

Minutes of the EaP CSF Steering Committee (SC) Meeting

24-25 April 2017, Tallinn and Helsinki

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

Secretariat: Director Natalia Yerashevich, Advocacy Manager Vera Rihackova, Communications Manager Darya Mustafayeva

1. Opening of the meeting and approval of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

2. Annual Assembly discussion

The status of the attendees to be invited by the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership (ECEAP) was discussed. It was decided to grant them a status of a participant without voting rights. The discussion on the Networking Fair focused on the number of projects/outputs to be presented - it was decided to limit them to 5 per WGs and provide 2 desks per WG at the premises. The speakers to be invited for the main plenary discussion were discussed, as well the topics for the parallel sessions. It was decided that the ECEAP will send their suggestions on the title of the event within a week; the suggestions on the topics for the sessions and speakers to be invited are to be received within two weeks (mid-May).

Documents to be adopted at the AA:

The process for developing the alternative resolution prepared by the Secretariat was discussed. The members were in agreement on that, however no decision has been taken on the other documents to be adopted at the event. Several options were discussed including producing only alternative declaration to the EaP Summit, declaration and one collective resolution, and alternative declaration and a number of EaP CSF resolution as traditionally done at the AA. Statements task force will develop options in two weeks.

3. EaP CSF actions around the EaP Summit (November 24)

The proposed options for advocacy event (1. advocacy visit of several EaP CSF representatives to Brussels in October in conjunction with the EaP CSF regranting project Think Tank Forum, 2. event for the Brussels stakeholders on the same day as the EaP Summit, 3. follow-up event during the week of 4-7 December - "Taking stock of the EaP summit" exercise) were discussed with the following results:

--Event on the same day as the EaP summit - 4 votes in favour, rejected

--Follow-up "Taking stock" event at the beginning of December 2017 - 5 votes in favour, suggestion to postpone the event to 2018 and combine efforts with other Brussels-based CSOs, think tanks or the European Parliament

--Advocacy visit in October - will most likely take place anyway, update needed from the grantees of the Think Tank Forum project (WG1 meeting)

Decision: to bring several (2-3) SC members to Brussels right after the event in Tallinn at the beginning of November (ideally during the week of 6-10 November) to convey the pre-summit advocacy message generated by the civil society in Tallinn to the Brussels stakeholders.

4. EaP CSF Update on Budget and Finances

The SC members were briefed on the financial situation by the Director of the Secretariat. The loan that has been taken by the Secretariat is close to being depleted. However the audit report submitted to the EC has not been approved yet, and no EC money for the operations in 2017 have been provided creating a lack of liquidity situation. The SC has been alerted about the need to borrow again later in 2017 due to the final tranche of the current grant only being provided after the audit of 2017 activities. The SC was updated on the amount of the required co-funding that still needs to be found for 2017 and efforts undertaken to secure it (several submitted applications are pending response from the donors' side. The SC was requested not to come up with ambitious plans for events or other activities before the obligatory co-funding is secured.

5. Regranting

SC decisions and recommendations

Due to gross project mismanagement, the SC adopted the following **decisions**:

- **1.** The Centre for Development and Management (project leader), the project coordinator (Ihar Lednik) and Center for Economic Development and Public Affairs (represented by Sergiu Tutunaru) that misinformed the Secretariat about their legal obligations within the grant agreement, shall not be selected as EaP CSF members (participants or observers) for the EaP CSF **Annual Assembly in Tallinn** in October 2017 due to serious mismanagement of the project: all in favour
- **2.** The Centre for Development and Management (project leader) and the project coordinator (Ihar Lednik), be it in capacity of legal or natural person, shall be prevented from **benefiting from EaP CSf regranting scheme** in any capacity for the next three years; 12 votes in favour, 1 abstained
- **3.** The Centre for Development and Management (project leader), the project coordinator (Ihar Lednik) shall not attend the **WG2 meeting in Chisinau** as sponsored participants due to liability for financial loss; 11 votes in favour, 2 abstained
- **4.** The Centre for Development and Management (project leader), the project coordinator (Ihar Lednik) and Center for Economic development and Public Affairs (represented by Sergiu Tutunaru) that misinformed the Secretariat about their legal obligations within the grant

agreement, shall not be selected as EaP CSF representatives for official **EaP Platforms and Panels for the next three years**; 10 votes in favour, 1 against, 2 abstained

- **5. Public notice** will be issued on the EaP CSF website that the project did not deliver (after May 10 final deadline), all in favour
- **6.** If the requested **reimbursement of funding** is not provided (money returned), the lead organisation (Centre for Development and Management) and the project coordinator (Ihar Lednik) cannot participate in the EaP CSF Annual Assembly for three consecutive years; 12 votes in favour, 1 against
- **7.** The Centre for Development and Management (project leader) will be given the very final deadline to deliver all supporting documents for finalizing the financial reporting. The final deadline is set on May 10. All interested parties will be informed about the above adopted decisions of the Steering Committee after this deadline.

It was recommended to the Secretariat to inform the respective NP Coordinator about any such a case in the future in advance. The Secretariat will be in touch with MD NP Coordinator over the issue.

It was recommended to conduct the meeting with the representative of the Centre for Development and Management on the side of WG2 meeting in Chisinau (June 7-8) and to clarify the decision of the SC. the meeting shall be attended by the WG2 Coordinators, Secretariat representative and MD NP Coordinator.

It was recommended to the Secretariat to run more rigorous procedures when checking the grant agreements against the data stated in the requests for grant installments in the so called Annex III (grant agreement signed by legal representative of different organization than stated in the agreement and Annex III that serves as basis for transfer of funding).

Other regranting related issues

The SC members received a document with **2017 regranting** statistics and description of the selected projects ahead of the meeting.

Several proposals on regranting procedure amendments were presented during the discussion on internal reform (role of WG Councils, evaluation of proposals, multi-year proposals supporting the WGs activities etc.). Further discussion on regranting is scheduled for July SC meeting.

6. AA participants selection

The SC members have finalised the list of the attendees of the EaP CSF AA which includes 153 participants and 13 observers from the EaP countries and the EU.

The SC members raised the concern about the current country quotas in WGs's lists and suggested that the calculations should be based on the amount of applications to a certain WG from a country and not only on the total amount of applicants to a certain WG. The indicative quota for the EU participants in each WGs should also be provided to guide the selection process.

In a voting it was decided not to allow the participation of Vyacheslav Roi, who violated the Forum's rules and was negligent when his company was responsible for the organization of the AA in 2015.

There were 9 votes for removing V. Roi from the list, 3 against and 1 abstained. It was decided that each following SC will have to deal with his case in case of his future applications.

7. Strategy

It was agreed that the assessment of the implementation of the current strategy is needed before the new strategy is developed.

The discussion has revealed that most of the participants of the meeting see the need for:

- A. the revision of the current strategy that most of the participants agreed is of a good quality and will only need to be insignificantly refined, however making a focus on its practical application by all structures of the Forum; policy-wise it should be based on the 4 EaP Riga Summit priorities;
- B. proposals on the internal reform of the EaP CSF, as now is the good timing and a number of issues has accumulated that prevent the CSF from reaching its potential and objectives.

The timeline below includes the steps of the development of both based on the discussions within the strategy task force and at the SC meeting.

The actions with regard to A or B are marked correspondingly in the table below.

Timeline for the strategy development and all the processes around it

Activity	Time period
A+B SC initial brainstorming on the strategy process and CSF internal reform proposal Resp: SC	25 April
B Concept of the CSF internal reform proposal developed (use brainstormed ideas +analysis of the already collected data (2016 members' survey) and previous discussions (WG1 meeting in 2016 and AA in 2016) SC Resp: Ulad drafting; SC members finalise	7 May
A Assessment of the implementation of the current CSF strategy by an external expert based on the annual reports Resp: An external expert knowledgeable about the CSF or an expert from CSF drafts the assessment; SC members comment on the final draft	Before the next SC meeting

<p>B</p> <p>Running the concept of the CSF internal reform by WG/NP members (including at annual WG meetings)</p> <p>Resp: WG Coordinators and NP Coordinators plus Secretariat</p>	<p>11 May</p>
<p>B</p> <p>Updated concept of the CSF internal reform proposal developed to be discussed at the SC meeting</p> <p>Resp: Ulad and the whole SC</p>	<p>Late June</p>
<p>A</p> <p>Preparation of the facilitation plan for the strategy and internal reform debate to happen during the strategy day of the SC meeting</p> <p>Resp: An external expert knowledgeable about the CSF or an expert from CSF drafts the plan (ideally the same expert who did the assessment of the implementation of the current strategy; SC and Secretariat provide comments</p>	
<p>A</p> <p>Brainstorming on the CSF strategy at the SC meeting (SC members + experts) facilitated by an external moderator</p>	<p>8 July</p>
<p>EaP CSF Secretariat project application</p> <p>Resp: Secretariat</p>	<p>July</p>
<p>A+B</p> <p>Strategy draft and CSF internal reform proposal is shared with AA participants by email</p> <p>Resp: Secretariat</p>	<p>By mid-September</p>
<p>A+B</p> <p>Collect feedback from CSF members</p> <p>Resp: Secretariat</p>	<p>By 1 of October</p>
<p>A+B</p> <p>Incorporating the feedback to the final documents to be offered for the adoption</p> <p>Resp: Expert; final approval by the SC and Secretariat</p>	<p>By 15th October</p>

<p>A+B Adoption of the new strategy and CSF internal reform at AA in Tallinn Resp: SC plus Secretariat</p>	<p>25-27 October</p>
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8. Discussion of the EaP CSF activities in 2018-2021

The brief prepared by the Secretariat based on the discussions during the previous SC meeting was discussed. The need to link the funding application to the new EaP CSF strategy was reiterated. There was no clarity on some matters as it was considered that they will only crystallise during the strategy development process. Most of the points of the brief were discussed again. It was advised to be cautious about capacity-building not to replicate what is being done already and to leave the NPs to find their own funding to ensure their independence. The possibility of having Annual Assembly on biannual basis has been discussed, but no decision has been made.

9. Possibility of SC members' remuneration

The heavy workload of the SC members of the EaP CSF in comparison to other organisations has been discussed. It was mentioned that the SC members are involved in many time-consuming processes that take away their time from their own organisations. It was agreed to come up with more information for the detailed discussion during the next SC meeting by both the SC members (their own experiences in other boards) and the Secretariat (from the legal perspective and how this can affect the statutory documents of the EaP CSF). It was also mentioned by the Secretariat that the procedure should be introduced for the SC to be remunerated for any duties performed outside of the realm of the SC members's responsibilities. This will allow to avoid conflict of interest but at the same time provide avenues for fair remuneration for the work done.

10. External meetings:

The Meeting **with Estonian MFA Undersecretary and Head of Political Department Mr. Paul Teesalu** focused on the MFA priorities for the Presidency in the Council of the European Union related to the future of the EU. The highlighted challenges and goals included staying united both in the Eurozone and within the EU as a whole. Interconnectivity and better communication were mentioned as goals. The EU should focus on communicating success stories and positive benefits to the public both within the EU and in the EaP countries. Security was stressed as a priority for the EU policy towards the EaP countries.

At the meeting with the EaP Ambassador of the MFA of Finland **Ari Heikkinen** four SC members and the Director of the Secretariat, among other matters, shared the concerns about the worsening situation for civil society in Azerbaijan, Belarus and Moldova and stressed the importance of conditionality. The Ambassador has shared his position that civil society should be more visible and involved in the revised EaP what most likely will be reiterated in the EaP Summit declaration.

The meeting with Finnish MPs **Tytti Tuppurainen** (SD), Vice-chair of the Grand Committee, MP **Olavi Ala-Nissila** and MP **Katri Kulmuni** (Centrist) allowed the Steering Committee members present (Dovile Sukyte, Maria Golubeva, Ina Coseru, Yurii Vdovenko, Siarhei Antusevich) to share their views on the situation of the civil society and human rights in the EaP countries, environmental policies, cross-border cooperation and economic integration, situation of minorities and regional security. Several issues like EU funding for the civil society and inclusion of the genuine civil society into the decision-making were underlined. Given the Grand Committee of the Finnish Parliament has a strong position vis a vis the government, approving the mandates before each EU summit, the messages delivered might be used by the MPs when deliberating on the Finnish position before the EaP summit.

11. Next SC meetings

--6-8 July, Vilnius (confirmed). The meeting will include a one-day strategy discussion;
--mid-September, Kyiv (TBC). Possibly in conjunction with the security event organised by the Ukrainian government.

12. Other matters

It was advised that the EaP CSF becomes a member of the CoE's INGO Conference.

Adopted on 9 May 2017