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Environmental security in the EaP countries: state of play, challenges and opportunities

EaP CSF Working Group 3 Policy Paper

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Table of Contents

I. Executive summary	4
II. Post-2025 EaP priorities and in view of the next EaP Summit	5
III. Introduction	6
IV. Methodology	7
V. Overview of the current state of play	10
VI. Review of the implementation of the EaP priority post-2020	22
VII. Policy considerations and opportunities for improvement	27
VIII. Recommendations aimed at providing input for the post-2025 EaP priorities and in view of the next EaP Summit	31
IX. Conclusions	34
X. References	35

I. Executive summary

The securitisation of the environmental issues at the European Union policy level is connected to growing awareness that resource scarcity, human-induced environmental degradation, climate change and natural disasters amplify existing strained relations. The latest EaP policy documents do not properly take into account the security component, in particular in the energy, climate change and environment nexus. Current paper explores the environmental security in the EaP countries in the framework of post-2020 reforms.

Achieving environmental and climate resilience remains a challenge for all countries in the EaP region, which complicated further by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. War causes enormous damage to nature, pollutes air, water, and soil, and increases greenhouse gas emissions. Such impacts are not only national but also cross-border, sometimes even global. The war also influenced many aspects of ongoing reforms, caused a slow down in the energy transition, and further decline of environmental and climate priorities.

All EaP countries face significant climate change related threats. Forest fires induced by droughts, extreme precipitation, heat waves, and mudslides become more common, but still unexpected events and require from states high level of preparedness. Besides the climate change impact, which reinforces environmental degradation, major environmental security issues for EaP countries are biodiversity loss, water quality and quantity decline, deforestation, and urban air pollution. Biodiversity conservation is not a high priority in the EaP region. Environmental degradation is not being perceived by the Governments, local authorities, business or public as immediate danger, therefore being not the matter of security.

The response to environmental and climate challenges is effective policy and institutions. Green transition in the EaP countries requires robust legislative frameworks and long-term strategies; further approximation with the EU acquis and heavy financial investment. There is an existential need to prioritise and quickly work on raising awareness, closing the skills gap, sustaining funding, and strengthening governance for achieving the green transformation resilience. The Good Environmental Governance is a key precondition for reaching environmental and climate resilience. It is crucially important to develop, adopt, and start implementing in EaP countries a plan for state environmental institutional reform in connection to the reform of state environmental finances, starting with a functional analysis of the entire institutional system of environmental protection (including on the regional and local levels).

In order to close the gap in awareness, skills, and knowledge on green technologies and social innovations, we suggest building an EaP regional platform of successful cases (projects) with visual content to learn from EaP countries' experience and promote smart solutions. Such a platform based on EaP CSF support could sustain the development of local CSO initiatives network to empower local expertise, which continues to withdraw due to the departure of local activists from many countries in the region, caused by worsening democratic conditions and lack of resources.

II. Post-2025 EaP priorities and in view of the next EaP Summit

Strengthening EaP and political will for green transformation: the EU would help the EaP countries to securitise and prioritise their green transformation policy, uniting efforts, “to find the strength to reforms” and reach transformative resilience. There is an opinion expressed by many leading CSOs in EaP countries that the EaP policy could be better institutionalised, having a secretariat and permanent representatives in EU offices in all EaP countries.

Framework document on environment and climate security: the EaP needs the framework document on countries’ commitments to environment, climate, and security in the green transformation context, which could be shaped via an inclusive preparatory process helping to raise awareness and involve different stakeholders, from LAs to Members of Parliament (MPs) and CSOs. The essence is to help countries in environmental and climate policy reforms, including strengthening their institutional capacities.

Open dialogue in EaP countries on environment and climate change policy reforms: It is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the national and local authorities to conduct a systematic, qualified, transparent, accountable dialogue with the public on urgent issues of state environmental policy. In addition to improving the quality of decisions on environmental reforms, the dialogue will prevent potential conflicts within societies and mitigate existing ones.

More support to EaP CSF National platforms: There is also clear need to enlarge support to EaP Civil Society. National Platforms of the EaP CSF are doing an amazing job in given circumstances: preparing shadow reports, launching open dialogues with officials and MPs, and helping local communities to prepare and implement local environmental and climate policies according to modern standards. Civil Society, working for the green transition in EaP countries, should be recognized as an indispensable driver of reforms.

The EU should realize, that for a number of EaP countries, the EaP policy remains the only bridge to the civilized world of environmental democracy and high nature protection standards. The EU should then take more responsibility to guide policy in the region, in the mutually beneficial interest of improving the manufacturing, environmental, and climate security belt of Europe.

III. Introduction

There are many interpretations of environmental security, depending on how the environment and security are understood. From the Environmental security point of view, the major challenge concerns the environmental change, focusing on the interactions between ecosystems and mankind, the effects of environmental change on environmental degradation, the effects of increasing social need for resources, ecosystem services, and environmental goods. From the Human security point of view, values at risk are the survival of human beings and their quality of life [1]. Nowadays we recognize concepts like ecosystem functions and services, ecosystem integrity, sustainability and resilience as fundamental values for the survival and well-being of mankind. Considering the transnational nature of environmental security, this issue is indeed in the core of the EaP regional stability.

Until the 2020s, environmental degradation was not considered much as a security issue, though was discussed by scientists since the 90s as a threat multiplier. The securitisation of the environmental issues at the European Union policy level is connected to growing awareness that resource scarcity, human-induced environmental degradation, climate change, and natural disasters amplify existing strained relations [2]. According to the European Environmental Agency (EEA), the Environmental security is measures taken or policies instituted to protect and promote the safety of external conditions affecting the life, development and survival of an organism [3].

Joint communication from the European Commission (June 2023) A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence [4] stresses that climate change and environmental degradation pose increasing risks to international peace and security with extreme weather events, rising temperatures and sea levels, desertification, water scarcity, threats to biodiversity, environmental pollution and contamination and loss of livelihoods threaten the health and well-being of humanity¹. The document states that climate change and environmental degradation are intrinsically interlinked and exacerbating each other and are already affecting food security. At the same time, unsustainable food production also drives environmental degradation and water scarcity inducing environmental crime. The document also says that resources and technologies that are essential for the sustainable energy transition and the phase out of fossil fuel have become the subject of growing strategic competition, which has further accelerated since Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine.

In 2024, EEA produced Europe's sustainability transitions outlook addressing green transition during poli crisis, which the continent is going through now. Since the launch of the European Green Deal (EGD), Europe has faced many new challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and a surge in political populism, often related to issues around migration. And at the same time, climate

1 The term climate and security nexus as used in this document, refers to the impacts of both climate change and environmental degradation, including biodiversity loss and pollution, on peace, security and defence.

change continues to escalate, with increasing impacts here in Europe and around the globe. Together, these challenges impact not only Europe's food, but also water and energy security, as well as the continent's macroeconomic and social stability.

The EaP policy document "Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities" (July 2021) [5] provides for operationalisation of new "strengthening resilience" overarching EaP policy framework, which includes, inter alia, the direction "together towards environmental and climate resilience" as one out of 5 main priorities [6]. It foresees cooperation between the EU and EaP countries to increase benefits for people's health and wellbeing. Changes will improve the environmental conditions via proper environmental governance, achieving a progress in transition to a circular economy, climate neutrality, and green recovery and growth with less pollution and more efficient natural resources use. Outcomes will include: preserving biodiversity and strengthening the economy's natural assets base with sustainable management of waters and forests, the extension and connection of the protected areas, and ecosystems restoration; strengthening energy security and nuclear safety by promoting and supporting the transition to clean energy systems in the partner countries in line with the EGD; and apply the 'energy efficiency first' principle across all sectors regarding policy, investment and planning decisions, and ensure the highest level of nuclear safety and radiation protection with full transparency.

Since the latest EaP political documents were adopted before the war of Russia against Ukraine, they do not properly take into account the security component. Civil society clearly understands and insists on its inclusion, in particular in the context of energy, climate change, the environmental degradation and in the classical understanding of regional security as such [7]. The current paper will explore the environmental security in the EaP countries in the framework of post-2020 reforms.

IV. Methodology

The aim of this paper is to explore the situation with environmental security in countries of the Eastern Partnership region, inter alia, after Russian aggression against Ukraine began; to understand main challenges and opportunities in this field and the role of Civil Society (CS) in promoting environmental security in the context of green transformation; to elucidate the extent on which energy and climate change challenges impact environmental security in the region.

The study focuses on current state of play in the EaP region and countries in terms of environmental security challenges, effectiveness of environmental policy and institutions in the reforms path, involvement of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) into the decision-making process and civil society role in the EaP environment and climate priorities implementation. It also trying to assess the role of EaP policy in providing safeguard in times of democratic backsliding in a context of political turmoil exacerbated by Russia's war against Ukraine, as it concerns environment and climate domain. Another significant role of EaP in anchoring the EaP countries to European values, in particular, to the Good Environmental Governance (GEG) 5 principals, was

also investigated. Special attention was paid to major obstacles for civil society to operate, its further empowerment and involvement into environmental policy reforms. The review of the implementation of the EaP priority post-2020 illustrates findings of the study, which is finalised by the recommendations aimed at providing input for the post-2025 EaP priorities and in view of the next EaP Summit.

To complete the policy paper, the following methods were used:

- Survey among respective delegates and members of the EaP CSF, based on a tailor-made questionnaire covering issues of environmental and climate security, EaP policy implementation, CSOs role and future of the EaP;
- Interviews with one EaP Civil Society Forum's (CSF) Working Group (WG) delegate and one member from each of the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine;
- Desk study, oriented towards classic research papers on environmental security, European Commission official documents; European and Global international organisation's decisions and publications; EaP countries adopted policy documents and laws; CSOs reports, position and policy papers; EaP CSF publications; other open sources.

This study does not represent the opinion of whole civil society of each EaP country, but reflects the view of most active EaP CSF members, also working on strengthening National EaP CSF platforms in order to promote European values and implement the EaP policy in their respectful countries at the national and local levels.

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**Overview of the current state
of play**

V. Overview of the current state of play

The Eastern Partnership aims to reinforce the political association and economic integration of six² Eastern European and South Caucasus partner countries, and supports sustainable reforms processes there [8]. The accession experience of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in the 1990s proved that compliance with the EU environmental standards is one of the most complicated and expensive pieces among all of the EU acquis reforms. For example, with overall sum of 110-116 billion over a period of some 20 years, expenses could estimate between 23 percent and 134 percent of the countries' GDP at a starting point. In per capita terms, the total investment amounts to between Euro 760 and 1,760, mainly for improving water supply and sanitation infrastructure, reducing air pollution and providing proper solid waste management [9]. Setting up the administrative structure necessary to carry out the environmental acquis is also very expensive.

The current climate, green growth, environmental, and sustainable development (SD) policies and legislation in the EaP region is either underdeveloped or poorly implemented and enforced [10]. It concerns weak environmental institutions, lack of knowledge and resources.

The EaP countries continue to face challenges stemming from the legacy of the Soviet era. Oversized and outdated infrastructure, inefficient water management practices, and obsolete technologies, especially in the mining and metallurgical sectors, consume excessive amounts of materials and energy, resulting in significant unabated pollution. These challenges are combined with new pressures from intensified transport, increased household waste, and extensive use of fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture [11].

Russia's war in Ukraine, which awfully affected all spheres of life in the country, also influenced many aspects of reforms in other EaP countries, first of all, energy security and further decline of environmental and climate priorities in those of them, which are not yet negotiating membership with the EU.

While, in their report of 2024 "Environment at a Glance in the EU Eastern Partnership Countries: Measuring Progress Towards a Green Transformation" OECD concluded that despite these challenges, the five EaP countries have demonstrated commendable commitment and progress in advancing the transition to a green economy. However, CSOs argue, that this progress is largely associated with the preparation and adoption of correspondent policies and legislation, while the actual implementation lies far behind.

² According to Council Conclusions of 12 October 2020 and in light of Belarus's involvement into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, recognised in the European Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU has stopped engaging with representatives of Belarus public bodies and state-owned enterprises. CoE 2024

Modern concepts of democratic and effective decision-making are yet to be implemented in all countries of the EaP region, especially for solving such integral problems as environmental degradation and climate change. For example, Good Governance, as a more horizontal model of public administration in compare with traditional, hierarchical, state-control (and typical soviet) style, which requires knowledge and skills to communicate and work with many various stakeholders and take into account their opinion, or full policy cycle, including all elements³. The last part of the cycle, evaluation, does often not happen at all, instead, a new policy is designed, if any. This makes it impossible to assess the effectiveness of policy response and correct it. So, environmental policy is not incremental, and institutional memory is regularly being lost with frequent changes of environmental ministers and merging of the environmental domain with other central governmental bodies (e.g., energy, agriculture).

1. Armenia

Main environment and security challenges

With ongoing decrease of precipitation (9% since 1990 [12]), slow increase of average temperature and extreme precipitation events, climate change is the main challenge, also the source of uncertainty concerning future. Some scenarios on water availability estimate a decline by 39% of water flow by the end of this century, but others suggest a significant increase in a short-term due to intensified melting of Caucasus Glaciers. Research suggests potential declines in water quality and safety for human consumption as a result of ongoing changes [13]. The preparedness to respond to crises, like floods, is low. Drought exposure is also significant. In cities, air contamination is high (from unsustainable public transport system)⁴, green trees areas are in decline, and outdated storm sewer system are of major concern. For the whole country, deforestation (due to illegal logging) and flooding are most significant threats. In 2024, after heavy rains the streets and some homes in Yerevan were flooded with water. The same year, river floods severely affected rural areas causing damage to infrastructure, homes, livestock, and businesses. Degradation of Lake Sevan ecosystem, coupled with climate change impact, also poses the significant threat. Dependence from imported fossil fuel (from Russia) constitutes a double risk. Extensive mining is

3 (1) issue identification and definition, (2) data, research and analysis, (3) policy formulation, (4) policy consultation, (5) policy adoption, (6) policy implementation, and (7) policy monitoring and evaluation

4 Reducing pollution from transport requires a multifaceted approach that includes technological advancements, infrastructure improvements, policy measures, and behavioural changes. This could be implemented through urban policy measures including widespread adoption of low-emission and electric vehicles (EVs), promoting public and active transport to reduce emission rate per capita, developing cycling and walking infrastructure, smart urban planning and intelligent traffic systems, raising awareness etc.

underlined by some experts as “most palpable, most visible and most socially unfair environmental security challenge”, caused by lax legislation on mining and a void of social and environmental responsibility.

Despite the situation, the environment is not a priority in the government’s policy agenda and is being tackled fragmentally. Although some strategies and laws were adopted at the National level, the implementation is low, especially at the local level. Strategic framework is absent since the previous NEAP is finished, but the preparation of new one didn’t start. On the other hand, in 2021 the Government adopted National Action Programme of Adaptation to Climate Change and the List of Measures For 2021-2025. The National Security Strategy (updated 2020) addresses climate change, environment and green economy, inter alia. [14]

Strategic planning, especially at the local level, of environmental and climate policy (e.g., climate or local river protection) is absent or problematic, due to lack of knowledge and expertise. Even if CSOs offer assistance, it is not always leading to adoption of jointly prepared plans by local communities (1 out of 6 as a case). There is a huge work requires to increase the environment and climate awareness and consciousness of society at large and local communities, in particular; implement education programmes and certification for local specialists to work on green transformation.

CSOs

There is a lack of dialogue between the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and CSOs. The opinion of CSOs is not taken into account in the decision-making process⁵. Public participation significantly declined after new Subsoil law (Mining Sector Development Strategy) was adopted in 2022 despite public protests against the assumption that the mining industry in Armenia should develop rapidly in all areas where deposits of natural resources are confirmed [15]. Armenian CSOs are almost not participating in national partnerships with the Government for international cooperation programmes.

It seems, the most developed model of interaction with CSOs in Armenia (also most embarrassing) is SLAPP (Strategic lawsuits against public participation)⁶. According CSOs, there are about 30 such cases of mining companies against environmental activists being processes in the court, several CSOs already paid penalty (usually 10-15K Euro), but submitted cases to the ICHR. Conflict between

⁵ Even the public council within the Ministry had their last meeting 3 years ago.

⁶ Strategic lawsuits against public participation (“SLAPPs”) are understood as legal actions that are threatened, initiated or pursued as a means of harassing or intimidating their target, and which seek to prevent, inhibit, restrict or penalise free expression on matters of public interest and the exercise of rights associated with public participation. CoE, see [here](#).

Armenia and Azerbaijan was used in recent attacks to environmental activists dealing with environmental monitoring with fake accusation in serving Azerbaijan. Greenwashing is penetrating practice, which also hinders independent CSOs from operating in Armenia.

2. Azerbaijan

Main environment and security challenges

Azerbaijan's population is vulnerable to earthquakes, drought and flooding. Droughts are of frequent occurrence and can lead to forest fires. Flooding is a regular issue in the country denuding the land, damaging soil and causing a total damage to economy of \$18-25 million each year [16].

Besides climate related natural hazard, the country is struggling with many environmental problems, such as air pollution and water scarcity, exacerbated by the harmful consequences of the fossil fuel industry. Recent reports indicate that air pollution levels in Baku exceed safe limits, and nearly 30% of the population lacks access to safe drinking water [17]. Local scientists consider the Abseron Yasaqligi and the Caspian Sea to be the ecologically most devastated area in the world because of severe air, soil, and water pollution; soil pollution results from oil spills, from the use of DDT pesticide, and from toxic defoliants used in the production of cotton; surface and underground water are polluted by untreated municipal and industrial wastewater and agricultural run-off [18].

In its Report on Water security assessment in Azerbaijan, the World Bank says the country experiences significant interannual and seasonal water variability due to its geographical location, climate, and hydrological characteristics. Irrigated agriculture stands as the largest water-consuming sector in Azerbaijan's accounting for a significant portion of the country's total water resource consumption, but inefficient irrigation practices are a major concern, especially in regions with high agricultural potential [19].

The country is 100% energy independent and the fourth-largest supplier of piped gas to the EU with a share of 7 percent, behind Norway, Algeria and Russia. Azerbaijan has strengthened its energy ties with the EU since 2022, ramping up gas deliveries and articulating ambitions to export renewable energy and green hydrogen to Europe in the future.

CSOs

Despite being a party to the Aarhus Convention, Azerbaijan's government

systematically undermines public participation in environmental decision-making. The detention and the ongoing repression of activists leaving citizens without a voice in addressing the country's growing environmental challenges.

The adverse effects of hydrocarbon resources mining industries are externalized onto the less powerful segments of society with such negative consequences as air and water pollution, and land degradation. Instances of crude oil contaminating rivers, oil seeping into residential areas, location of oil wells near homes without any kind of protection, or oil pits creating foul air and environmental hazards could be easily found in local settlements or nearby. Natural resources and the environment, for a significant portion of the population, are essential for their livelihood. Resources like water, pastures, and forests are vital for their daily survival. For these and similar reasons, public participation in environmental matters is essential for the well-being of the Azerbaijani people. However, there is a significant lack of interest among the population in engaging with ecological processes too. This disinterest is deeply rooted in the state's policies; educational curricula lack comprehensive initiatives for environmental awareness, and the public, including NGOs, face severe restrictions in conducting environmental awareness activities [20].

3. Belarus

Main environment and security challenges (highlights)

The country faces significant climate change related threats. Temperatures, floods, droughts, and precipitation volume have begun to diverge from historical patterns, which will impact multiple sectors. Water, while abundant within Belarus, may deteriorate in quality due to increased flooding, extreme rain events, and changes in runoff patterns. Furthermore, changing rainfall patterns and flooding may alter the distribution of dangerous radionuclides, particularly in food and water resources, found in southern Belarus as a result of the 1986 Chernobyl accident. In a country with almost 43 percent forested land, rising temperatures are likely to change ecosystem function and forest composition.

Ninety-nine percent of total installed capacity of electricity in Belarus comes from fossil fuels, largely natural gas, utilizing thermal power plants installed during the Soviet period. As most of Belarus' thermal power plants were installed in the 1960s and 1970s, they are at the end of their planned lives and are badly in need of repairs or replacement. Increased frequency of flooding events could damage infrastructure already in need of maintenance or repair [21]. Continued dominance on imported fossil fuels (from Russia) in the energy sector, low diversification of energy suppliers, and only a marginal share of renewables

complete full picture of energy insecurity.

CSOs

Since 2020, Belarusian civil society has faced unprecedented attack: more than 1200 CSOs have been liquidated, including about 90 environmental CSOs. Many experts left Belarus, causing a drastic decrease in capacities inside the country. Absence of watchdogs and the dialogue with Civil society resulted in growing profanation of environmental policy by the Government. In shadow report on SD goals implementation (2022), independent experts stress the lack of reforms, slowness of green transition activities, decline of environmental management and control system with possible collapse of the latter in the near future [22]. Since the activities within the established networks, including the Covenant of Mayors, can no longer be supported, in 2021-2022, several CSOs and experts re-established their work abroad and remained focused on Belarus and the EaP region. The Green Belarus initiative emerged in 2022 and united more than 10 Belarusian CSOs and experts working on sustainability and the green economy. Moreover, the growing impacts of the EU environmental policies and EGD on the economy and trade in the region drives emerging interest in sustainability issues among Belarusian business [23].

The current situation significantly impeded cooperation of EU and Belarusian civil society on sustainability, climate and environmental policy. Although EU supports singular activities of the Belarusian CSO (administrative and relocation support, training and education) the systematic cooperation is currently ceased and need to be re-established to pave the way to future green transition of the country.

4. Georgia

Main environment and security challenges

The National Security Concept of 2011 expired in 10 years and was never updated. It says that environmental challenges as deterioration of Georgia's natural environment, including natural and man-made hazards, could eventually endanger its natural environment, the wellbeing of its citizens and its biodiversity. Georgia's location in a seismically active area increases its vulnerability to natural disasters [24]. The Concept didn't include climate change.

As with other EaP South Caucasus countries, Georgia is quite vulnerable to climate threats because of its mountain fragile ecosystems and extreme weather events associated with floods, droughts, heatwaves, extreme precipitation,

extreme temperature and extreme wind. Rapidly melting glaciers and destructive landslides is causing devastating floods that will only grow in severity. Thousands of acres of forests have been burned as a result of fires. There is also one of the urgent problems of air pollution in the capital, an area that also has very high CO2 emissions [25]. In 2023, Georgia's dependence on imports of petroleum gases and other gaseous hydrocarbons (natural gas) from Russia and Iran increased compared to the previous year, while imports from Azerbaijan decreased [26].

Georgia adopted Climate Change Strategy until 2030 and Mitigation Action Plan in 2021 [28]. Currently, Sectoral adaptation plans are being prepared [27].

CSOs

2020-2024 was a very hard period for Georgian Civil society, which culminated with the new Law on Foreign Agents, voted in May 2024 by Georgia's parliament, enacted on August 1. The law, practically, ceased the role of CSOs as a watchdog and undermined their advocacy capacity. The law requires NGOs that receive 20 percent or more of their funding from abroad to officially register themselves as "pursuing the interests of a foreign power." This would affect many of the roughly twenty-six thousand NGOs in Georgia; according to a 2020 report by the Asian Development Bank, Georgian civil society organisations receive more than 90 percent of their funding from abroad [28]. Failure to register by September 1, 2024, could result in fines of up to \$9,300 [29]. One could experience cognitive dissonance if looking at the Fourth National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia 2022-2026, objectives of which include, inter alia, improving the public participation mechanism and increasing the participation of interested parties, as well as creating a mechanism for collecting environmental information and increasing access to it [30]

5. Republic of Moldova

Main environment and security challenges

Moldova is vulnerable to the impacts of temperature increase, changes in precipitation regimes, and increase in climate aridity from extreme weather events such as heatwaves and frost, floods, storms with heavy rains and hails, and severe droughts. Floods were a major concern to Moldova as 10 major floods have been reported over the past 70 years, three of which occurred in the 21st century (in 2006, 2008, and 2010) [31]. Water scarcity, water quality, and deforestation are major concerns during last decade. So, with annual precipitation decline, water conflicts in distance from big rivers started between ponds' management of upper and lower flow of small rivers. Desertification also was addressed in

a new law (2019) and the practice of using artesian water for irrigation, which causes significant mineralisation of soils.

Moldova is more vulnerable to climate change than the rest of Europe, due to: its higher sensitivity to changes in climate conditions (reflecting its heavier reliance on agriculture, a comparatively-larger rural population, high dependence on energy imports and limited diversification of energy supply sources, and limited financial resources to provide high-quality public services). And due to its weaker adaptive capacity to climate shocks (from its comparatively weaker disaster preparedness strategy and low adaptation in the agriculture sector and poorer quality of infrastructure) [32].

The National Security Strategy of Republic of Moldova (2023) lists the nation's main environmental vulnerabilities: degradation of the environment, as a result of economic activities, namely those affecting the quality of water, soil and air; low level of environment education of the population; degradation and continuous pollution of water resources; low resilience to climate change; limited waste management capacity [33]. High energy dependence from Russia is a core issue of energy security. In January 2025, Moldova purchased most of its gas from Romania. 62% of the needs will be covered by imports from Romania, another 30% will be provided by CHP plants and local renewable energy producers [34].

CSOs

Some major obstacles for CS to operate are: a limited access to decision-making process, and limited public dialogue and return connection. Though the Ministry of Environment was reestablished in 2021 after mistakenly merging with Ministry of Agriculture, frequent change in top-management again caused loss of public dialogue and communication with CSOs. Given CSOs' active role in advocacy, monitoring, and assessment of environmental policy implementation, as well as taking stakeholder policy consultation--especially in the new era of EU accession--inadequate dialogue between CSOs and profiled Ministry is a serious handicap for effective environmental and climate reforms.

Influential CS advocacy depends on receptivity of the government, but receptivity also depends on professionalism of governmental officials, which needs to be improved. However, CSOs managed to contribute substantially to the new National Environmental Strategy for 2024-2030, which sets the best example of comprehensive environmental policy document among EaP countries.

6. Ukraine

Russia, in its war against Ukraine, destroyed, damaged and caused irreversible

losses on the country's environment. According to various estimates, Russia has already committed more than 5,000 environmental crimes since the beginning of its attack on Ukraine, the ecological losses of which amount to approximately 60 billion US dollars and more. Russian war criminals mined in Ukraine the largest territory in the world. The most optimistic estimates give 70 years for demining and returning these lands to peaceful life. At least 30% of Ukraine's forests have been burned, destroyed, and damaged by war. As a result of the terrorist attack on the Kakhovka Dam alone, 14 km³ of fresh water was lost from the cascade of reservoirs, which entered the Black Sea and led to the death of thousands of dolphins and other living organisms. As a result of these losses, more than 60 thousand hectares of forests will be lost in the coming years. Meanwhile, the shelling and bombing of Russia have created more than a hundred thousand tons of war waste and destruction on the territory of Ukraine. And this is not a complete list of environmental losses and damages that were caused by the aggressors requiring restoration measures [35]. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, in Ukraine, attributable to 24 months of war, have increased to 175 million tCO₂e. In the early months of the war, the majority of the emissions were caused by the large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure requiring a large post-war reconstruction effort. Now, after two years of war, the largest share of emissions originates from a combination of warfare, landscape fires and the damage to energy infrastructure [36].

Despite every day's horror, Ukraine continues to work on environment and climate security. In 2021, the Environmental Security and Adaptation to Climate change Strategy till 2030 was adopted by the Cabinet. In 2024, the Framework Climate law was adopted with the goal of achieving climate neutrality until 2050. Aside from the war, the country is at risk of hydrometeorological hazards and natural disasters, which primarily affect the agricultural and human health sectors, through seasonal flooding and periods of drought. Threats from riverine, urban floods, and wildfires are considered high. Impacts from climate change make Ukraine increasingly vulnerable to droughts, high temperatures, heat waves, heavy precipitation, mudflows, and floods. The most common natural disasters are associated with heavy rainstorms that may cause mudslides and flooding of large areas of agricultural land, houses and industrial buildings [37].

CSOs

Currently, there is a misunderstanding between civil society and the authorities regarding compliance with the principles of transparency, participation and accountability in the field of environmental protection during martial law, in particular regarding access to registers, data submission, public involvement in environmental assessment procedures, etc. In the opinion of CSOs, the legislation of Ukraine does not require the restrictions that the authorities

currently apply to environmental information and public participation. The war has proven that Ukraine should not be like the neighbouring aggressor country; it must adhere to democratic procedures, no matter how difficult that is. The issue of the survival of the country and society is the ability of the authorities to conduct a systematic, qualified, transparent, accountable dialogue with the public on urgent issues of state policy. The issues of preserving the environment of Ukraine, and therefore - the greening of the economy - are not just urgent, these issues determine the civilizational future of the state. Such a potential conflict (between the authorities and CSOs operating in the environmental sphere) can only be resolved through a constant, systematic dialogue between the authorities and civil society, where the parties hear each other's arguments and are willing to find a compromise between positions [38]. It is important to note that Ukrainian CSOs current priority for work is the reconstruction of Ukraine and greening the reconstruction – for environmental CSOs.

7. Regional considerations

The European continent is shaken by the biggest armed conflict in the past 75 years [39]. Through the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia seeks to expand its territories and control over former soviet republics and CEE countries of former socialistic camp and to revitalise Soviet Empire in the world, where empires already gone long time ago.

No doubt, this war has strong implication for the EU and Eastern neighbourhood region. The dependence on imported energy carriages from Russia (dirty in all means) is not possible any longer, because it became a clear source of vulnerability. Extreme weather events are more severe over the continent and reinforcing environmental damages. So, such plans as green transformation, energy source diversification, and decentralisation suddenly became immediate surviving needs to be prioritised here and now.

Paradoxically, this war created also new opportunities for green transition during crisis, which the continent is going through now. According to EEA, transformative resilience refers to the capacity of key systems to continue transforming in the event of a crisis (as compared to a more conventional understanding of resilience as a system 'bouncing back' to a pre-crisis baseline). Mainstreaming a transformative approach to resilience in policy practice could integrate security concerns and the need to transform key systems towards environmental and climate goals [40].

The Draghi report is a revolutionary response to current existential crisis, which the EU faces by the need simultaneously transit to green economy, stay competitive, ensure security and defend traditional values of prosperity, equity, freedom,

peace and democracy in a sustainable environment. As a needed mechanisms to respond to the multi-challenge environment, the author argues for accelerating innovation, closing the skill gap, producing sustainable investments, revamping competition, and strengthening governance [41]. In the preface, he says that it is long since self-preservation has been such a common concern. “The reasons for a unified response have never been so compelling – and in our unity we will find the strength to reform”, - he concluded.

Looking into the EaP region, we could stress that instead of undermining environment and climate agenda (as it is usual practice in the EaP countries in general), there is an existential need to work on collective environment and climate security putting it into the core of development. The EU would help the EaP countries to securitise and prioritise their green transformation policy, uniting efforts as more strongly as possible “to find the strength to reforms” and reach transformative resilience. For the success of such ambitious goals, Civil Society, working for green transition in EaP countries, should be recognized as indispensable driver of reforms and obtain more support.

Green transition in the EaP countries requires robust legislative frameworks and long-term strategies, further approximation with the EU acquis and heavy investments. One of main priority should be given to raising awareness, education and involvement of local authorities in partnership with CSOs working on local policies development and implementation.

02

Review of the implementation of the EaP priority post-2020

VI. Review of the implementation of the EaP priority post-2020⁷

1. Together towards environmental and climate resilience

Benefits for people's health and well-being

Achieving environmental and climate resilience remains a challenge for all countries in the EaP region, which was complicated further by Russia's aggression in Ukraine. War causes enormous damage to nature, pollutes air, water, and soil, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Such influences are not only national but also cross-border, sometimes even global.

The EaP countries continue to work on reforming the environmental sectoral policy and legislation: water (new Water Strategy in Ukraine, new Water Code in Armenia, Law on Water Resources Management in Georgia, Law on Sewage and Wastewater Treatment in Ukraine), air quality (comprehensive plan in Georgia), waste (Regulation on waste transfers in Moldova and Law on Waste Management in Ukraine entered into force,), strategic planning (Forth National Environmental Action Programme in Georgia, Environmental Strategy till 2030 in Moldova, 2024), industrial pollution (Law On integrated prevention and control of industrial pollution in Ukraine, 2024) as well as practical initiatives (EBRD support of waste management and disposal practices in the Adjara region in Georgia; development of river basin management plans in Ukraine).

The EU acquis implementation becomes more relevant for countries that have the perspective of EU membership [42], though even there the strategic framework is rather patchy and lack consistency. The policy formulation function is not separated from the rest in the Ministries of Environment, adopted policy documents often lack monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms. Public and stakeholder involvement into the decision-making process is often far from the Aarhus Convention standards though 5 countries are parties to it⁸. GEG principle's implementation and environmental sector institutional reform [43] are explicitly written into legislation only in Moldova, though mentioned in some other countries policy documents. Substantial efforts are needed to re-consider the institutional architecture of environmental sector and strengthen Ministries of Environment in terms of administrative, financial, and organisational capacity (re-establish Ministry of Environment in Georgia) to perform GEG. This entails additional expertise, capacity-building activities, and the acquisition of

⁷ This section used materials of EaP Civic Tracker project

⁸ Belarus withdrew from the Aarhus Convention in 2022.

necessary equipment to fully implement environmental protection and green transition legislation.

Circular economy, climate neutrality, and green growth

The implementation of the EGD and the announcement of joining this course had a great impact on the development of climate policy in countries, in particular, the introduction of such concepts into national legislation as “climate neutrality”, “decarbonization”. While climate change policies in the region are largely driven by the Paris Agreement process. Countries that adopted their updated NDCs under the Paris Agreement continue to work on further climate policies implementation. For example, Armenia in 2023 approved Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy of the Republic of Armenia (Until 2050), Georgia formally approved its Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy 2050 (Lt-LEDS), Moldova adopted its National Climate Change Adaptation Programme until 2030 and Law on fluorinated gases, Ukraine developed a plan of measures for the implementation of the Updated NDC of Ukraine for the period up to 2030 and adopted Law on the Basic Principles of State Climate Policy (2024). As to the circular economy and decarbonization, there is no common trend in the EaP region, and each country is on its own track. To promote the circular economy, in 2023, the Government of Moldova approved the Regulation on ecological labelling, and the Programme for the promotion of the green and circular economy for the years 2024-2028 was approved in 2024. In 2023, the new Energy Strategy of Ukraine was adopted. According to the Ministry of Energy, it sets the goal of achieving climate neutrality in Ukraine’s energy sector by 2050, which corresponds to the goals of the European Green Deal. In 2024, Ukraine adopted the National Energy and Climate Plan [44].

Biodiversity and economy’s natural assets base

The conservation of biodiversity is not a priority in the EaP countries. Protected areas’ share remains low in all countries, with no ambition to achieve targets comparable to the EU. At the same time, between 2000-2019, coverage of nationally protected areas more than doubled in Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan, increased substantially in Ukraine (75 %), and expanded to a lesser extent in Georgia (37 %), Armenia (26 %) and Belarus (17 %). With European Union (EU) and Council of Europe support, 561 Emerald sites have been created, covering 12.3 % of the Eastern Partnership countries’ territories. Through the efforts of national governments--which have also been supported by international organisations--information on habitats, species and protected areas is being made increasingly available to the public (EEA, 2020c). Nevertheless, there is still a large gap between monitoring efforts, data harmonisation, and the use of

available data for supporting the knowledge-based policy processes in Eastern Partnership countries [45].

The issue of restoring nature will be one of the most difficult for Ukraine after the end of the war. In 2023, the Strategy for the Development of the Fisheries Industry of Ukraine for the period until 2030 was approved to ensure the sustainable development of the industry and the preservation of natural reserves of aquatic biological resources. The National Afforestation Programme for the restoration of existing forest and creation of new ones on 145 thousand hectares over 10 years (2023-2032) was launched in Moldova.

Strengthening energy security and nuclear safety

The energy efficiency and energy security issues are on top of the energy agenda of all EaP countries, especially in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine. All countries have ambitious plans for renewable energy projects taking into account their own national circumstances. Energy security became a top priority for several EaP countries, motivating the countries to cooperate with new partners and deal with unprecedented challenges from cutting their dependence on energy carriers supply from Russia.

Energy-efficient building modernization is one of the goals of Armenia-EU cooperation, resulting in the thermal modernization of 59 buildings in 2022, saving at least 50% of energy spare in the apartments. In 2022 Government of Armenia also approved “Energy Saving and Renewable Energy Programme 2022-2030”, at the same time launching the first stage of the Programme implementation for 2022-2024.

In Azerbaijan, the AREA (Azerbaijan Renewable Energy Agency) was created in 2020 to develop and implement renewable energy projects, along with various companies. The main objective of the agency is to increase the share of renewables in the power capacity up to 30% by 2030 (20% in 2023).

In the context of renewable energy development, Georgia has taken significant strides. The Georgian government, in July 2023, approved the first auction of renewable energy projects, resulting in 27 companies securing winning bids. These projects encompass a wide array of renewable energy infrastructure, including ten solar power plants, two wind farms, and fifteen hydropower plants. Support to small and micro hydro generation seems to be a priority in this context.

Moldova and Ukraine energy systems are most affected by the 2022 full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine. For Ukraine, deliberate shelling of energy infrastructure, occupation of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe, and destruction of the Kakhovka dam were the key challenges putting

energy security first. Despite this, Ukraine has been investing in renewable energy projects during the war and has ambitious plans for nuclear development. Ukraine has been rigorously upgrading cross-border transmission lines with EU neighbours to be able to import more electricity.

For Moldova, energy security – in particular asserting autonomy from Russian gas and electrical supply – has been a key priority due to Russian aggression in Ukraine and regionally. Moldova took strong steps to ensure stable gas supplies and plans to enhance electricity connections with Romania.

Nuclear safety has been a key concern for Ukraine, as well as for Armenia-EU relations. Ukraine's nuclear power plants are at constant risk of heavy accidents as a result of Russian bombings and the unprecedented occupation of its largest nuclear power plant. Despite this, Ukraine plans to rely on nuclear generation in the future, including MMRs.

Some countries have demonstrated strong cooperation in the energy sector. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary aim to construct an energy bridge from the Caucasus region to Europe (undersea transmission cable). Ukraine and Moldova have established close cooperation in the gas and electricity sectors to jointly cope with security risks.

Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility

The issue of introducing smart and sustainable mobility is currently mostly considered at the level of individual cities in some EaP countries: through the implementation of individual components in the development strategy, the development of strategies regarding certain elements of sustainable mobility (for example, regarding the development of electric transport), or through the implementation of individual initiatives.

Nevertheless, some cities continue to choose environmentally harmful and unsustainable solutions despite the general trend and movement towards the EU.

Environmentally sound multimodal transportation in the framework of new European Transport Corridor (ETC) Baltic Sea – Black Sea – Aegean Sea (BBA) links European Member States from the far north to the far south of Europe with the maritime interfaces of the Baltic Sea, Black Sea and Aegean Sea part of the Mediterranean Seas, through the countries of Ukraine and Moldova approved by EU on 22.12.2023.

03

Policy considerations and opportunities for improvement

VII. Policy considerations and opportunities for improvement

Russia's barbaric war against Ukraine raised the main question in post-soviet EaP countries concerning development's path: whether to go back to an archaic world or shift to a modern future; green, safe and sustainable?

There is an existential need to prioritise and quickly work on raising awareness, closing the skills gap, sustaining funding, and strengthening governance. This core should help for saucerisation of green transition perception and sustain the resilience that the transformations would not bounce back.

EaP countries are the closest to epicentre of crisis in Europe, their future is inevitably important for security of whole European continent. There is a time to re-consider the role of EaP CSF and Civil Society/ CSOs in EaP countries and recognize their significance in efforts to cut EaP region from wild Russia, sustain EaP countries attempts to broke energy dependence and modernise its sources, finally move to environmentally conscious path of development.

1. Lessons learnt

The conservation of biodiversity is not a priority in the EaP countries. It means that the environmental degradation and climate change is not being perceived by the Governments, local authorities (LAs), business or public as immediate danger, therefore being not the matter of security. Also, environmentally friendly decisions are conflicting with the economic interests of numerous stakeholders, e.g. big industry and landowners, who don't want to invest into modernisation or emission control systems or participate in nature protected areas extension. Hence, the environmental policy is not a priority among other development objectives in the EaP countries. Another reason is weak environmental institutions, including compliance and enforcement function; an inefficient environmental financing system; insufficient support to information and raising awareness about CSO's activities; Nature protection areas in share of countries' areas are much smaller than in the EU and their administrations have limited capacity to engage resources.

Awareness, skills and knowledge gap between EU and EaP (and between capitals and regions inside EaP countries) human resources and citizens is big but could be closed by systematic work and up-scaling. In terms of citizen's awareness, if we look at Russian propaganda, fake news and its impact, we could think about information and communication technologies and skills, which could really intensively reach much wider auditorium on systematic ground. Despite great job, which EU4Environment, EU4Climate, GUMA and other EU funded projects

are doing, much bigger scale of reaching people is needed to make change irreversible. We are in a different world already, the world of survival and we need to wake up, business as usual will not help any more. News on environment, climate and security, as well as about EU standards for well-being or circular economy is likely to broadcast far more intensively. Learning by doing in terms of designing new policies and action plans needs a lot of knowledgeable coaches, and we have them – CSOs working permanently on policy advocacy, monitoring and assessment, already helping to Ministries and/ or LAs with comments and consultations, and main reserve to expand raising awareness and skill-share campaigns.

The environmental governance in the EaP is not effective. Strategies and other policy documents in climate and environmental sectors are being adopted, though sometimes without strategic vision or measurable goals, but are purely implemented. Sectoral institutional reforms in environment and climate domain are crucial to provide for effective policy design and implementation. The quality of policy and its positive impact through successful implementation depends on whether the whole policy circle is being implemented (environmental policy assessment does often not happen at all), whether the process of consultations and coordination was well-organised and whether GEG principals are being followed. Open Dialogue with Civil society is one of most important elements, which often missed. Modern concepts of democratic and effective decision-making are hard to be implemented yet in all countries of the EaP region, especially for solving such integral problems as environmental degradation and climate change. Another fundamental problem is outdated environmental monitoring system, which obstacle the knowledge-based decisions.

Clean environment, protected Nature, GEG – part of European values. EaP CSF is the main force with institutional memory, that continuously protects European values in the EaP countries and supports Civil Society there in terms of unity, advocacy and programming, and EaP CSOs are among major drivers for the reforms:

- Continuously working on monitoring, evaluation and advocacy of environmental reforms, climate and energy policy, pushing for improvement and effectiveness,
- Most advanced in knowledge, communication and information technologies, social innovations, environmental and climate policy, various aspects of development,
- Continuously working with LAs and local communities.

2. Challenges going forward and mechanisms for mitigation

All countries face significant climate change related threats. Temperatures, floods, draughts, and precipitation have begun to diverge from historical patterns, which impact multiple sectors. Forest fires induced by draughts, extreme precipitation, heat waves, mudslides became usual, but still unexpected events and require from states high level of preparedness and mitigation action plans based on strategic approach and scientific-based prognostication. Besides climate change impact, which reinforces environmental degradation, major environmental security issues for EaP countries are biodiversity loss, water quality and quantity decline, deforestation, and urban air pollution.

The response to environmental and climate challenges is effective policy. Instead of undermining the environment and climate agenda, there is an existential need to work on collective environment and climate security putting it into the core of development.

Green transition in the EaP countries requires robust legislative frameworks and long-term strategies, further approximation with the EU acquis and heavy investments. One of main priority should be given to raising awareness, education and involvement of local authorities in partnership with CSOs working on local policies development and implementation.

Good Environmental Governance (GEG) is a key precondition for reaching environmental and climate resilience. The proper implementation of the GEG principles/ objectives (openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence) in the environment and climate policy will have a robust impact on integration of environmental consideration into all policies, allow for better implementation of legislation, and increased public participation and visibility of reforms [46]. The key role of the GEG for the progress in reforming environment and climate is continuously being stressed by the EaP CSF. Achieving GEG and environmental institutional reform is among the requirements under the CEPA of Armenia, the Association Agreements of three EaP countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and a clear obligation of two of them in the accession process.

It is crucially important to develop, adopt and start implementing the plan of state environmental institutional reform in connection to the reform of state environmental finances. For such plan preparation, EaP countries should conduct a functional analysis of the entire institutional system of environmental protection (including the regional and local levels, the system of formation, distribution and control over the targeted use of budget funds) in order to increase institutional capacity and determine the optimal architecture of the central environmental and climate executive governors and its authority at the regional and local level. The capacity building for environmental officials at different levels is another

wing of institutional reform. Special attention is required to the clarity of the presentation and accessibility of environmental monitoring data, the analysis and preparation of data-based decisions, incremental assessment of the achievement of environmental policy targets, the provision of public consultations and feedback on the planning and assessment of the effectiveness of environmental policy, as well as functionality of assessing the environmental impact of planned activities of business entities (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment of plans and programmes (SEA) in order to improve the quality of environmental assessment reports, the transparency and convenience of EIA and SEA registers, and control over the quality of environmental assessments. Countries should plan, start, or accelerate the implementation of basic reforms of state environmental monitoring, state environmental control, reform of legal liability for environmental degradation and violations of environmental legislation, and financial reform in the field of environmental and climate protection.

Local Authorities have even less capacity to implement green transformation policy and projects. Climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and conception of nature-based solutions remain a new area for the municipalities in the Eastern Partnership region. Therefore, further capacity building and awareness raising in this field is required. Moreover, access to finance is the main challenge for the local level, and there is a clear need for further actions in the area to enable projects in the field of climate adaptation. With Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia having obtained candidate status, the capacity of authorities in implementing the EU legislation at both national and local levels should be improved. In the specific case of Ukraine, climate change adaptation still needs to be fully factored into reconstruction and recovery strategies, both at the local and national level [47].

In terms of closing the gap in awareness, skills and knowledge on green technologies and social innovations, experiences CSOs suggest to build the EaP regional platform of successful cases (projects) with visual content to learn from EaP countries experience, promote and upscale smart solutions in energy efficiency, nature protection, Renewable energy sources (RES) installation and application, using clean transportation schemes, preparation and implementation of environmental and climate policy, open dialogues effectiveness, etc. Such a platform based on EaP CSF support could sustain the development of the local CSO initiatives network to empower local expertise, which continue to withdraw due to departure of local activists from many countries of the region caused by worsening democratic conditions and lack of resources.

VIII. Recommendations aimed at providing input for the post-2025 EaP priorities and in view of the next EaP Summit

1. Strengthening EaP and political will for green transformation

The EU would help to EaP countries to securitise and prioritise their green transformation policy, uniting efforts as more strongly as possible “to find the strength to reforms” and reach transformative resilience. The unity is logical response to high turbulence and severe challenges, which EaP countries together with whole Europe are going through now. There is an opinion expressed by many leading CSOs in EaP countries that EaP could be better institutionalised, having a secretariat and permanent representatives in EU offices in all EaP countries, issuing more often decisions and able to execute the follow-up. It is especially important for adoption of the transformative approach of the governance, which inter alia would require multi-stakeholder collaboration, innovative financing mechanisms and capacity to work permanently with feed-back analysis, monitoring and reporting.

2. Framework document on environment and climate security

EaP needs the framework document on countries commitment to environment, climate and security in the green transformation context, which could be shaped via inclusive preparatory process helping to raise awareness and involve different stakeholders, from LAs to Members of Parliament (MPs) and CSOs. The essence is to help countries in environmental and climate policy reforms, including strengthening institutional capacity. The Task force could be organised with active participation of the EaP CSF representatives. Clear targets, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, regular reporting could support countries in their attempts of green transition.

3. Open dialogue in EaP countries on environment and climate change policy reforms

It is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the authorities to conduct a systematic, qualified, transparent, and accountable dialogue with the public on urgent issues of state environmental policy. The issues of environmental

protection - and therefore the greening of the economy - are not just urgent, these issues determine the civilizational future of the EaP countries. In addition to improving the quality of decisions on environmental reforms, the dialogue will prevent potential conflicts and mitigate existing ones (between the authorities and CSOs operating in the environmental protection sector), through a permanent, systematic dialogue between the authorities and civil society, where the parties hear each other's arguments and are willing to find a compromise between positions. As a favourite tool for developing environmental policy or compiling reports on the implementation of policies and legislation, the EU could transfer experience to the authorities of EaP countries and help in its constant application. The issue of access to information and public participation in the decision-making on environment and climate matters in the EaP countries should be examined and specifically addressed in next EaP policy circle.

4. More support to EaP CSF National platforms

There is also a clear need to enlarge support to EaP Civil Society. National Platforms of the EaP CSF are doing an amazing job in given circumstances; preparing shadow reports, launching open dialogues with officials and MPs, and helping local communities in preparation and implementation of local environmental and climate policies according to modern standards. This so crucial direction of work is especially underfunded and also need corrections of conditions for support. For example, it could be the donor requirement for LA applicants to include into consortium/ coordination team CSOs or coalition/ platform of CSOs. Environmental CSOs often have less opportunities than other issues groups in the EaP countries since environment and climate is still low priority there, while Civil Society, working for green transition in EaP countries, should be recognized as one of the indispensable drivers of reforms, and obtain more support through dedicated EU funding streams, capacity-building programmes and conditional involvement as partners into regional projects and programmemes granted to Local and/ or National Authorities.

04

Conclusions and References

IX. Conclusions

No doubt, the war of Russia has strong implications for the EU and Eastern neighbourhood region. The dependence on imported energy carriages from Russia became a clear source of vulnerability and required urgent solutions. Extreme weather events are more severe over the continent and reinforcing environmental damages. So such plans as green transformation, energy sources diversification and decentralisation suddenly became immediate needs to be prioritised here and now. Paradoxically, this war created also new opportunities for green transition during crisis, which the continent is going through now.

As EU policy now revolves around security issues, EaP policy as one of the policies cannot fail to have this component, requiring both a general overview, as well as an overview in the context of the environment-climate-energy-security nexus.

The EU should realize, that for a number of EaP countries, it is the EaP policy that remains the only bridge to the civilized world of environmental democracy and high standards of nature protection, and it should therefore take more responsibility, also mutually beneficial in terms of manufacturing environmental and climate security belt of Europe.

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