



## EAP CSF ARMENIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

### STATEMENT

#### *on the Implementation of Article 366 of the RA-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA)*

*June 14, 2019*

The Armenian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF ANP) expresses deep concern with regard to the implementation of Article 366 of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Armenia.

According to the mentioned Article: *“A Civil Society Platform, comprised of representatives of civil society on the side of the European Union, including members of the European Economic and Social Committee, and representatives of civil society organizations, networks and platforms on the side of Armenia, including Eastern Partnership National Platform, shall be established”*.

ANP has always expressed its commitment to a democratic, transparent and inclusive process of establishment of a new platform and has initiated the engagement of partners in Armenia and the EU countries that can contribute to the implementation of CEPA. With the support of the EaP Civil Society Forum, the experience of similar bilateral platforms in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine was studied, and an appropriate package of recommendations developed. However, all these efforts were ignored. Instead, for the formation of the civil society platform the EU Delegation to Armenia has engaged external consultants, on whose months-long activities' results the Armenian civil society knows nothing.

It is also not known through what mechanisms and arrangements the implementation of the above-mentioned Article of the bilateral agreement, whose main parties are the European Commission and the Government of the Republic of Armenia, was, in fact, almost entirely delegated to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which had not demonstrated particular activeness in the implementation of reforms in Armenia before. Moreover, despite the fact that EESC is mentioned in CEPA with the same status as CSF ANP, that organization attempts to confer upon itself the right to not only select all the members of the new platform representing the civil society of the European Union, but also to dictate its terms in determining the two-thirds of the Armenian members. Unfortunately, the efforts of the CSF Armenian National Platform representatives to build mutual understanding and partnership with the European Economic and

Social Committee were unsuccessful. And all this happens with the consent of the EU and the RA structures responsible for the implementation of the bilateral agreement.

At the same time, in the April 8, 2019 official letter of the EESC to the representatives of the civil society of Armenia it is noted that “*the selection procedure of the Armenian side of the civil society platform will be entirely conducted by the Armenian civil society*”. This demonstrates only one of the many contradictions between the principles and practice of the establishment of the platform. Transparency (“*the results of the selection process should not be challenged*”) is indicated as one of the most important criteria of the process, while the mechanisms used by EESC have nothing to do with this criterion.

The ANP members at meetings with EU officials have repeatedly expressed their concern about the situation with the establishment of the civil society platform within the framework of CEPA. In particular, in the Address by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum to the Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting (May 13, 2019) it is noted: “*We also call for the formation and development of a clear mission for CEPA civil society platform taking into account the concerns of the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform*”. However, there has been no response to this call.

We consider the issue raised as non-compliant with the essential components of democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms stipulated by Article 2 of CEPA, and consequently with the crucial provisions of CEPA.

Considering such development of events unacceptable, the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform once again draws the attention of the European Commission, the European External Action Service and the RA Government to the problems of ensuring efficient participation of civil society in the implementation of CEPA.

We state that the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform will take part in the establishment of the civil society platform envisaged by CEPA only in case relevant adjustments are made to fully ensure the democratic nature, inclusiveness, and transparency of the process.

We call on our colleagues from all segments of civil society to show solidarity and responsibility in this issue, which is of fundamental importance for the successful development of the bilateral relations between our country and the European Union.