

## Steering Committee meeting, 3-4 October, 2018

**In attendance:** Steering Committee members Krzysztof Bobinski, Ina Coseru, Laura Dittel, Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Mikalai Kvantaliani, Petru Macovei, Hennadiy Maksak (Day 2 only), Boris Navasardian, Ana Otilia Nutu, Lasha Tughushi (Day 1 only)

**Absent:** Ziya Guliyev, Goda Neverauskaite

**Secretariat:** Lidia Gromadzka, Administrative and Statutory Processes Manager, Vera Rihackova, Advocacy Manager

### 1. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting

Agenda was adopted.

### 2. Discussion of situations in the EaP countries and any actions needed by the EaP CSF/Advocacy/EaP Ministerial

The session started with the discussion of the EaP CSF participation in the EaP Senior Official Meeting (SOM) scheduled to take place on 4 October in Brussels and to which a representative of the Steering Committee was invited. The SC delegated Goda Neverauskaite, WG5 Coordinator and SC member, to represent the Forum at this event. Main points of the speech were discussed, with special focus on the recommendations raised in the EaP CSF position paper on the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). It was agreed this item will also be raised at the EaP Foreign Ministerial taking place on 15 October in Luxembourg (the Forum will be represented by Hennadiy Maksak, Ukrainian NP Facilitator).

It was once again reiterated that the goal of the Forum is to make sure we are regularly invited to SOMs and can stay for the whole duration of the meeting.

Among other issues, the SC discussed the negative Moldovan NP experience with the rapid response mechanism as well as activities connected to the pre-electoral period. The NP is ready to help prepare the society for the elections and the SC should advocate for its financial support from the EU. In this regard, the SC also discussed messages in support of their Moldovan colleagues to raise at the meeting with the EU Ambassador Peter Michalko and Mr Mathieu Bousquet (Head of Unit, Georgia, Moldova and Neighbourhood Cross-Border Cooperation). Among them the unique regional dimension of the Forum that allows as quickly dispatching people from EaP countries for activities like consultations, monitoring, experience sharing. The Moldovan NP held meetings with the diaspora in Brussels in September, mobilizing it to vote in the upcoming elections. The suggestions on how to involve the first time voters and young people during the pre-election period were discussed, as well as the Slovak experience from the pre-election period that led to the end of Vladimir Meciar's regime in 1998.

Update from the countries:

In **Moldova**, the situation is unprecedented. The EU should carefully consider its future steps, as this could influence the cooperation between EU and the region in general.

In **Georgia**, the civil society is preparing for the last direct election of the president; the ruling party does not have a candidate and is instead giving its support to an independent candidate Salome Zurbishvili (dual French and Georgian citizen, she recently renounced her French citizenship). Polarization of the political scene and the society is rising every day; most likely there will be a second tour. There is a risk that important changes regarding the prosecutor office will be overshadowed by the elections, so the civil society and the EU should closely follow this issue.

In **Armenia**, the NP held a fruitful meeting with the government on CEPA implementation. According to the government there will not be a single roadmap but rather several ones on different areas (two

of them are ready). Unfortunately, quite some time was already lost and the process is going with a certain delay. The country is getting ready for snap parliamentary elections as well (December 16). The Platform awaits information from the Commission on correct forms to fill in to request funding via the rapid response mechanism.

In **Ukraine**, the Exchange Forum on AA/DCFTA countries took place with EaP CSF represented by several SC members on various panels. The Ukrainian NP is planning its regular annual event for the beginning of November. As for internal developments in the country, two trends were singled out - ongoing awareness raising campaign on EU and several cases of shooting of civil society activists, a new and worrying trend.

In **Belarus**, the National Platform is working with the Forum's Secretariat on the issue of registration of its Secretariat. The Platform is working on two major events, one being a human rights youth festival (will develop recommendations for the EaP Youth Conference in Vienna on 8-9 November) and another is the Media Management & IT Forum (25-27 October). The situation around media continues to be worrisome, especially with the ongoing repression against two media outlets. Among positive news, the country has accepted the EU's roadmap for civil society work and the dialogue on human rights is ongoing.

### **3. Index presentation (by EaP Index and Membership Manager Tania Marocchi via skype)**

Tania Marocchi shared with SC members updates on the production of the EaP Index, plans for the upgrading of Index-related communication - including the website and interactive tool - and for the dissemination of the results.

Index data for 2017 should be available by mid-October. Depending on sector coordinators – the publication should be available between end of October and November. Advocacy launch events can be organised starting as of November. Index results will be presented to EU stakeholders (in Brussels), EaP stakeholders and EaP CSF members and stakeholders (in each EaP Country) and to EU member states stakeholders. The results will be presented at public events, closed-door meetings, and with articles on the media.

*Brussels launch - Public event:* Like previous years, the Index will be launched at a public event in Brussels. The event can be organised in partnership with a member state (preferably a member state, such as France or Germany). Invited stakeholders will include researchers, think tankers, EC officials, EU perm reps and EaP missions. The EaP index website will be transferred and incorporated to the EaP CSF website in order to promote the Index as a flagship project of the Forum.

The Secretariat will also work to get the Index featured on the Politico Europe's morning newsletter 'Playbook', which is widely disseminated and reaches out to a great number of Brussels-stakeholders. SC member Krzysztof Bobinski offered to support the Secretariat in this effort reaching out to his media contacts.

Platforms and Panels meetings will also be an occasion to draw the attention of EU and EaP officials on Index results. We will ask for a speaking slot at upcoming platforms and panels and include the presentation of Index data.

More generally, copies of the Index and Index one-pagers will be distributed systematically at upcoming Platforms and Panels. SC members were shown one-page mock ups featuring extrapolation of Index results tailored to platform and panels. Some comments were raised about the clarity of some of the graphs and SC members were invited to send written feedback should they have any suggestion to improve the current mock-ups.

*NP Launch events in the region:* the presentation of Index results at public events organised by the EaP National Platforms was also discussed. Interest in presenting the results were raised by Armenia (for an event sometime in January), Belarus and Georgia. It was suggested to explore the possibility of involving the EU delegations in the launch events, maybe as hosts. The launch should ideally include as panellists each country's Index country coordinator as well as the Chief-Editor/Index manager.

It was also suggested that the matching of Index results done for Platforms and Panels can be useful also for national working groups. Index data covering the sector of interest of a particular WG can be extrapolated, presented and serve as a useful advocacy and monitoring tool for NGOs. Local experts involved with the production of the Index could have a practical role in this.

Finally, the SC was presented the EaP CSF-ENC project *EaP/Foreign Policy Perceptions among youths in EU member states*. The Secretariat was approached by the European Neighbourhood Council (ENC) to co-organise a series of lectures and public events around Europe, which would include a presentation of Index results. The project covers 9 Western European countries and the implementation will happen during January-June 2019. It was suggested to add Romania to the list of countries, given that the country will be holding the EU council presidency between January and June 2019 and SC member Ana Otilia Nutu offered to facilitate to the event organisation in Bucharest. The process of fund-raising is ongoing and updates will be shared as soon as available.

#### **4. Discussion of the Annual Assembly agenda**

The SC discussed the current draft of the Annual Assembly agenda, including potential invitees from the EaP governments, civil society representatives, and prominent guests.

For the first time ever, the Forum will also give out the EaP CSF Civil Society Award, given to an activist who contributed to defending core democratic values and social, political or economic development in their country. As well, the Pavel Sheremet Award, recognising independent journalism and work done in the name of media freedom, will also be attributed. In both cases, any member of EaP CSF can submit the name of their candidates until 14 October.

On the resolution to be adopted on Day 3, SC member Krzysztof Bobinski will present it to the plenary, and will manage this process ahead of the event, including outlining the procedure (drafting, incorporating comments, approval) and timeline.

#### **5. Nomination procedure for EaP Platforms and Panels**

After a presentation by the Secretariat of the current procedure as approved by the SC during its meeting in Vilnius in July 2017, the SC decided to amend it in the following way: WG Coordinators responsible for the Platform/Panel will review the applications submitted for a given event and nominate two experts. If they do not do it until the deadline, the Secretariat takes the decision so as not to stall this time-sensitive process. The decision is shared also with all of the SC for their information (within 24 hours they will have a "veto" right in case they have justified and substantiated doubts about the experts, but otherwise they don't approve the selection). The Secretariat will resend the schedule of upcoming meetings to alert WG Coordinators and allow for better preparation once the Forum is invited to a given Platform or Panel. It was also decided that WG5 Coordinators co-take the decision on Structural reforms panel (Platform 2) and Migration panel (Platform 4), since they don't have their own Platform and these two panels are relevant and in line with the work of WG5.

The SC also discussed the need to strengthen the panels where the Forum does not have a sufficiently diversified number of experts, in particular the Research and Innovation panel (Platform

4). Successful establishment of a Transport panel group (Platform 3) can serve as an encouraging example to follow.

Finally, since nominated experts represent the Forum and part of their duties is to share the information that they have learned with all Forum members and experts (to which they agree when they subscribe to the database), a “blacklist” will be established to keep track of representatives who do not comply with this requirement. These experts will be excluded from future calls for interest.

The changes to the procedure were unanimously adopted by the SC members present.

#### **6. Meeting with members of the Moldovan NP**

During the meeting, the SC presented the outline of the AA agenda as well as the upcoming internal reform. Members of the Steering Committee (especially from Armenia and Georgia) presented their experience with election observation tools (including electronic ones), methods to involve diaspora, ethnic minorities, and voters in rural areas in the electoral process, as well as capacity building tools helping to bring CSOs up to international standards in mechanisms and methodology. The importance of following up of electoral complaints was underlined as it constitutes an integral part of a democratic and transparent process.

Moldovan NP members also described the difficult financial situation of the Platform and challenges in diversifying the donor base. SC advised to request support for specific topics and projects rather than institutional funding.

The SC also encouraged NP members to subscribe to the database of experts that serves to nominate Forum representatives to official Platforms and Panels meetings, as well as underlined the importance of the upcoming internal reform (voting will open on 15 October). Lastly, the NP submitted a draft statement to the attention of the Steering Committee on the situation in the country, which was adopted by the SC and [published on the Forum’s website](#).

The upcoming regranting to NPs was presented to the members of the Moldovan NP.

#### **7. Regranting to NPs**

The Secretariat has presented a list of 3 external experts to be contacted to complete the composition of the NP Regranting Selection Committee and the guidelines. The SC agreed the Secretariat can go ahead with the envisaged procedure.

#### **8. Adoption of annual accounts (presentation by Finance and Grants Manager Iustina Haroianu via skype)**

The SC has unanimously adopted the annual accounts.

After the presentation, the SC asked questions on co-funding, as well as on the status of costs considered ineligible from the previous grant. The Secretariat has not received any response from the EC on the final decision on the matter. The SC also discussed an idea of a systematized form to report information on the resources that the EaP CSF including NPs managed to fund-raise and to publish all the donors on the website for the sake of increased transparency.

#### **9. WG regranting**

The SC discussed the procedure and voted to update it in the following way: the Secretariat will share with the SC members the list of external experts currently in the database. The SC will have a chance to veto any experts that they deem not suitable enough, as well as request opening of the call to add more experts if they believe there is not enough candidates; however, the final decision on the two experts will belong to the Secretariat. The evaluation committee will be composed only of these two experts (they will evaluate the projects proposals according to the pre-set criteria and distribute points on this basis). The SC member from the relevant WG will be able to comment on the

anonymized proposals beforehand. During the discussions and voting, the SC member from the relevant WG and a Secretariat representative will be present as observers.

The changes were unanimously adopted by the SC members present.

The new call for regrating will be launched on 5 November.

#### **10. Code of conduct**

The SC discussed the draft of code of conduct submitted by the consultant hired to develop it. The draft has already been consulted ahead of the meeting with Laura Dittel, WG2 Coordinator. The SC members raised a question on who should vote on approving the document (SC only or all Forum members), as well as discussed missing documents (Code of ethics, bylaws, conflict of interest policy) that would have to be developed to fill in the gaps left unaddressed by the Code of conduct, considered a framework document.

The SC members agreed to send their comments by 11 October.

#### **External Meetings:**

##### **Meeting at the EU Delegation**

The SC members met with the EU Ambassador, H.E. Peter Michalko and Mr Mathieu Bousquet, Head of Unit, Georgia, Moldova and Neighbourhood Cross-Border Cooperation at the EU Delegation. The SC delivered the messages and concerns related to the pre-election period and overall developments in Moldova, offering assistance and know-how on how to engage the citizens that worked in other EaP countries. The SC underlined the fact the whole region is watching Moldova and the actions taken by the EU will have impact on other EaP countries.

##### **Meeting with Mr Iurie Leanca, Deputy Prime-Minister of Moldova for European Integration**

The SC discussed the ongoing political situation in Moldova and raised several issues connected to the upcoming elections, general internal situation in the country (including the judicial system and the follow up of the banking fraud scandal), as well as energy projects and frayed relations with Turkey.

The meeting finished with the SC extending an invitation to Mr Leanca to speak at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Assembly of the Forum in Tbilisi.

##### **Meeting with opposition representative Maia Sandu**

The SC discussed the upcoming elections and challenges that the opposition party in the country are facing, as well as ways of mobilizing voters.

Adopted on 18 October 2018