodies of the Forum the possibility to work more strategically and consistently, implementing long-term projects and strengthening long-term partnerships with local authorities, governments and EU institutions. A new cycle will help to strengthen the sense of ownership among the members of the Forum and build synergies.</p> <p>Obligatory quotas for delegates selection will ensure a good balance of new and returning delegates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not less than 30% of totally new delegates; not more than 40% of the delegates of the previous cycle; not more than 30% of those who are coming back after a gap of one cycle or more. The counting of mandates and delegate status becomes effective starting the adoption of the reform (October 2018). Maximum two mandates for any SC member. Unlimited number of mandates for delegates for AA.

Two-year timeline

	2018: year 1 of cycle 2018-19	2019: Year 2 of cycle 2018-19	
Transition cycle 2018-2019	October 2018: internal reform adopted December 2018: Annual Assembly No elections of Steering Committee— current SC members continue until election at the WG/NP meetings before June 2019. Arbitration Committee is elected at AA2018	 April-June: WG meetings + NP meetings (elections of Steering Committee; the old SC steps down) 1st meeting of the new SC in July 2019 Autumn: Annual Assembly (no elections) November: launch of Delegate selection procedure for 2020-21 cycle (p. 4)	
2020: Year 1 of cycle 2020-21 EaP Summit year			2022: Year 1 of cycle 2022-23 EaP Summit year
March: New delegates selected via the new procedure for 2020-21 cycle April-June: WG meetings; WG Coordinators/EU Facilitators + NP Facilitators elected at WG and NP meetings July: 1st meeting of the new SC; the old SC steps down Autumn: Annual Assembly (elections of Arbitration Committee), possibly combined with the EU Presidency event	April-June: WG meetings	April-June: WG meetings; WG Coordinators/EU Facilitators + NP Facilitators elections at WG and NP meetings July: 1st meeting of the new SC; the old SC steps down Autumn: Annual Assembly (elections of ArCom), possibly combined with the EU presidency event	April-June: WG meetings November: launch of Delegate selection for 2024-25 cycle
2021: Year 2 of cycle 2020-21			2023: Year 2 of cycle 2022-23

2. Annual Assemblies without elections focusing on content

Characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Annual Assemblies are taking place every year▪ The AA is a decision-making body of the EaP CSF that the SC and Secretariat report to▪ Being the main decision-making body, the AA has the right to out-vote the SC or its individual members after one year in case of dissatisfaction, thus keeping strong accountability▪ Measures will be taken to increase the accountability and linkage of the SC to the members via the strengthened reporting system, and the survey among the member conducted on an annual basis – Delegates elected for two years will participate in two Assemblies▪ If feasible, during the years coinciding with the EaP Summit, the Assembly will be combined with the EU presidency civil society event▪ Elections are shifted from the level of the Assembly to the WG meetings and NP level (see in Elections section), helping the event focus on content rather than procedures▪ The AA serves as a space for thematic policy dialogue with stakeholders, using the results of Re-granting projects and WG and NP work, adoption of Resolution(s), Position(s) and internal matters such as annual reporting and other decisions. The AA assesses the general situation and reforms in the EaP and development of strategies on how to address the dynamic situation in the region, and if the current approaches of the stakeholders and the civil society should be adapted. The Annual Assembly provides the space for developing the biannual plans and developing input in the EaP events, such as EaP Platforms and panels.

3. Membership

Any bona fide CSO that is non-partisan and free of government and business influence can **apply and become a member of the EaP CSF**.

The following categories are considered **as members of the EaP CSF**:

- **Members of the National Platforms (permanent status)**. These will be CSOs, members of their respective NPs. They will have the right to vote at the NP statutory events. If selected as Delegates, they will attend the Forum-sponsored statutory events (AA and WG meetings). If they are not Delegates, they may attend - Forums events as non-voting participants at their own expense. They may also participate in re-granting scheme of the EaP CSF and be included into the database of experts for EaP Platfroms and pannels. Membership will no longer be linked strictly to funding and possibility to attend the AA and will ensure more inclusiveness, the accumulation of expertise and experience, and continuity within the Forum. Those not in a delegate status, we will have numerous opportunities to be engated in the Forum. The focus will be taken away from the AA and more other formats of work will be created between the AAs.
- **Members at the EU level (permanent status)**: If it fulfills the membership criteria, any EU organisation willing to become a member of the EaP CSF can become a member by applying to the EaP CSF Secretariat (providing 2 letters of support from 2 current members or delegates from 2 different countries). To become Delegates, the EU CSOs (members of the EaP CSF or not) will need to submit the application form (the same as EaP applicants). The activities of the EU

members are facilitated by two EU Facilitators – more focus is placed on helping with advocacy in the EU MSs in cooperation with the EaP-based members.

- **Delegates (2-year status).** Delegates will be selected for two years from existing Members (both EaP and EU) (see above) and non-members. Delegates have the right to vote and be elected to the Forum's decision-making bodies, and will be funded for participation in two WG meetings and two AAs. They will vote on any decisions that will be taken during the AA. They can participate in regranting and be part of the database of experts for the EaP platforms and panels.

Other categories:

- **Experts:** can be invited to contribute to events such as WG meetings, intergovernmental panels and activities between meetings on an as-needed basis. Experts may be Members or external experts who subscribed to the EaP CSF experts database if the required expertise is not available among Forum Members.
- **Friends of the Forum:** These will be distinguished individuals who are neither Delegates nor Members, and who will help the Forum to raise its profile. The Steering Committee will be responsible for inviting Friends of the Forum to Forum events and building relations.
- **Observers:** The EaP CSF can invite organisations (some EU and EaP CSOs, donor organisations, important individuals, Friends of the Forum) both from inside EU/EaP and third countries as observers to the Annual Assembly. They may also be invited to WG meetings, provided they can fund their participation. The status of Observers is necessary to maintain relations with relevant external stakeholders.

4. Delegate selection

National Platforms will make the selection of the EaP Delegates (**20 CSOs per each EaP country**) in close consultation with WG Coordinators and EU Delegations. The new system with the enhanced role for the NPs will come into force starting the selection for the 2020-2021 cycle at the end of 2019. An enhanced role for the NPs will not only resolve the question of the Steering Committee making the final decisions about the delegates who elect the SC members, but will also empower the NPs, increase their sense of responsibility, and make use of their familiarity with the CSOs in their respective countries. Those NPs that have not yet fulfilled the requirements of the Code of Conduct and have not updated NP statutes (assessed by the external expert) will continue to use the currently existing selection process. In the long-term, the expectation is that all NPs will operate the same Delegate Selection system.

All six NPs will follow standardised selection procedures, following training in these procedures. These procedures will be set out in detail in the Rules and Regulations document (Statute). The NP Facilitator will oversee the selection process. He/she will not vote but will ensure the integrity and transparency of the process.

Trilateral consultations with the NP, EaP CSF WG Coordinators and EU Delegation in the respective countries should take place before selection to exchange information on the applicants and their track record.

In each country list, the thematic expertise and balance of WGs, in accordance with the EaP architecture should be ensured and the following quotas¹ should be respected:

- At least six places out of the 20 (30%) are reserved for newcomer applicants (organisations who have never held a status of Delegate); half of those should be CSOs who are not NP members at the time of application;
- 40% delegates (eight organizations) of the previous 2-year cycle;
- not more than 30% (six organizations) of those who are coming back after a gap of two years or more.

Each EaP CSF WG Coordinator will recommend a number of organizations per country (**WG1 4; WG2 2; WG3 2; WG4 3; WG5 1**). EU Delegations in each country will also recommend 12 CSOs (following the same WG split). If the WG Coordinators and EU Delegations both recommend the same CSO, then it will automatically be selected as a Delegate. If a CSO is recommended by only the EU Delegation or the EaP CSF WG coordinator, then the NP makes the final decision according to its Statute or equivalent document.

Selection of EU Delegates (40 CSOs)

To become a Delegate, the EU CSOs (members of the EaP CSF or external organizations) will need to submit the application form. The final decision is made by the EU Facilitators, on the basis of two voting lists (one voted online by the EU members of the EaP CSF plus one prepared by WG Coordinators who vote on a list of CSOs from their respective WGs). The EU Facilitators will oversee the selection process and do not vote themselves. Instead, their job will be to ensure that:

- Consultations with EaP CSF WG Coordinators take place
- Quotas of new/returning CSOs are respected
- There is thematic expertise and balance of WGs in accordance with the EaP architecture
- The track-record section of application forms is fully used for reference
- The process is fully transparent

The final list of the Delegates is approved by the European Commission.

There is no limitation on the number of times that an organisation can be selected as a Delegate, the quotas will ensure a good balance of new and returning members.

5. Steering Committee composition and election

Composition of the SC

13 people = 6 NP Facilitators + 5 WG Coordinators (1 per WG) + 2 EU Facilitators (appointed from WG EU Coordinators):

- NP Facilitators represent NP Delegates. They are elected at the NP level from the Delegates during meetings at the national level.
- WG Coordinators represent the WGs. They are elected at WG meetings. WG Coordinators decide among themselves who of the two goes to the SC (If no consensus, the one with higher votes goes to the SC).

¹ the counting of mandates and statuses of members and delegates becomes effective starting the adoption of the reform

- EU Facilitators represent EU Delegates. They are elected at WG meetings.
- Two elected WG EU Coordinators are automatically becoming EU Facilitators and thus, SC members. The EU Facilitators are automatically appointed from the WG EU Coordinators from WG1 and 2 in Cycle 1; WG3 and 4 in Cycle 2; WG5 and 1 Cycle 3, etc.

Mandates:

No more than 2 cycles (consecutively or not), in total not more than 4 years in SC – applicable to organisations and people

Transition period:

No SC elections will happen at 10th Annual Assembly – current SC members continue their mandates until elections are organised at the WG/NP meetings in April-June 2019. The step will allow to firstly ensure the consistent implementation of the internal reform, which this Steering Committee has been actively developing, and secondly the internal reform shifts the elections from Annual Assembly to WG meetings, which will happen during March-June 2019, thus making the elections at the Annual Assembly not possible. To avoid the situation of a gap between the current SC and new one that will only be elected before summer 2019, this measure is proposed. The Arbitration Committee will be elected at 10th Annual Assembly.

6. EaP CSF Code of Conduct and basic standards for National Platforms

A set of **minimum standards** to ensure the fundamental principles of integrity, transparency, and accountability will be introduced in the form of a unified EaP CSF **Code of Conduct**. This Code of Conduct should be agreed on and applied at all levels: National Platforms, members, delegates, Steering Committee, Secretariat, and Arbitration Committee.

The Code of Conduct will include:

- A set of fundamental principles which broadly define the NPs' core values and types of behaviours which are acceptable and encouraged
- A set of operational standards that guide the organisation's governance, management and activities. The operational standards will include sub-sections on the following:
 - Integrity
 - Mission
 - Good governance
 - Gender equality
 - Inclusiveness and participation
 - Transparency
 - Human resources
 - Public trust
 - Financial and legal procedures
 - Partnership, collaboration and networking
 - Accountability

Minimum standards for National Platforms

Each NP should have a comprehensive and up-to-date statute. The NP boards will review their guiding documents on a regular basis (e.g. every three-four years) and amend them accordingly, with the approval of the NP assembly. It is essential that the NP add adequate detail on procedural issues to their Statutes. The NPs should abide by the regulations of the EaP CSF including the Code of Conduct.

Appointment of a Code of Conduct Advisor for each NP

The Adviser will be appointed by the NPs on a 2-year basis. His/her role will be to:

- Ensure that NP members are aware of the code, have access to it and understand it.
- Monitor implementation of the code through observation of meetings and other activities, reviews of documentation, interviews with NP board members, and other NP stakeholders on an anonymous basis.
- Be available for complaints on a confidential basis.
- Be a contact point for complaints at NP level and respond to complaints. If these cannot be resolved at the NP, the Advisor and/or complainant/s can address the CSF Arbitration Committee.
- Organise an annual internal self-assessment (see below).
- Cooperate with the external assessor in facilitating access to a range of NP stakeholders, NP documentation and opportunities for observing procedures.

The Advisors will not have the responsibility for enforcing compliance or applying sanctions. The NP board will bear the responsibility for the compliance with the Code of Conduct. The Steering Committee of the EaP CSF decides on possible sanctions in case of incompliance. The Arbitration Committee will be involved in case of disagreements.

Implementation, assessment and compliance

In addition to the appointment of a Code of Conduct Advisor in each NP, each NP will undergo through the **internal self-assessment** and **third-party assessment**.

- **Self-assessment:** The NP Code of Conduct Advisor takes responsibility for conducting an annual review of compliance with the code. This will be done using a checklist based on the Code of Conduct filled in by the NP members. The NP Board will produce a report summarizing the findings and how the shortcomings if any will be addressed. This report will be sent to the CSF Steering Committee and published at the EaP CSF website. While the self-assessment process will lack an independent perspective, it will function as a self-reflection exercise.
- **Third-party assessment:** In the second half of 2019, an external consultant will carry out an assessment of all six NPs to assess if the Code of Conduct is followed. Thereafter, the assessment will be repeated on a 3-year basis. The consultant will write reports summarising his/her findings and recommendations for each of the six NPs, and submit these to the NPs, Steering Committee and Secretariat. He/she should be familiar with the civil society environment in each country, and aware of the risks imposed by GONGOs. The external consultant can also provide NPs with appropriate mechanisms for improvement.

7. MEMBERSHIP AND REGISTRATION FEE

NPs may choose to apply any type of a membership fee at the country level in order to diversify and localise funding and increase the member organisations' commitment. Membership fees will also send an important message to the EC as well as other potential funding bodies.

At the level of the EaP CSF, the registration fee of 10 EUR for the attendance of every Annual Assembly for funded delegates will be introduced, starting December 2018.

8. ESTABLISHMENT OF ARBITRATION BODY

The arbitration body is a necessary mechanism to ensure balanced divisions of power, accountability and resolutions of disputes. The Arbitration Committee will be elected during the first year of every cycle at the Annual Assembly of the Forum and will consist of five members (two EU and three EaP representatives), who will elect its Chair for the period of its mandate of two years.

Main functions of the Arbitration Committee:

- Contact point for addressing complaints and disagreements
- Responding to complaints related to EaP CSF norms and procedures (selection processes, regranting scheme etc.)
- Making/confirming decisions on conflict situations
- Monitoring and neutralising risks and cases of conflict of interest
- Monitoring the decisions of CSF bodies (SC, Secretariat, Regranging committee, NPs and WGs) in accordance to the proposed EaP CSF Rules and Regulations Document

Individuals can be re-elected to the Committee after a two-year break. They should not be involved in any other CSF bodies (SC, Secretariat, NP boards, WG councils etc.).