

Annual Activities Report 2016

WORKING GROUP 1

Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability Activity report for 2016



The Working Group 1 coordinators in 2016 were Krzysztof Bobinski of Unia & Polska, Poland (also the co-chair of the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum) and Ana Natsvlishvili from the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association.

Working Group 1 is the largest group in the Civil Society Forum,

encompassing the core values of the CSF – democracy and commitment to reform in partner states. WG1's importance is reflected in the fact that it consists of over 89 member organisations from the six partner countries and EU Member States, amounting to more than half of the delegates attending the Annual Assembly of this year. However, its members are widely dispersed across partner countries and EU member states. The WG's activity is limited to one annual meeting, the implementation of the regranting projects and participation in the EaP Platforms and panels. This year, the group worked on five projects under the EaP CSF regranting scheme.

WORKING GROUP COUNCILS

The WG1 Council for 2016 was made up of:

EU: Krzysztof Bobinski

EaP: Volodymyr Kuprii

Armenia: Boris Navasardyan

Azerbaijan: Fuad Hasanov

Belarus: Piotr Kuzniatsov

Georgia: Giorgi Kldiashvili
Moldova: Victoria Bucataru
Ukraine: Hennadiy Maksak

WORKING GROUP 1 SUB-GROUPS

WG1 also had subgroups whose coordinators who were chosen at the Assembly in Kiev in November 2015. Their task was to monitor the activities of the sub-groups throughout the year. The coordinators for 2016 were:

- Local Government and Public Administration Reform: Antonella Valmorbida (EU)
- Judicial Reform and Fight Against Corruption
- Visa Facilitation and Liberalisation: Grzegorz Gromadzki and Krzysztof Mrozek (EU)
- Human Rights: Ana Natsvishvili (Georgia)
- Election Observation: Nadiya Pashkova (Ukraine)
- Gender Equality: Yulia Mitskevich (Belarus)
- Media Freedom: Andrei Kulakov (Ukraine)
- Security: Hennadij Maksak (Ukraine)
- Confidence Building and Regional Cooperation

WORKING GROUP COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The WG Council is made up of one representative from each of the six National Platforms and their task is to liaise with the WG coordinators and most importantly to help define and approve the annual priorities for the regranting scheme. The WG1 Council identified priorities for the regranting exercise during their meeting in June in Brussels. The Council however failed to efficiently structure the activities of of the WG and productivity was impeded by a lack of communication between Council members and WG1 coordinators and subgroup coordinators.

It is recommended for the future that each WG1 Council member advises the WG Coordinator at the National Platform level on the choice of organisations for the Annual Assembly in order to better inform the rest of the WG members on the choice of delegates.

ANNUAL MEETING OF WG1

On 1-2 June the meeting of the Working Group 1 “Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability” brought together over 60 working group members from the Eastern Partnership and EU countries, as well as officials from EU institutions (the European External Action Service, European Commission and European Parliament).



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The focus of the first day of the conference was on the changes in approach brought by the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), strengthening transparency of the dialogue between EaP governments and the EU by increasing involvement of the civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as improving working conditions for CSOs. The second day of discussions covered issues pertaining to streamlining gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, EU role in security challenges in the EaP region, countering political corruption and Russian propaganda in the media, as well as public administration reform.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

The EaP CSF operates in a twelve month cycle during which the working group must organise and hold its annual meeting ([1-2 June 2016 in Brussels](#)) and set up the regranting scheme (with the crucial help of Vera Rihackova from Secretariat). This means defining the group's priorities, calling for proposals,



selecting the best ideas and engaging in project work. Additionally, the regranting scheme requires input from around a third of the group's members. The preparations for the Annual Assembly begin soon after the June meeting, meaning that time for other projects is limited in the second half of the year.

The WG1 members briefly met at the annual assembly 2015, where the two WG Coordinators were elected, and exchanged ideas in the subgroup format. During these meetings the subgroup coordinators were also elected and members of the subgroups became acquainted. However, there was insufficient time to establish firm links or decide on priorities for the year. Consequently, few ideas and initiatives emerged from this meeting, and the group did not meet again until June, when it is decided who is to represent the WG the following year.

SUBGROUP ACTIVITY AND REGRANTING PROJECTS

Despite only a small number of new initiatives from the subgroup coordinators and members in 2016, the subgroups submitted seventeen proposals for regranting projects of which six were selected relating to the theme of five of the nine subgroups. WG1 received funding of 129,000 euros for the following projects:

- [Joining efforts and skills to confront propaganda](#) (Media Freedom)
- [Security Alert on EU's Eastern Doorstep](#) (Security)
- [Consolidating the Efforts of the Civil Society Organisations in Fighting the Political Corruption](#) (Judicial Reform and Fight Against Corruption)
- [Developing a single strategy on Gender Equality issues of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum](#) (Gender Equality)
- [Update on Public Administration and Local Governments Reform in EaP](#) (Local Government and Public Administration Reform)
- [From Inclusion to Participation in Decision Making](#) (Local Government and Public Administration Reform)

The Security project was one of the most significant outputs of WG1 this year, presented in Warsaw at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) before the NATO summit in July. The security report was also distributed at a summit side events, the Riga Security Conference in October and the EaP CSF regional event in Chisinau in september.

The subgroup on Visa Facilitation and Liberalisation was transferred to the Georgian and Ukrainian national platforms and the Steering Committee, all of whom advocated for visa free travel for citizens of these countries to the EU. The subgroup on Election Observation was small and thus while no new activity was implemented, the subgroup demonstrated strong regional cooperation and confidence building.

The subgroup on Human Rights was absorbed by the EaP CSF's monitoring mission to Armenia in the wake of the demonstrations in Yerevan in the summer. For the large part, it was the Steering Committee that monitored the human rights situation throughout the partner countries and released [statements](#) when appropriate. On one occasion, a signal from WG1 Council member Gennadij Maksak calling for urgent action against the involuntary confinement of Ilmi Umerov, Deputy Head of the Crimean Mejlis, to a psychiatric hospital for opposing the annexation of Crimea incited immediate action from the Steering Committee. Members of the subgroup on Human Rights are involved in networks outside the EaP CSF, meaning that their focus is occasionally detracted from the work of the subgroups.



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Some subgroups have coordinated more successfully than others in the past year. The subgroup on Media Freedom has a strong sense of identity and purpose going back over a number of years and argues a less frequent rotation of organisations within the EaP CSF. The subgroup on Local Government and Public Administration Reform is strongly linked to member organisation The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) and gains considerable support from them. ALDA organised a panel discussion in cooperation with MEP Bogdan Zdrojewski, the EaP CSF Belarusian National Platform, and member organisations Centre for European Transformation and Lev Sapieha Foundation, entitled “[Dialogue between Citizens and Institutions in Belarus – the Way Forward?](#)” The event took place at the European Parliament (EP) on 26 April 2016.

THE MONITORING MISSION OF THE EAP CSF IN ARMENIA

[The Monitoring Mission of the EaP CSF](#) on the civil society, media and human rights situation in Armenia took place during the period of 9-15 August 2016. The Mission's team was composed of leading experts in the field of human rights from Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Its work was supported by the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform. The Mission's main objectives were to assess the situation with non-governmental organizations and media in the aftermath of the political crisis during the period of 17-31 July 2016, and acquire the complete and accurate information about the situation in various fields of human rights. During the visit to Armenia, the Mission interviewed the representatives of civil society, leading human rights organizations, experts and lawyers. Separate meetings were held with the Ombudsman of the Republic of Armenia and representatives of major intergovernmental organizations.

TWO STRUCTURES – NATIONAL AND MULTINATIONAL

The EaP CSF is based on two different structures – the national platforms which operate at the partner country level and the five working groups which are designed to link organisations across the EaP CSF regardless of national affiliation. Both structures are represented in the Steering Committee. The national platforms have an advantage over the working groups in that they are concentrated geographically and can meet more easily and cheaply to coordinate activities, make decisions and seek to influence the policies of the EaP CSF as a whole. The working group members are more dispersed and can only communicate remotely. This is especially true of WG1 due to its size. Appeals for comments and advice occasionally elicit halfhearted responses. For example, when the WG1 coordinator asked for contribution to the annual June this year, only 10 responses were received.

The relative weakness of the working group structure in shaping EaP CSF decisions can be seen in the work of the Steering Committee in 2016 where the national coordinators have their national priorities clearly defined and can defend these when the need arises. This was most



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evident in issues relating to the Azerbaijan national platform where in its exchange of views with the Armenian national platform, its own priorities were in the forefront. The Steering Committee rules give national platform coordinators the right of veto over decisions which affect their national interests. The working group coordinators have no such mechanism. Consequently, it is the national platforms that lead the way in decision making processes while the the working groups have less of a voice.

It will be interesting to see if future monitoring missions, such as took place in Armenia, will espouse the concerns of working groups as well as national platforms. A balance between these two segments should be retained by the EaP CSF and its participants should be aware of the challenge this poses to the functioning of the organisation.

WORKING GROUP 1 REPRESENTED AT EaP GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WG1 was represented at several EaP Platform meetings which bring together government representatives from the EaP and EU member states and are chaired by the EEAS. These included the Platform 1 meeting in Brussels on 22 April 2016 attended by Krzysztof Bobinski. Panel meetings on Public Administration Reform took place on 2 June 2016 in Baku and again 6-7 October 2016 in Warsaw, the latter of which was attended by Samir Aliyev and Levan Alipishvili. A meeting of the Integrated Border Management Panel took place in Chisinau on 15 June 2016.

WORKING GROUP 1 REPRESENTED AT EaP REGIONAL EVENTS

WG1's interests were represented at two regional conferences organised by the national platforms of EaP countries. This included the conference ["On the frontline: human rights situation in the EaP countries"](#). The two-day event included panel discussions that focused on international mechanisms addressing human rights challenges in the EaP countries, best practices for human rights defenders, as well as human rights monitoring and protection in conflict zones.

In addition, on 28-29 July the conference ["Security Challenges of the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood"](#) organized by the EaP CSF's Georgian National Platform and Liberal Academy Tbilisi brought together in Tbilisi, Georgia over 60 representatives of civil society from 6 EaP countries, Georgian government and EU institutions, as well as prominent security experts. The event provided a platform to identify solutions to the key security threats (soft and hard power) for the EaP countries and it also sought to develop recommendations for the EU and NATO to stabilize the region, as well as to identify the measures that can be taken by the civil society.

Krzysztof Bobinski



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