
Structured consultation on the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020

CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE

EaP CSF



October 2019

The civil society perspective: Structured consultation on the Eastern Partnership beyond 2020

Q1 – ECONOMIC AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

The social, political, and economic changes that took place in the last decade have had a major impact on the human capital in the EaP countries, youth in particular, and their capacity to contribute to the prosperity of their societies. High rates of unemployment, emigration, lack of sustainable and quality jobs, as well as lack of quality education still represent serious challenges that need to be tackled.

The EU should prioritize the following policy objectives to achieve further progress in its support for stronger and more diverse economies: (a) support a fair business environment free of nepotism, and businesses that are not closely linked to the government; competition can be strengthened, for example by supporting independence of competition regulating agencies. The quality of implementation of the legislation on agencies regulating competition should be set as one of the benchmarks in providing macro-financial assistance to EaP countries; (b) invest in sectors with a potential for development, growth and competitiveness on the EU market and guarantee private investments into the EaP economies by a separate

financial instrument; (c) support investments in infrastructure already planned to address the needs of a green economy; (d) keep focusing on the development of strong SMEs segment in the EaP economies.

The EU should prioritize **investments in the development of the competitiveness potential** of the digital market, banking, insurance, transport, tourism and services, energy cooperation, rural development, and green economy. Agriculture (including organic) also has enormous economic potential but currently lacks the infrastructure and modern technologies (i.e. poor development of the storage/refrigerated infrastructure, raw material processing, production of sufficient volume of agricultural output, and organized sale systems). The EU should focus on modernization of the agricultural sector, which would consequently make it more attractive to the labour force. Moreover, the EU should focus on not only the development of individual sectors of the economy, but on the support of infrastructural reforms (i.e. electricity and broadband connectivity) and the harmonization of regulatory framework principles (i.e. standards to meet safety regulations, quality control).

Sustainable development requires good infrastructure, and transport is

one of the most important factors in economic development. Currently connectivity across the region is quite poor (i.e. outdated railways) and represents a serious obstacle to business and economic development. As EaP domestic investments for infrastructure repair are not available, the EU should prioritize funding and investments that enhance the development of core transport networks and links among the EaP countries and with the EU, among other infrastructural projects for the region.

Small and medium-sized entrepreneurship (SMEs) is still poorly developed in the EaP region due to strong economic monopolies that the EU has not managed to break. The EU should continue to invest in new SMEs, social enterprises, businesses and smaller-scale start-ups. It should also assist in attracting venture capital to the region, share experience on how to facilitate more effectively access of SMEs to micro-credit schemes and ensure the availability of credit resources at affordable rates (close to Eurozone rates) via its EU4Business programme. The EU should also further invest in capacity building and entrepreneurial skills; more specifically, it should focus on the development of entrepreneurial management skills for both established and new businesses, mentoring (also intra-regional), introduction of production standards and quality norms (ISO) and continue collaborating with non-governmental local actors such as local business associations on concrete projects.

EaP countries have been rapidly **depopulating** on the course of the last decade. Namely, young people are prone to leave their home countries and regions in search for better education and decent jobs. To counter this trend, the EU should

prioritize: (a) strengthening the connection between education systems reform and labour markets demands, (b) investing in programmes favouring youth (with a major focus on rural youth) and social entrepreneurship, and (c) creating a new programme for young professionals modelled on Erasmus+ (EU4Young Professionals).

Human capital development is not a priority for partner countries. Most governments, if not all, lack long-term strategic planning and do not invest in the development of national strategies for human capital development. The mismatch between the skills supplied by the education system and those demanded by the economy negatively affects the labour market and productivity. **The EU should help raise awareness about the importance of human capital both within governments and within society** and it should **assist state institutions in designing relevant strategies, roadmaps and policies.** Such strategies and programmes should target not only youth, but also middle age professionals struggling with unemployment by supporting the development of lifelong learning education and training programmes as well as requalification courses and vocational training.

The EU needs to invest further in **vocational education** by engaging with actors at government, civil society, and educational levels. While the demand for such jobs is very high, the actual professions are unattractive because they lack the same reputation as white-collar jobs, which are more sought particularly by young people. Also, many are unaware about existing vocational training opportunities, and are

not familiar with the financial benefits such a career track could bring. To help raise interest in vocational training, and make it more responsive to labour market demands, the EU should support the establishment of **modern vocational education centres in cooperation with local businesses and in accordance with EU standards**, focusing namely on rural areas and focus on increasing the capacity of vocational education institutions to deliver high-level quality courses. The EU should also help EaP governments to organise communication campaigns explaining which specialisations are in demand and what salaries could be expected for various job categories, raising awareness among parents about the economic value of vocational education for their children. The EU should encourage EaP governments to provide tax incentives for employers who recruit young alumni of vocational trainings.

Poor working environment is a problem identified across the region, among others leading to citizens' labour migration. To improve working environments, the EU should support strengthening the general institutional frameworks, which are not necessarily directly related to the labour force and social labour rights in the EaP countries such as **healthcare**. The EU should also support formal structures for improving the capacity of labour unions and state agencies like labour inspections to protect labour rights. Anti-discrimination (namely gender-based) in the sphere of employment should be also a priority. Improving the situation in the social sphere would also bring the EU's visibility and benefits closer to the EaP citizens.

The EU should encourage **youth entrepreneurship** by supporting start-up

hubs and by offering mentoring schemes via, for example, extended Erasmus+4YoungEntrepreneurs to cover all EaP countries, not only Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine. Easing access to credit loan schemes, attracting venture capital and offering guarantees for start-ups and young entrepreneurs who focus namely on social entrepreneurship from which the whole communities benefit can also help. Women and girls should be further incentivised to learn entrepreneurial skills and start their own businesses; for this purpose, specific women networks and mentoring can be further facilitated and supported.

The EU should consider creating a new programme for young professionals modelled according to Erasmus+ (EU4Young Professionals). This programme should support capacity building and skills training for young professionals, including civil servants from central and local public administration. Support to the establishment of an Academy for public servants, particularly for local-level bureaucrats, could be considered. Collaboration with the European Training Foundation on all aspects of support to young professionals needs to be further supported.

Q2 – GOOD GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW, SECURITY COOPERATION

The **rule of law** has been one of the most difficult areas to reform due to the strong vested interests of political elites. The EU has invested many resources into training judges, investigators, prosecutors, prison staff, public defenders and lawyers in order

to increase their skills in protecting the rights of individuals. These efforts should continue, for example by establishing programme for judges with focus on accountability and independence where judges could meet their counterparts from the EU member states and EaP. CSOs with relevant expertise and at the relevant level (local, regional, or national) could also participate.

In order to achieve **stronger and more sustainable impact on rule of law reforms in EaP countries**, the EU should: (a) increase financial support to individual human rights defenders and CSOs, and support their participation in the implementation and assessment of reforms, for example via their inclusion into the EU-Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine Human rights dialogues; (b) set up an inclusive and multi-stakeholder joint monitoring body to monitor the progress of implementation of AA/DCFTAs and CEPA that would both strengthen the role of CSOs and increase the scrutiny of the governments; (c) expand cooperation between EaP countries and Europol, including in the areas of fight against organised crime and AML regime implementation; (d) support specialised parliamentary committees (legal, anti-corruption, law enforcement) by improving their members' professional skills and expertise; (e) approve the EU Magnitsky Act and apply it against individuals in EaP countries who are guilty of human rights abuses, state capture, and high-level corruption, and provide much more consistent support to civil society organisations in their effort to monitor fraud and money laundering; (f) improve the currently too general EU reports assessing the state of rule of law with the introduction of a monitoring mechanism of RoL and its

reforms similar to the existing RoL scorecard applied to EU member states and candidate countries.

The EU's **conditionality** mechanism has helped adopt key reforms to strengthen the rule of law, and is seen in the region as an effective tool to keep governments focused on their reform agendas. Yet, the newly created institutions and mechanisms need to be fully implemented and consolidated in national contexts to become sustainable. In this regard, **the EU needs to continue applying stronger and more targeted pressure for further adoption and implementation of core accountability mechanisms** - in the judiciary focus on transparent selection and promotion of judges and fair disciplinary proceedings; for public officials the key anti-corruption measures should be in place (i.e. asset declarations), in the field of competition of political parties **the EU should focus on monitoring the further adoption of legislative amendments to electoral laws and the party financing legislation in line with individual country recommendations provided by the Venice Commission**. All elements mentioned above should be part of applied conditionality, linked to disbursement of macro-financial assistance, and coordinated and mainstreamed across the approach of other international organisations and financial partners (i.e. CoE programmes for the region funded from the EU, IMF, EBRD and World Bank) where EU has strong leverage. The EU needs to **react faster to the deterioration or clear breaches of the rule of law**. In the absence of prompt and consistent responses on behalf of the EU, EaP partner country governments continue their practices and backslide on their democratic track record, as a result. The

EU should thus be more vocal and show zero tolerance by issuing prompt statements addressing the incumbents' actions. This mechanism should also be kept consistent regardless of the leadership changes in Brussels or in EU Delegations at national level. It would also indirectly support the local CSOs in performing better their roles as watchdogs.

EaP countries need to continue working on sustainable professional, depoliticised, accountable and ethical **public administrations** at central, regional, and local level. In this regard, the **EU should provide more intensive trainings and internship programmes for public servants** that would strengthen their professional skills to implement effectively the reform agenda their governments have committed to. Twinning projects or job shadowing for EaP civil servants to spend a period of time in an EU public administration body could be introduced. The EU should also focus on the implementation of ethical codes, protection of internal whistle-blowers as well as on facilitating the extensive interpretation of access to information for the citizens in order to increase transparency of public bodies. In addition, it **should support decentralisation, participative decision-making at local and regional level** that would involve citizens into decisions on, for example, the allocation of EU funds for local projects. The EU should **entrust the implementation of part of its financial support directly to local authorities**, to also help strengthen regional and local authorities and elected bodies, and make them less dependent on central government funding.

The EU should **pursue a consistent approach to countering disinformation and propaganda** in partner countries **in close cooperation with civil society** and support local actors in creating content, which promotes European values. Disinformation is most impactful on groups who have for various reasons less access to diverse sources and independent streams of information. The **EU should focus on supporting projects identifying further these groups and specifying the biases and enablers for each of the groups**, going beyond standard notions (rural areas, elderly people, minorities). Moreover, it **should focus on streamlining media literacy** and work with various target audiences (with a particular focus on rural populations and youth) **through local CSOs** which could disseminate lessons learnt to the wider public by distributing materials on disinformation in local languages. The EU should also **subsidise the adaptation and broadcast of European content to EaP countries** (incl. entertainment, educational, professional, documentary channels, etc.). Focus should be also given to conflict zones where access to information is usually heavily limited and monopolized. The EU needs to help break the isolation of residents and communities in conflict areas and disputed territories. To do this, the EU should **continue supporting programmes for confidence building within and across conflict-divided communities**; support news outlets, peace journalists, and bloggers who have access and can reach out to populations in conflict areas to create alternative counter narratives; support more freedom of expression in conflict areas, and the security of human rights defenders.

The EU should recognise that **cyber resilience and security** is an expensive sphere for EaP countries to tackle. In this regard, the EU should streamline its resources into several directions: (a) support governments to improve their cyber security structures and enhance institutionalization in the field (establishing special units on cyber security, developing cyber security strategy and action plans with the active participation of civil society, business and specialized expert community). Twinning projects with frontrunner EU member states in cyber security need to be supported; (b) support development of projects across EU and EaP states for sharing experiences and best practices via the setup of national and regional task forces; (c) support cooperation among the EaP countries and with the neighbouring EU member states in repelling cyber-attacks.

Q3 – HOW TO ENHANCE COOPERATION BETWEEN EASTERN PARTNERS, WHILST ENSURING INCLUSIVENESS AND DIFFERENTIATION IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE EU?

Intra-EaP cooperation is currently weak and offers a yet-untapped potential for future cooperation given EaP countries existing common challenges and shared interests. **To boost regionalisation**, the EU should consider the **setup of a EU macro-regional strategy for EaP countries** (similar to the macro-strategy for the Danube region), with a policy framework allowing countries located in the same region to jointly tackle and find solutions to problems or to better use the potential they

have in common. Moreover, **the EU's EaP multilateral framework beyond 2020 should boost regionalisation by dedicating special resources facilitating cooperation in sectors that require cross-border cooperation and solutions** – such as transport, interconnectivity, energy security, environmental protection, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. This can be achieved with more conspicuous support to existing programmes with a cross-border dimension, such as the European Union's Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation programme (EaPTC) and adapting the model of the EUREGIO and Interreg programmes. Other areas with potential for intra-regional cooperation that the EU should prioritise are trade and investment, culture, tourism, education, agriculture, and information technologies.

In addition, the number of EU programmes and agencies that EaP partners have access to should be increased. Participation in agencies working on food safety, environment alongside education and science, would allow EaP officials the chance to socialise with their EU and EaP counterparts, improve their understanding of how the EU bureaucracy functions, allow the sharing of best EU practices, and tackle mutual challenges. The AA/DCFTA countries can be allowed to participate with an observer status in discussions on the future EU laws that they will also need to approximate with following the format that the EU has already offered to Norway for example.

The EU should also consider advising EaP countries to **establish the position of EaP ambassador within their governments.** EaP ambassadors would be

entrusted with developing cooperation with their EaP counterparts, facilitating trade and cross-border projects and raising the profile of the policy within EaP countries.

At the same time, inclusiveness and differentiation in EaP relations with the EU can be achieved **amending the policy beyond 2020 so that it allows for a variable geometry of cooperation among the EaP countries in various areas, offering different opportunities matching countries' different levels of ambitions** without weakening the multilateral track. New formats of cooperation for the three AA/DCFTA countries could be developed and be also open to Armenia. AA countries could be offered participation in a panel dedicated to DCFTA implementation, that would complement the existing framework rather than replace it, and that should remain open for non-AA countries to join in the future. Ad hoc groups of countries could agree on cooperation on a specific target or deliverable based on shared interests and common challenges, with the rest of the EaP partners having the possibility to join at a later stage. This would allow the development of new cooperation formats not dividing the countries along AA/non-AA line. Such an approach would balance a multispeed EaP and enhance regional links.

At the level of policy implementation, while keeping its regional focus, the EU should tailor the targets within each deliverable to individual EaP countries. Performance indicators should be further broken down to the level of individual countries, and the EU should consider cooperating with national CSOs in their designing and monitoring. There is a widespread call amongst the stakeholders to

have country specific roadmaps within the roadmap, where each country will have its own commitments and targets.

Last but not least, mobility programmes and people-to-people contacts have proven to be most successful in the last decade and they should be continued as they create a layer of EaP-minded EaP citizens, indirectly contributing to a local demand for extended intra-regional cooperation among EaP partners. The EU should further support (a) mobility and exchanges among young people from EaP countries - youth mobility around the region, as well as (b) mobility of academics, workers and experts in various fields around the EaP region - sharing of expertise and know-how. The EaP CSF and the EaP School in Tbilisi are concrete examples of **intra-regional cooperation** that work well across the EaP space and should be continued.

Q4 – HOW CAN WE DO MORE TO ENHANCE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND EU VISIBILITY?

The significant financial support channelled by the EU towards EaP countries is not always well communicated or made visible to beneficiaries. Insufficient EU visibility and a minimalist approach towards communicating results and achievements represent an obstacle to unlocking more support for the EU and the EaP on behalf of populations in the EaP countries who frequently are unaware about the volumes of EU's support for their country and the benefits that touch them directly.

EU visibility campaigns should better target society at large. To do so, the EU should **prioritise funding for local projects raising awareness about the EU in small towns and regions and going beyond already EU-minded cohorts.** Existing initiatives fail to address society as they address mainly English-speaking, EU-minded groups in the capitals and are often disproportionately aimed towards university-educated youth. To reach out to the broader population, the EU should engage with **high school youth** in the cities and in the regions, thus reaching out to broader groups in formal education. Such programmes could be carried out by local foundations and/or coordinated by the EU Delegation, and can include school visits by former and current EU Young Ambassadors and Eastern Partnership Civil Society fellows. More cohorts can be reached by campaigns **informing citizens about the opportunities stemming from DCFTA implementation**, raising awareness about the benefits of EU integration and linking them to the positive impact on labour markets. Farmers, owners of SMEs, categories of population who benefit from DCFTA implementation should be the primary targets, as well as consumers, who benefit from improved phytosanitary standards. Local beneficiaries of EU funding could provide testimonies to their communities, facilitating a personal exchange of ideas over a faceless broadcasting of information. The **EU visibility guidelines** for EU grantees are frequently only formally executed and **should be used more strategically** as a local visibility entry point. They should be stricter, less cumbersome and not changed too often to be easily implemented by the grantees and easily to be recognised by the beneficiaries. To increase the visibility of the

EU support, the EU Delegations should have more staff locally who will not only oversee the design and implementation of the projects, but continuously look for opportunities to increase the presence and visibility of the EU on the ground.

The EU should also improve its public diplomacy initiatives in the EaP countries by establishing an EaP Year dedicated to a specific topic (Environment, Digitalisation etc.) to be chosen through a bottom-up process and to be implemented with numerous initiatives in cooperation with civil society and local creative communities, in the regions and at the local level. Current communication campaigns fall short as they are too formal and unilateral, adopting a broadcasting rather than an interactive style. Advertisement on building facades, banners with the results of individual EU projects on the streets, distribution of booklets and EU flags fall short of engaging with the audience, creating relatable meaning and value. Best practices of campaigns which combine grassroots elements with pop-culture, eco-yards, workshops, master classes and theatrical performances – should be used as a source of inspiration. **High-level meetings** (Ministerial meetings and Summits) **should be organised in EaP countries** to enhance the EU's visibility among the local public and signal presence and commitment to the region.

The EU Young Ambassadors programme and the Eastern Partnership Civil Society fellowships are good initiatives that should be continued but better capitalised upon, establishing an active alumni network on the basis of existing successful models, to be managed by a dedicated staffer in the local

EU Delegations organising activities for former and current alumni of the EU-funded programmes. This would avoid dispersion and maintain a close connection between the EU and programme beneficiaries and among beneficiaries themselves..

To further empower civil society to tackle disinformation, the EU should enhance its strategic cooperation between EU and EaP institutions on StratCom issues to target country-specific myths and misconceptions about the EU. The EU East StratCom should be strengthened, including through allocating more financial resources and designating country desks for each of the EaP states.

The EU should also try to reach EaP citizens with quality information first, with programmes aimed at high-school students – like EU info-sessions during regular school hours – and supporting local media and journalists, facilitating the dissemination of verified information from the source. Journalists’ poor knowledge about the EU and poor reporting is one of the causes of substandard communication about the EU. It should be addressed by improving **media monitoring** using CSOs independent analysis; increasing financial **support for local independent media**; improving the **quality of** reporting investing in trainings for journalists and in the establishment of partnership between EU and EaP media, for example via supporting **media fellowships for EaP journalists**.

The EU should increase mobility opportunities from the EU towards the EaP. The direction of mobility programmes is now predominantly from the EaP towards the EU, benefitting small groups of European-minded EaP citizens. This should

be balanced by creating more opportunities for EU citizens to visit EaP countries and mingle with different segments of society, going beyond students and including for example blue collar workers. This could indirectly boost the visibility of the Eastern Partnership countries within the EU as well. More efforts should be done to increase the visibility of the EaP in the EU. The EU citizens not only need to know what the EU support to the region is and what is its result, but rather via people-to-people contacts to learn more about the history, culture of the region and the aspirations of its people. This can be done by organising Days of the EaP and of the individual EaP countries in the EU and encourage the cooperation between the EaP and EU CSOs aimed at reaching out the EU population.

Q5 – OTHER PROPOSALS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The EaP policy beyond 2020 must be framed around a renewed and stronger model of cooperation between the EU and democratically-minded constituencies in the region who can support the democratic reform processes. To do so, the EU should adopt two complementary strategies: (1) make support to enabling civil society environment a top priority, improving access to funding and strengthen civil society’s ability to act as a watchdog for reform, cutting red tape and securing its presence in trilateral meetings (2) work with civil society for reform implementation and monitoring, to ensure local buy-in and demand for further reform.

The EU should make **support to enabling civil society environment a top priority**. The fundamental challenges civil society is facing range from legal frameworks that do not include consultations with civil society, restrict access to funding, prevent legal registration or authorises surveillance, all the way to repressive actions, such as politically motivated prosecution. The lack of sustainable institutional funding available to CSOs across the region remains a key challenge that the EU needs to prioritise. **Within the next EU financial instrument, the EU should provide special funds to strengthen CSOs institutionally. This includes funding activities specifically aimed at** improving CSOs internal management capacity, abilities to develop high quality research output and grassroots activities, creating sustainable staff policies as well as introducing internal ethical codes of conduct and gender strategies. **The EU should also strengthen civil society's ability to act as a watchdog for reform, cutting red tape** and securing its presence in trilateral meetings. This can be done (a) lending firm and consistent political support to civil society and its statements denouncing human rights violations and failure to respect the rule of law, thereby strengthening and further legitimising their demands; (b) including civil society in all Human Rights Dialogues, not only preparatory meetings, and in Association and Cooperation Council meetings; (c) enhancing the role of the National Platforms of the EaP CSF as a third party in EaP official documents and give them concrete implementation roles. This could build a truly multi-stakeholder development process which can bring real results in promoting HR, democratic participation, transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, **the EU should enhance the role of civil society in EaP policy implementation to improve results and strengthen local ownership of reforms**. The most effective measures for the EU to grant civil society a stronger role in policy implementation, would be (a) to assign specific roles to civil society actors, including EaP CSF and its National Platforms, in the new EaP post-2020 agenda and its individual targets, (b) to establish permanent working groups, involving civil society and other non-governmental representatives tasked with supporting implementation and monitoring of cross-cutting deliverables. The working groups would transfer effectively the need-based knowledge and expertise at short notice, and feed the information directly into the regular assessments of policy implementation, run by EU institutions and EaP governments. Furthermore, (c) to facilitate joint identification and development of clear benchmarks for measuring reform implementation, a gap that is frequently identified by CSOs as an impediment to their efforts to hold governments more accountable.

The EU should also strengthen the role of CSOs in regional monitoring by providing more sustainable institutional support for CSOs to be able to produce independent reporting on the Europeanization agenda of the EaP governments – such as the existing Eastern Partnership Index, and implementation of key agreements (i.e. to develop, adopt and harmonize the monitoring methodology, provide regular shadow reports). This could highlight countries different levels of progress, promoting constructive competition and the sharing of best-practices and cooperation among partners.

Strengthening civil society's role in policy formulation, should go hand in hand with the EU **paying closer attention to working with bona fide CSOs**, particularly in Belarus and Azerbaijan. EU Delegations on the ground should receive clear indications to vet CSOs they collaborate with and establish a practice of consulting with trusted organisations, networks, umbrella and international organisations. Rules sanctioning the involvement of civil society in trilateral meetings should be written or amended to include criteria that would exclude the participation of GONGOs at the expenses of genuine CSOs.

Annex I – Methodological note

The EaP CSF prepared its response to DG NEAR Structured Consultation on the future of the Eastern Partnership by carrying out a comprehensive process of internal consultation of its membership base. In order to harness and combine national, regional and thematic priorities, the internal consultation process was built on three pillars: six national focus groups, four thematic focus-groups and one online questionnaire combining quantitative and qualitative elements. The input from these three tools was used to put together a synthesis report based on major common patterns that emerged across the focus groups and the online survey.

National focus groups

Six in-person focus groups have been conducted in October 2019, one in each of the six EaP countries. Each discussion was aimed at gathering the input of leaders of civil society organisations on a set of four clusters of questions and following the same scenario. Questions were formulated for national-level discussions to allow aggregation of a balanced set of recommendations for the EU based on the (i) identification of current policy practices that the EU should retain in its post-2020 policy framework and ones it should stop doing because of either not being effective enough or being counterproductive; (ii) identification of new policy practices the EU could initiate; (iii) testing of policy ideas that the EaP CSF already identified in previous rounds of internal consultations or proposed as part of its existing written output (iv) identification of processes and policies that the EaP CSF should further advocate for; (v) identification of umbrella recommendations as well as concrete policy actions that the EU could adopt.

Thematic focus groups

Four online thematic focus groups have been conducted in October 2019. These addressed the following thematic areas: (i) *Economic development*, (ii) *Human capital development*, (iii) *Good governance, rule of law, and security* (iv) *Civil society engagement*. Each focus group hosted 5-10 specialists with different expertise covering all EaP CSF working groups for a one-hour discussion on a set of 7-9 questions which addressed each thematic cluster from a regional perspective. Questions were formulated to allow aggregation of a set of recommendations at regional level for the EU and to build upon and complement the key findings from the national focus groups with regional recommendations.

Online survey

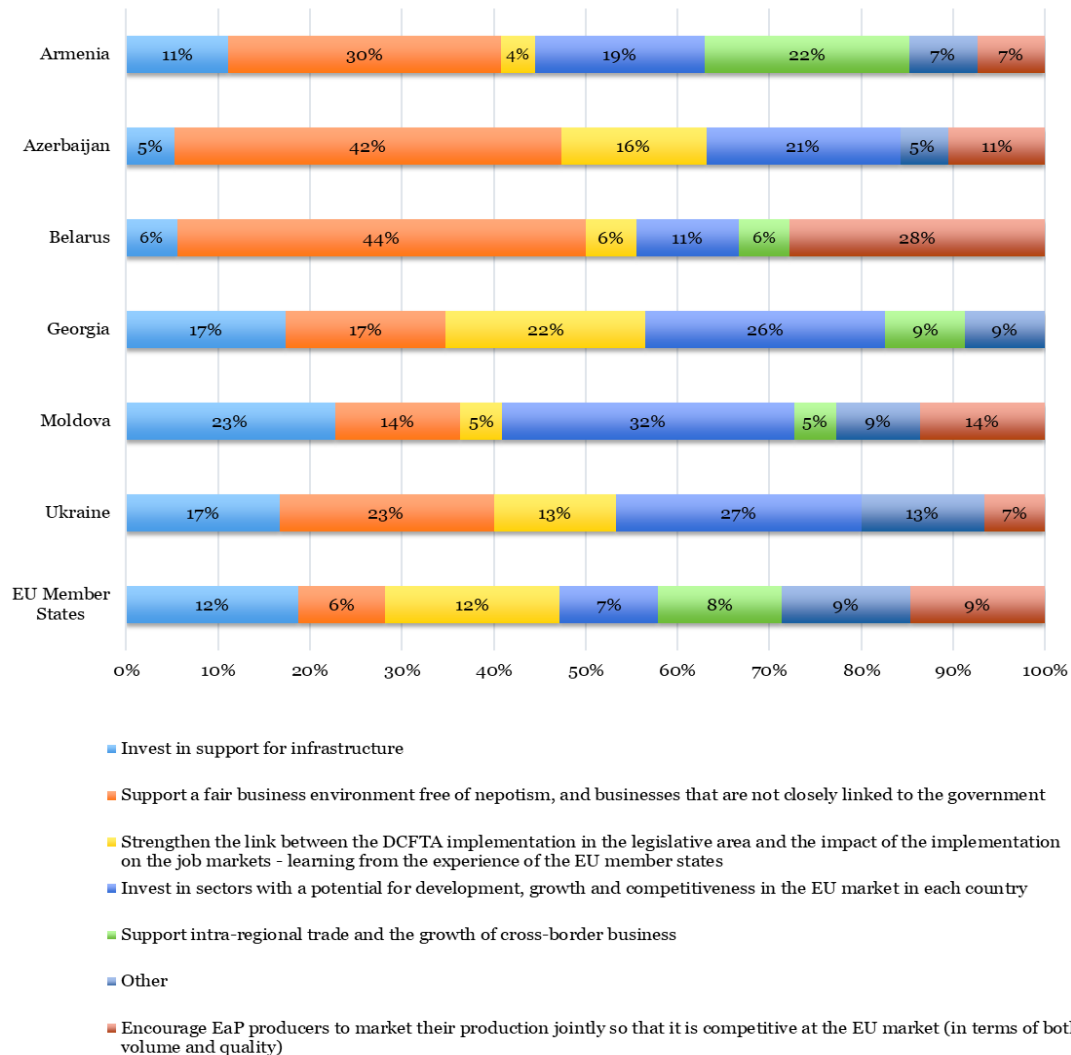
One general online questionnaire complemented the national and thematic focus groups. The questionnaire could be answered in English and Russian, and was open for responses to all EaP CSF member organisations in all six EaP partner countries and in the EU. A total of 160 EaP CSF member organisations filled out the online questionnaire during 3-14 October 2019. The survey included fifteen questions formulated around the EU Survey on the structured consultation process but was meant for a broader audience than the focus groups. The survey asked a mix of 15 open-ended and closed questions (+2 identification questions) grouped into six themes.

Annex II – Graphs

The graphs below offer an overview of EaP CSF member organisations' responses to the closed questions of the online questionnaire. The six closed questions offered multiple choice (single) options for response, and included the catch-all type option (other). The graphs should be read together with the narrative report, which summarises the recommendations that emerged from national and thematic focus groups, and open-ended responses to the online questionnaire.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

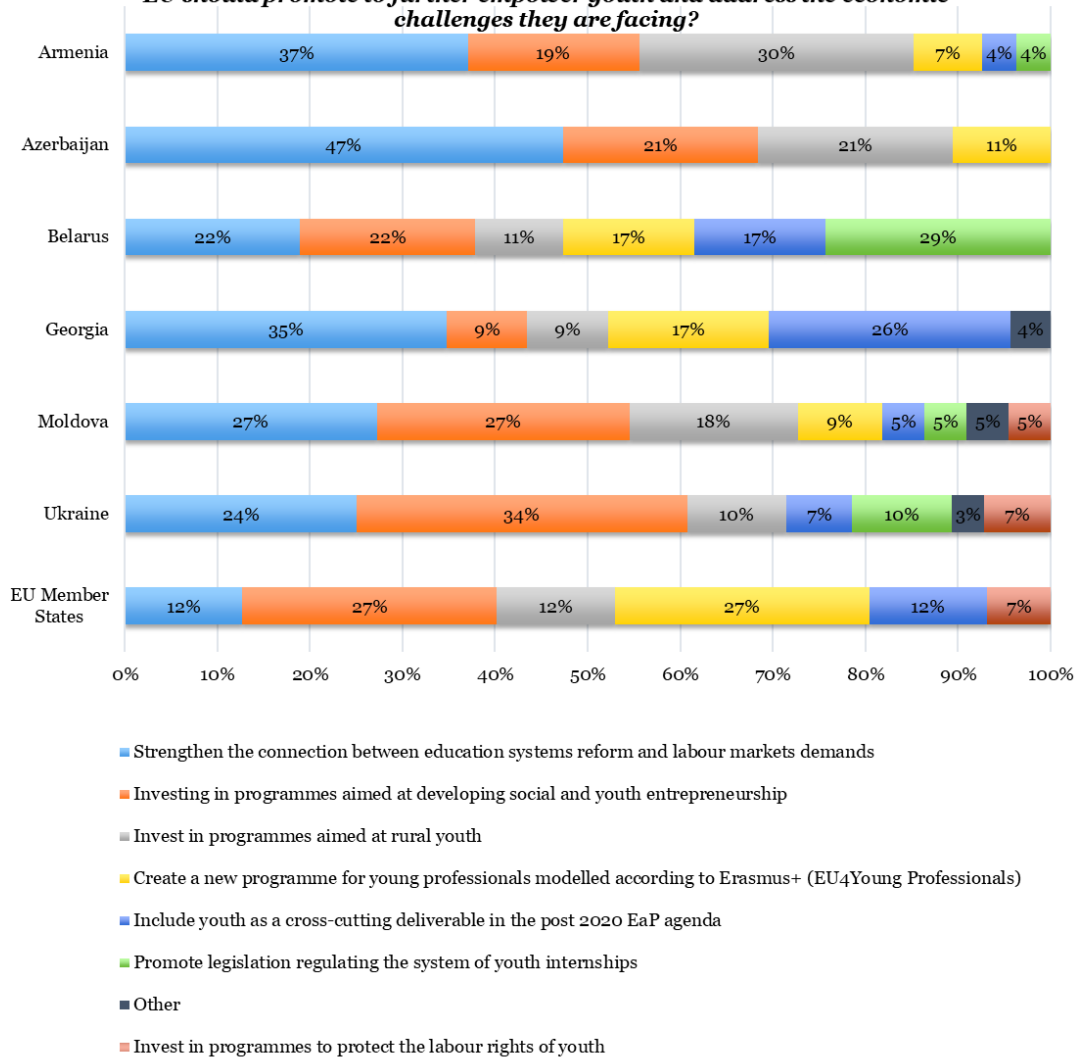
In your opinion, what would be the most urgent and effective measure that the EU should promote to support sustainable economic development in the EaP region?



The majority of respondents indicated (i) investing in support for the infrastructures and (ii) supporting a fair business environment free of nepotism, and businesses that are not closely linked to the government, as most urgent and effective measures to support sustainable economic development in the EaP region. Unlike other countries, **Moldovan** respondents indicated investing in sectors with competitiveness potential in the EU market as the most effective measure. **Belarusian** respondents indicated as second most effective action the adoption of measures encouraging EaP producers to market their production jointly. Interestingly, in Azerbaijan, none of the respondents supported the introduction of measures supporting intra-regional trade and the growth of cross-border business as effective actions.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

In your opinion, what would be the most urgent and effective measure that the EU should promote to further empower youth and address the economic challenges they are facing?



Most respondents indicated – to varying levels – (i) *strengthen the connection between education systems reform and labour markets demand* and (ii) *investing in programmes aimed at developing social and youth entrepreneurship* as most urgent and effective measures that the EU should promote to further empower youth and address the economic challenges they are facing. Most **Belarusian** respondents (29%) indicated promoting legislation regulating the system of youth internships as top priority, while **Georgian** respondents' second choice as most effective measure was including youth as a cross-cutting deliverable in the post 2020 EaP agenda (26%). Respondents from EU member states (27%) recommended creating new programme for young professionals modelled according to Erasmus+ (EU4Young Professionals).

RULE OF LAW & GOOD GOVERNANCE

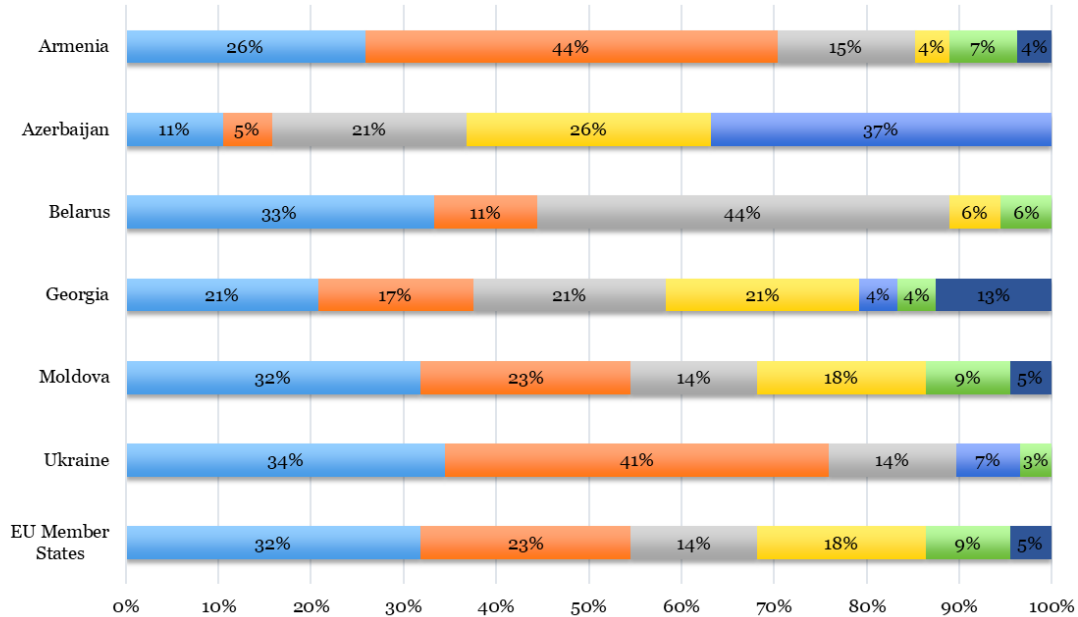
In your opinion, what would be the most urgent and effective measure that the EU could promote to support good governance and rule of law reform in the EaP?



Strengthening civil society's role in policy formulation, choosing bona fide civil society organizations was indicated as the most urgent and effective measure that the EU should adopt to support good governance and rule of law reform in the EaP by the majority of respondents in all countries, with peaks in **Belarus** (52%), **Georgia** (48%) and **Armenia** (44%). The second most chosen option overall was *adopting country-targeted sticks – individual sanctions, assets freezing in case of breaches of rule of law*. This measure received the highest support from Azerbaijani respondents (32%), and the lowest from **Georgian** ones (only 4% indicated it as an effective measure). In **Belarus**, no respondent indicated the adoption of country-targeted sticks, individual sanctions or asset freezing in case of breaches of rule of law as an effective measure, which can be interpreted as a reaction to the experience with the sanctions introduced on representatives of Belarus.

INTRA-EAP COOPERATION

In your opinion, what would be the most urgent and effective measure the EU should adopt to support Intra-EaP cooperation?

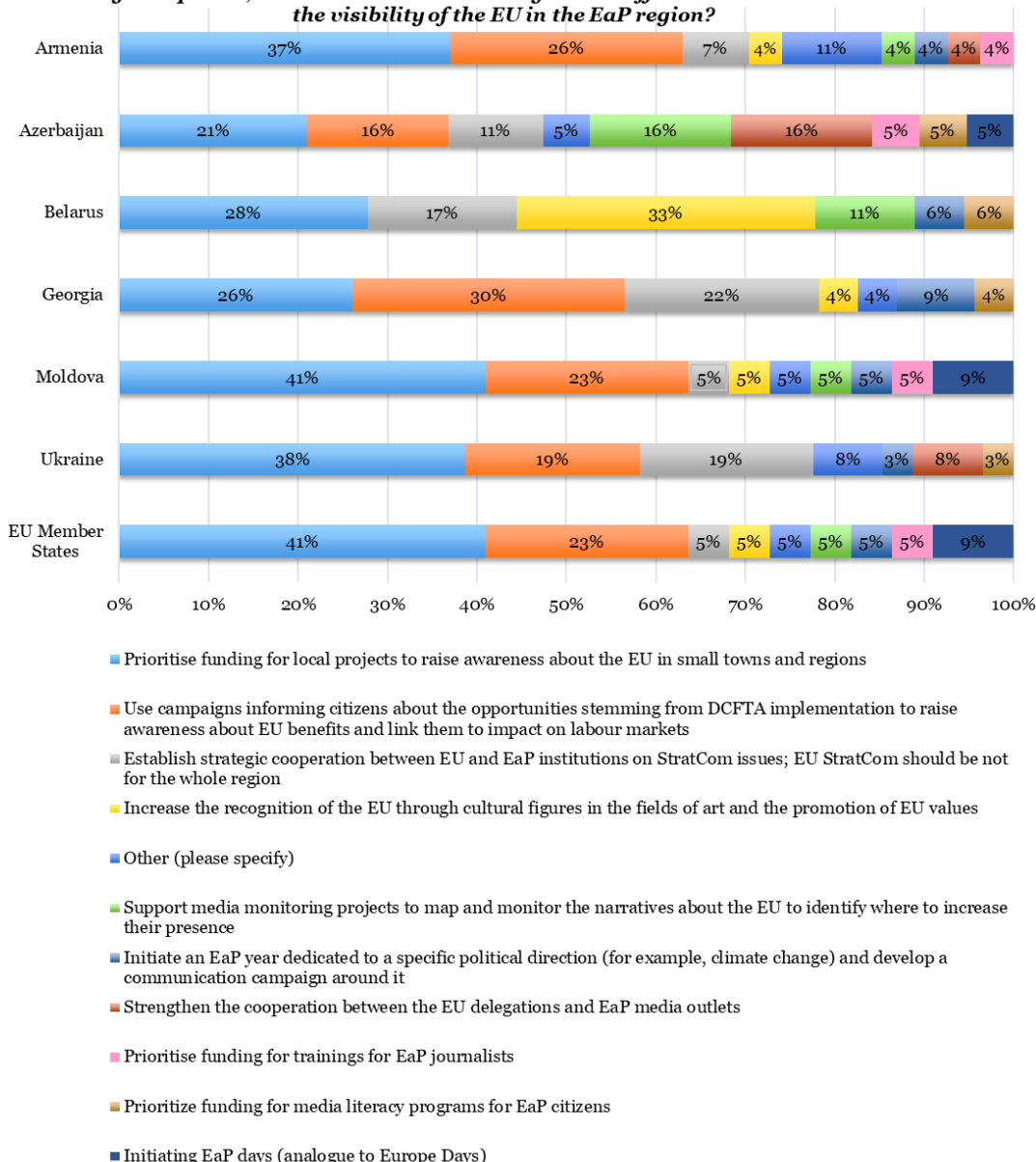


- Create ad hoc platforms for cooperation for EaP countries based on their shared interest; such platforms should be open to participation of the EaP countries that do not take part from the onset
- Develop new formats of cooperation for the three AA/DCFTA countries that might be open to Armenia (CEPA)
- Support primarily intra-regional trade, culture and tourism exchange
- Invest in programmes creating a local layer of EaP-minded EaP citizens (for example, expand the experience of the European School in Tbilisi, making it more inclusive)
- Support and promote the internal organisational reshuffles in order to establish special departments on regional cooperation and EaP within the national public administration and support establishing of the position of EaP ambassadors within EaP countries
- Other (please specify)
- Support the creation of a platform for meetings only between the ministers of the EaP (following the example of the Baltic Council or Visegrad 4)

According to the majority of respondents the two most effective measures that the EU should adopt to support Intra-EaP cooperation, are (i) *creating ad hoc platforms for cooperation for EaP countries based on their shared interest; such platforms should be open to participation on the EaP countries that do not take part from the onset* and (ii) *developing new formats of cooperation for the three AA/DCFTA countries that might be open to Armenia (CEPA)*. **Azerbaijan** is the only country where the majority of respondents pointed as most effective measure supporting and promoting the internal organisational reshuffles in order to establish special departments on regional cooperation and EaP within the national public administration and supporting the establishment of the position of EaP ambassadors within EaP. Azerbaijani respondents showed also the highest support for investing in programmes creating a local layer of EaP-minded citizens (26%). In **Belarus**, instead, most respondents indicated as most effective measure supporting intra-regional trade, culture and tourism exchange (44%). Interestingly, in **Georgia** (17%) and **Moldova** (23%), respondents supported the development of new formats of cooperation for the three AA/DCFTA countries significantly less than respondents in **Ukraine** (41%) and **Armenia** (44%).

EU VISIBILITY IN THE EAP

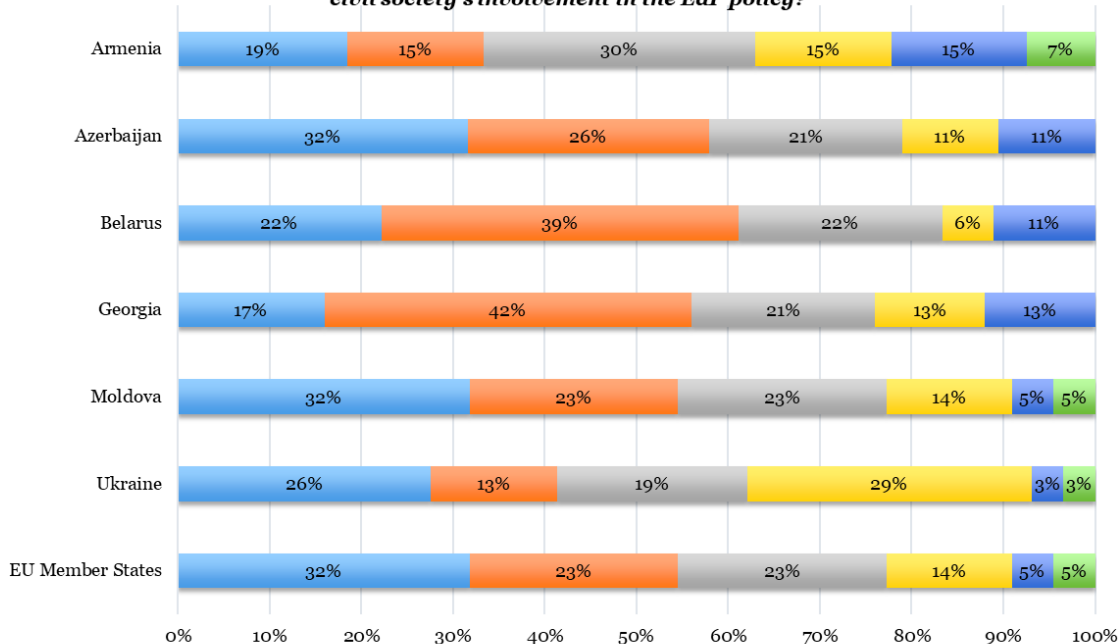
In your opinion, what would be the most urgent and effective measure to enhance the visibility of the EU in the EaP region?



Asked what would be the most urgent and effective measure to enhance the visibility of the EU in the EaP region, respondents indicated – to varying levels – (i) *prioritising funding for local projects to raise awareness about the EU in small towns and regions* and (ii) *using campaigns informing citizens about the opportunities stemming from DCFTA implementation to raise awareness about EU benefits and link them to impact on labour markets*. Unlike other countries, the majority of **Belarusian** respondents pointed to increasing recognition of EU through cultural figures in the fields of art and the promotion of EU values as most effective measure (33%). Only in **Armenia**, **Azerbaijan** and **Ukraine**, respondents chose supporting media monitoring projects to map and monitor the narratives about the EU to identify where to increase their presence and strengthening the cooperation between the EU delegations and EaP media outlets.

CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

In your opinion, what would be the most urgent and effective measure to increase civil society's involvement in the EaP policy?



- Enhance the role of the National Platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum as a third party in EaP official documents and give them concrete implementation roles
- Enhance the role of civil society in EaP policy implementation, to improve the results and strengthen the local ownership of reforms
- Establish permanent working groups, involving civil society representatives and other non-governmental actors tasked with supporting implementation and monitoring of the cross-cutting deliverables
- Include mandatory multi-stakeholding monitoring for EaP governments into the assessment process in the EaP countries, following the practice already established in Ukraine
- Establish joint monitoring bodies within each EaP multilateral Panel to monitor the progress of implementation; the permanent working groups tasked with supporting implementation and monitoring of the cross-cutting deliverables would be part of this schem
- Other (please specify)

The majority of respondents from all EaP countries indicated as most urgent and effective measure to increase civil society's involvement in the EaP policy (i) *enhancing the role of the National Platforms of the EaP CSF as a third party in EaP official documents, giving them concrete implementation roles* and (ii) *enhancing the role of civil society in EaP policy implementation, to improve the results and strengthen the local ownership of reforms*. The latter was the indicated as first priority by the highest number of respondents in **Georgia** (42%) and **Belarus** (39%). In **Ukraine**, the majority of respondents indicated as most effective measure the inclusion of mandatory multi-stake-holding monitoring for EaP governments into the assessment process in the EaP countries, following the practice already established in the country (29%). In **Armenia**, most respondents chose as most effective measure the establishment of permanent working groups involving civil society representatives and other non-governmental actors tasked with supporting implementation and monitoring of the cross-cutting deliverables (30%). The working groups would transfer need-based knowledge and expertise at short notice, and feed the information directly into the regular assessments of policy implementation, run by EU institutions and EaP governments.