

Minutes of the EaP CSF Steering Committee (SC) Meeting
1-2 February 2017, Brussels

In attendance: Steering Committee member Siarhei Antusevich, Ina Coseru, Kakhaber Gogolashvili, Marija Golubeva, Ziya Guliyev, Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Hennadyi Maksak, Boris Navasardian, Dovile Sukyte, Yurii Vdovenko

Absent, excused: Ion Manole, Uladzislau Vialichka

Secretariat: Director Natalia Yerashevich, Advocacy Manager Vera Rihackova, Communications Manager Darya Mustafayeva, Administrative Manager Lidia Gromadzka, Finance Manager Sophie Huguenet.

1. **Opening of the meeting and approval of agenda.** The agenda was adopted with small modifications concerning urgent issues (below).
2. **Urgent issue: Letter on Azerbaijani President visit and subsequent event in the European Parliament.** The [letter](#) and the [event](#) were approved by the SC (2 abstentions; 1 not voting; 8 for).
3. **Urgent issue: statement on situation in the Donbas region in Ukraine.** The [statement](#), in which the Steering Committee demands that the Russian Federation ceases hostilities immediately and strictly complies with the ceasefire, was adopted unanimously.
4. **Meeting with Boris Iarochevitch, Head of the Division, Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, EEAS and Sinziana Poiana, Civil Society Support, Neighbourhood East, DG NEAR.** Mr. Iarochevitch presented the EaP events that will take place in 2017, including the EaP Summit in Brussels scheduled for 24 November and EaP Ministerial on Digital Economy to be held on 5 October in Tallinn. He mentioned that visa liberalisation for Georgia most likely will happen in early April; Ukraine will follow. He stressed the prominent role of civil society in key EaP deliverables for 2020 developed by the European Commission and the European External Action Service and how important it is to get the commitment of all the sides for the objectives to be achieved by the EaP Summit and 2020. He supported the intention of EaP CSF to be more strategic and linking better its Working Groups to the activities of the EaP. He suggested that the comments of the EaP CSF on the EaP key deliverables relating to the civil society would be useful. Ms. Poiana stressed the big expectations from the Forum to react in fast-paced environment, to expand outreach, and to achieve tangible results. She drew attention to the expertise of the EaP CSF in governance that can be used across the thematic priorities of the EaP. She mentioned a

number of consultations in which the civil society will be invited to take part, including the ones on partnership priorities and single support framework.

5. **Selection of the NPs WG Coordinators.** The possibility of electing NP WGs coordinators in July out of the group who is going to the Annual Assembly was discussed.
6. **Election of Co-Chairs** Dovile Sukyte (8 votes) and Hennadyi Maksak (6 votes) were elected Co-chairs of the SC. For any legal proceedings under the Belgian law, Dovile Sukyte retains denomination of “President”. Yurii Vdovenko was elected Treasurer of the Steering Committee with 10 votes for and 1 abstention. Alexandra Kalatozishvili was elected Secretary of the Steering Committee with 10 votes for and 1 abstention.
7. **Discussion of the European Integration Index for EaP** EaP Index Coordinator briefed the Steering Committee on:
 - The current cycle and timeline;
 - Funding situation and project sustainability, donor environment and the need for stable funding, possibly from the EC grant. SC members suggested that Index methodology should be assessed by an external expert if the project is included into the core grant with the EC.
 - Advocacy tasks for the NPs and need to raise funds to organise national events, also to co-fund travel expenses to Brussels launch event (NPs).
 - Methodology update, scope of the change. NPs coordinators will be national peer reviewers in the coming weeks.
 - How to mitigate risks of delay of the process.
8. **Discussion on strategic priorities of the EaP CSF for 2017 and beyond and adoption of the annual plan for 2017.** SC members refined the document “Draft of strategic frame of EAP CSF for 2017” (in Annex). It was decided to produce a policy paper on the EaP deliverables by 2020 - the ToR for the paper will be developed by mid-February by the task force (Marija, Yurii, Kakha plus Secretariat). The possibility to produce a paper in revision of the multilateral dimension of the EaP was discussed. New strategy of the EaP CSF: it was decided to add 1,5 days to the next SC meeting for the strategic session, with the involvement of 3-4 experts. A form for feeding in the input of the EaP CSF members to the strategy should be developed by the strategy task force.
9. **Meeting with MEP Heidi Hautala.** The SC members had an exchange of views with **MEP Heidi Hautala** over dinner.
10. **Communication tools.** The Steering Committee discussed methods to diversify its communication channels and make them more secure. It was decided to seek and try out new tools such as the

applications Slack and Basecamp. The need to conduct the security audit by the external expert was voiced by the Secretariat.

11. **SC Statements and AA resolutions/statements.** It was decided that a list of priority statements (for example in cases like upcoming elections) will be developed to facilitate the SC communication work. The SC members discussed ways of working with NPs statements of divisive nature. The SC will decide whether to publish the NPs statements on the EaP CSF website on an ad hoc basis. It was suggested to introduce a rule for statements which prohibits hate speech. It was suggested that the adoption of SC statements should be justified, a list of addresses and a follow-up should be envisaged. It was suggested that the next Annual Assembly could produce one resolution, prepared in advance with contributions from Working Groups and National Platforms on previously discussed topics. The WGs and NPs, groups of CSOs could produce statements instead that can be issued either during the annual WG meetings or during the AA. A Task Force (see Annex) was established to work on the issue of statements/resolutions, including those of divisive nature. The Task Force is supposed to develop the rules and list of possible priority topics by mid-February. It was decided to compile a table with the statements from 2016, dissemination efforts and their impact in order to refine the process for this year.

12. **EaP CSF Update on Budget and Finances**

An **introduction** on the situation of EaP CSF Secretariat budget and finance situation was provided. The distribution of the **yearly budget** of the Secretariat by the largest types of expenses (organisation of events, re-granting scheme, Secretariat's office costs) was further presented, as well as 2017 financial procedures, in particular audits deadlines (of EC grant, and of annual accounts), co-funding requirements, and approval of annual accounts.

Finally, the **situation on liquidity** was presented as the Secretariat risks lacking liquidity in late February-early March 2017 to implement the activities, during the time lapse when the audit report is submitted to the EC and the EC approves it. Based on previous experiences, the possibility of a "credit line" or loan to the bank was presented. ***The Steering Committee authorized the EaP CSF Secretariat to request a loan to the bank should the risk of lack of liquidity be too pressing.***

13. **Meeting with the Estonian Centre of Eastern Partnership (Tina Ilsen, Deputy Director).** Ms. Ilsen presented the vision of the Estonian presidency in organising a civil society conference in Tallinn. She explained the added value in organising such an event in the capital of Estonia, who will also hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union, taking into account that civil society development in this country is considered to be a success story. The conference will be held on 25-26 October and aims to gather 200 participants with 20 representatives from each EaP country.

She also announced that the European Commission approved the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' funding request for the event.

14. **Suggested focus of the event:** Role of Civil Society at all levels of Decision Making: How to build effective cooperation with government structures on national and local level .
15. **Dates and place of the Annual Assembly of the EaP CSF, key topics.** It was decided that the next Annual Assembly will be held in Tallinn together with civil society event of the Estonian Presidency providing that the key needs of the EaP CSF as an organisation and limitations on flexibility of the annual assembly are met. The event will either precede or follow the Presidency conference. The participation of Estonian NGOs in each Working Group will be sought. The AA task force will start developing the agenda of the AA and modalities of the event and suggestions to the Estonian side on our future cooperation, including the red lines.
16. **Priority areas to be covered by the new EC funding to the EaP CSF for 2018-2020** (in no priority order)
Capacity building – combined with WGs meetings - presentation skills, concise writing;
Local advocacy campaigns – example: campaigns in the Russian-speaking areas in Moldova;
Networking and fellowship programme – exchanges between different NPs;
Measures for cross-fertilisation of WGs;
Regional events;
Advocacy and study visits;
Exchanges of experiences of best country practises;
WG Councils happening in the margins of the WG meetings;
Activities aimed at policy shaping beyond 2020;
Presence of the CSF in EU MSs;
Flagship projects.
17. **Regional events of the EaP CSF.** It was decided that an advocacy event in Brussels on the margins of the EaP summit will replace one of two regional events planned for this year. Possible themes for the regional events: digital economy/society, energy security, economic empowerment, business and human rights (social and economic rights), enabling environment, judiciary reform, connectivity and food security. The discussion of the priority topics will continue online.
18. **Discussion of the EaP CSF participation in the EaP platforms and panels.** The SC has approved the new guidance for the EaP CSF participants in the EaP platforms and panels aiming to strengthen the targeted EaP CSF participation in the events, including the presentation of the EaP CSF projects and initiatives.

19. **EaP CSF representatives in bilateral platforms** The SC has decided that Dovile Sukyte will be representing the EaP CSF in the EU-Georgia CSP; Krzysztof Bobinski from Unia et Polska will be representing the EaP CSF in the EU-Moldova CSP; Marija Golubeva, PASOS Czech Republic will be representing the EaP CSF in EU-Ukraine CSP.

20. **Regranting 2017.** The composition of the regranting selection committee was finalized. It was decided that the selection committee will be composed of 2 experts (Kristina Vaiciunaite from EED, Simon Papuashvili from IPHR) and 1 SC member (Ziya Guliyev).

2 decisions were taken:

- The SC members approved raising the honorarium for the experts from 200 to 300 EUR (10 votes in favour, 1 abstention).
- The SC members approved a decision moving carry-over money left from regranting 2016 to the Advocacy budget line (all in favour).

21. **Exchange of views with Kateryna Shalayeva**, Team Leader of the *Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility Regional Actions: Creating Synergies and Integration* project. Dr. Kateryna Shalayeva presented the 4-year project that will focus on the following key areas: mapping studies, e-learning, digital participation, cooperation with local authorities, and fellowships. The project includes partners from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, and no partners from Azerbaijan and Moldova so far.

22. **New cooperation opportunities** It was suggested to get involved in the OSCE Civil Society Network, Civil Society Facility South, UN civil society networks.

23. Working Group Meetings 2017 - preliminary schedule

WG4 – TBD

WG3 – 24-25 April, Brussels

WG1 – 15-16 May, Tbilisi (tbc) – capacity building session organized by Marija Golubeva

WG2 + WG5 – 12 June, Brussels

24. Next SC Meeting

It was decided to organise the next SC Meeting in April in Tallinn, Estonia. The meeting will be combined with 1,5 days strategy session.

Annex:

Agenda of the Meeting

- Practicalities of the operation of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat (googlegroup, producing statements, task forces, reporting at the end of the year, financial procedures etc); rules and distribution of responsibilities;
- Update on the financial reporting requirements of the Secretariat under the Belgian law and liquidity situation of the Secretariat as of the end of January 2017;
- Discussion of the European Integration Index for EaP;
- Making more out of the EaP CSF participation in the EaP platforms and panels;
- Going through the selection procedure of the attendees of the next annual assembly of the EaP CSF (supporting document: selection timeline);
- Election of Co-Chairs of the SC and Secretary and Treasurer of the Secretariat;
- EaP CSF goals and priorities for 2017 and how they translate into the EaP CSF activities in 2017 envisioned by the project *Support to the activities of the EaP CSF 2015-2017* among others (supporting document: Calendar, Work Programme);
- Priority areas to be covered by the new EC funding to the EaP CSF for 2018-2020.

Task forces

Task Force	Members
Strategy (subgroup: Advocacy)	Marija, Haykuhi, Hennadiy, Dovile Hennadiy, Ulad
Policy Brief	Maria, Yurii, Kakha, Ulad
Statements	Haykuhi, Ina, Boris, Ziya
Annual Assembly	Dovile, Boris, Maria
Constitution	Yurii, Boris, Siarhei, Alexandra