

Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum - Working Group 3

Online Meeting, 26 – 27 June 2024

Short report for distribution

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) Working Group 3 (WG3) held its first meeting online on 26-27 June 2024. The event, spanning five sessions, involved the introduction of delegates, statutory elections, policy country updates, formulation of the 2024-2025 Work Plan.

Introduction

The meeting began with introductory remarks from outgoing coordinators Ana Otilia Nutu (Romania, EU) and Olena Pavlenko (Ukraine, EaP). Delegates introduced themselves, their organisations, and countries, highlighting their unique contributions to the civil society ecosystem. The EaP CSF Secretariat provided an overview of the Forum's structure, regulatory processes, and activities, particularly focusing on the history, mission, and priorities of WG3 for the 2024/2025 cycle.

Statutory elections and results

Statutory elections for new WG3 coordinators were held. The EaP candidates included: Artashes Sargsyan (Armenia), Nazeli Vardanyan (Armenia), Elchin Sultanov (Azerbaijan), Nugzar Kokhreidze (Georgia), and Nataliya Andrushevych (Ukraine), and the EU candidate: Gurgen Petrosyan (France). Artashes Sargsyan and Nazeli Vardanyan withdrew their candidacies. The candidates presented their motivations and electoral programmes and engaged in a Q&A session with delegates. The [election results](#), announced the next afternoon, showed Nataliya Andrushevych and Gurgen Petrosyan as the new WG3 coordinators.

Policy Country Updates

Delegates provided updates from their the EaP countries and National Platforms, and the EU.

EU. Ana Otilia Nutu (WG3 delegate, outgoing WG3 EU coordinator) Presented Moldova and Ukraine's path towards EU accession. This is a time for Moldova and Ukraine to focus on internal reform and acquis harmonisation. Regarding the results of the European Parliament, Ana Otilia explained that they were not as drastic as expected. However, expected significant delays in legislative files that is particularly relevant for the Green Deal.

Armenia. Nazeli Vardanyan (WG3 delegate and appointed spokesperson in the session on behalf of local WG3 within the Armenian National Platform) explained that Armenian forest non-governmental organisation is actively working on implementing projects on climate protection. Including, working on replanting forests, limiting animal food produce, and increasing awareness on environmental legislation. The aim of civil society is to help boost the transition to green economy and educate the public. Nazeli highlighted that civil society in Armenia is playing a key role in mobilising the public in support of the green transition.



Azerbaijan. Elchin Sultanov (local WG3 coordinator within the Azerbaijani National Platform) explained that one of the biggest achievements in Azerbaijan is the repair of forests which has included high levels of local involvement. Elchin stressed the importance of protecting wildlife and creating sustainable solutions. Furthermore, presented the main challenges including the narrow conceptualisation and understanding of the environment by most people, failing to understand the far-reaching consequences of pollution and environmental degradation.

Belarus. Vitalina Dudko (WG3 delegate and appointed spokesperson in the session on behalf of local WG3 within the Belarusian National Platform) pointed to the forced liquidation of civil society organisations including 100 in the environmental sector. Furthermore, eco activists continue to face repression, arrests and are subjugated to violence. Yaroslaw Bekish (WG3 delegate and appointed spokesperson in the session on behalf of local WG3 within the Belarusian National Platform) elaborated his proposal to reform the multilateral track of the EaP policy as well as the EaP CSF.

Georgia. Nugzar Kokhraidze (local WG3 coordinator within the Georgian National Platform) presented the recent democratic backsliding in Georgia following the introduction of the law on foreign influence, reminiscent to that of Russia. Nugzar stressed that there is a lack of sufficient resources and funding for environmental projects as well as low levels of public engagement which act as the biggest challenges. Furthermore, enforcement of environment and climate laws remains a big challenge when it comes to forests.

Ukraine. Nataliya Andrusevych (local WG3 coordinator within the Ukrainian National Platform) presented the impact of Russian war of aggression against Ukraine on energy infrastructure, nature and climate change. This includes direct losses of the energy sector of Ukraine as of May 2024 amounting to more than \$16.1 billion which were caused by the destruction of electric energy generation facilities, main electricity transmission lines as well as oil and gas infrastructure. Regarding the political context, Nataliya explained that there are two parallel processes unfolding, that of future EU membership and postwar recovery and green reconstruction. Nataliya recommended to support initiatives for European Green Deal, continue mainstreaming environment and climate change issues within Neighbourhood policies and instruments.

WG3 Work Plan 2024-2025

The final session was dedicated to discussing WG priorities and developing the 2024-2025 Work Plan through two breakout discussions. Key issues included: the delegates discussed thematic issues such as trans-boundary water issues, banning fossil fuels, and energy security; suggested work on relevant subtopics of interest to each EaP country within the EU's Green Deal; stressed the importance of elaborating more on the benefits of European implementation; discussed the possible topics on urban nature and urban sustainability including social and economic areas as well as increased cooperation between civil society and governments; considered the SDG 11 targets, on sustainable communities and economies; recommended advocacy around COP29.

Conclusions

The meeting concluded with an agreement to coordinate and articulate key policy priorities across the region, preparing for the WG3 Work Plan, policy paper, and prepare for the next in-person meeting in Vienna (EaP CSF Civil Society Summit).

