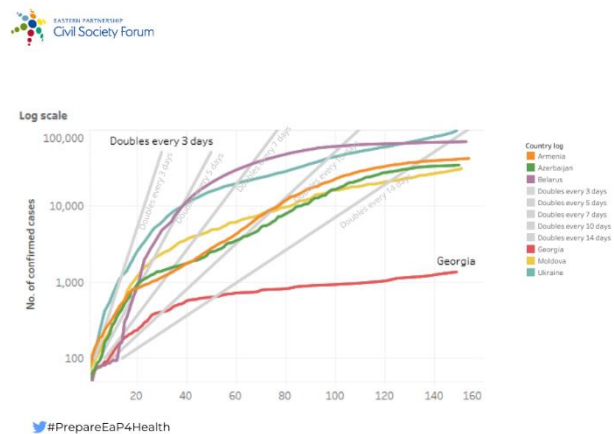


Annual Activities Report 2020

We are approaching the end of another turbulent year with a multitude of activities that we conducted as the EaP CSF. The Annual Assembly is taking place ahead of the Eastern Partnership Summit and against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, recently ended war in Nagorno-Karabakh, a severe political crisis in Belarus and Georgia, and important elections in Moldova and Ukraine. The Assembly will be out last and the biggest event of the year that will allow us to reflect on the key developments and discuss how they will affect us in the years to come.

COVID-19-related activities

Unsurprisingly, a large number of our activities in 2020 have been focused around the COVID-19 pandemic via a multitude of actions united by [#PrepareEaP4Health](#) campaign. After the outbreak of COVID-19 in mid-March, we launched a daily monitoring tool of new registered cases in the EaP countries, and at a time when Russia and China were not shy in promoting their levels of support to the region and beyond, we published a tool providing the real picture regarding the amounts and types of external support offered to the region, particularly by the EU and its member states.



With the implementation of sweeping restrictions in the EaP countries, intended to slow the spread of the virus, we voiced our concerns over the state of democracy and the rule of law via numerous statements, a series of papers on civil society and COVID-19 detailing the impact of virus mitigation measures on [fundamental rights and freedoms](#), [the economy](#), [vulnerable groups](#), and [the viability of the region's civil society sector](#), as well as a series of [podcasts](#), reaching more than 300 listeners. More recently, we launched a monitoring tool that tracks governmental responses to the crisis since March, and their broader impact, in the areas of rights and freedoms, economy and society, and health, presented in an [interactive timeline](#). We have also collected the concerns of EaP CSF members and the [recommendations you shared in the consultation on how to support civil society during the pandemic were shared with the European Commission](#). The second consultation was a Forum-wide one on how civil society should be supported during COVID-19, which served as a basis for the Forum advocacy on this subject.

In terms of the EaP CSF's own financial support for mitigating the effects of the ongoing crisis, we allocated 240.000 EUR for COVID-19 related support to 23 EaP CSF members. The re-granting will support CSOs working with populations severely affected by COVID. Supported projects touch upon a variety of issues: legal aid, psychological support to vulnerable groups,

addressing needs of persons with mental and physical disabilities, and building capacity of CSOs affected by the COVID crisis, among others. Additionally, EaP CSF is in the process of developing nine policy papers on how COVID-19 has affected a range of areas, including decentralisation, SMEs' digital transformation, water and waste management, education, and more.

Presidential elections in Belarus and post-electoral political crisis



In the run-up to the presidential election in Belarus, we launched a monitoring mission consisting of 5 EaP CSF members to observe political and societal developments before, during, and immediately after election day itself. The mission's final [report](#), which concluded that the election could not be considered free or fair and proposed a number of recommendations to the Belarusian authorities and the international community, was welcomed and referred to by

a number of key stakeholders. After the falsified election result and subsequent police crackdown on peaceful protesters sparked a full-blown political crisis in the country, together with our National Platforms we protested in front of the Belarusian embassies in Chisinau, Kyiv, Tbilisi and Yerevan to show our solidarity with the Belarusian people. Since the beginning of the crisis, the EaP CSF Steering Committee has adopted more than 12 statements in support of Belarusians' struggle for free and fair elections and the respect of their fundamental human rights, with the Forum also launching a [petition](#) calling for the release of three of our members, who were illegally detained by the authorities.

Beyond expressions of solidarity, we have also conducted numerous advocacy meetings in Brussels, channelling our positions on the rapidly evolving situation and on priorities for future support to Belarus. Over the course of 17 closed briefings and meetings with EU stakeholders and 8 public events, we have called for a number of concrete measures to assist the newly-mobilised Belarusian society at this time, with a particular emphasis on channelling EU financial assistance away from the state authorities, and supporting independent education provision.

Cooperation with EU institutions and EU member states

The EU institutions and EU member states are the genuine counterpart of the Forum in its efforts to promote and advocate the positions of the civil society within the EU decision-making process. Beyond the EaP CSF participation within the EaP multilateral architecture, which is described below, the Forum focused in 2020 on providing substantive input into the regular ENP, AA/DCFTA and CEPA reports on individual EaP countries, drafted by EEAS and the European Commission, as well as to the preparations of EU human rights dialogues with each EaP country. Further contributions were made namely to the European Parliament [report](#) on the Eastern Partnership, as well as to joint advocacy on the EU MFF 2021-2027 and the design and budget of the so-called Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), targeting namely the EU member states. After the alarming developments linked to the falsified presidential elections in Belarus, the cooperation with EU member states and EU institutions on information sharing and recommendations on how to assist the civil society and people of Belarus intensified on the course of the second half of the year. The EU institutions and EU member states were also the main recipients of Forum's messages on how to support the viability and sustainability of the civil society sector during the COVID-19 crisis, as well as on how to support vulnerable groups, underpin the fundamental rights and freedoms and lessen the economic impact of the pandemic that has been challenging all partner countries and the rest of the world.



Participation in the EaP architecture meetings and shaping the EaP policy post-2020



The discussions held during the WG meetings, and the ideas arising from them, went on to inform some of the Forum's input to meetings within the framework of the EaP architecture. Since September, when the EaP events have restarted in the online format, EaP CSF members have taken part in 11 such meetings, including 8 multilateral thematic Panels ([Public Administration Reform](#), [Rule of Law](#), and [Security & CSDP](#) under Platform 1, [Trade](#), [SMEs](#), and HDM under Platform 2, and Energy and Transport under Platform 3). We also had an opportunity to channel our positions at the EaP [Senior Official Meeting \(SOM\)](#), taking account of current EaP policy dialogue and discussing direction for further cooperation beyond 2020. In the weeks preceding the Annual Assembly in early December, EaP CSF members have also participated in two further Panel meetings (Research & Innovation, presenting a [position paper](#) of the EaP CSF, and Education, Culture & Youth – both under Platform 4), as well as the end-of-year meetings of the four

overarching multilateral Platforms. In total, EaP CSF participated in 24 official events within the EaP Architecture. Over the course of these architecture meetings, we have actively contributed to the shaping of the EaP policy beyond 2020. We have managed to increase our participation from 2 to 6 EaP CSF members per event, which allowed for a wider spectrum of positions to be voiced.

In terms of shaping the future EaP policy, our joint effort and results of the comprehensive framework consultations on the future of EaP policy materialised in the text of the [Joint Communication](#) of the European Commission and European External Action Service, entitled *Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all*, in March 2020, where 41 recommendations of the Forum were fully or partially reflected. To underline several important issues further, the Forum [responded](#) to the Joint Communication and provided its position to this key document. Further contributions to the elaboration of the future EaP deliverables, based on input from our members, have been made at the meetings of the EaP Platforms, which took place in late November and early December.

Working Group activities

Notwithstanding the all-encompassing impact of the pandemic, the events of this year have not prevented us from organising our annual Working Group meetings – conducted in an online format for the first time, therefore allowing the participation of not just delegates, but members



as well. Indeed, almost 290 people from the EaP CSF's network participated in a total of 28 sessions across the 5 WGs, sharing their priorities and recommendations for the future of the EaP policy with – and hearing the perspectives of – 13 stakeholders from the EU institutions, national governments, international organisations, and the EaP expert community. In addition to serving as a platform for engaging with stakeholders, the WG meetings also gave participants the opportunity to learn more about the work of the Forum, to get to know their counterparts from across the EaP region and EU member states, and to discuss policy areas of particular importance to each WG. Reports summarising each of the WG meetings can be viewed [here](#). Based on the demand of WG1 members, a follow-up capacity building session on different aspects of how to monitor the implementation of anti-corruption policies in the EaP countries as well as how the civil society can help to investigate financial crimes related namely to high-level corruption, was organised in October 2020.

During 2020, Working Group 3 focused mostly on the European Green Deal and the opportunities it offers for the region. The EaP CSF has run a consultation on the European Green Deal among the members of WG2 and WG3. The results of this consultation were used to formulate positions at all meetings under Platform 3 and EU4Environment that the Forum participated in. Thanks to EaP CSF facilitation, WG3 members participated in capacity

buildings organised under the EU4Environment umbrella and covering the implementation of Best Available Techniques (BAT) approach to environmental regulation and risk-based approaches to environmental compliance assurance. A third capacity building is in the pipeline for January 2020 and will cover accountability in energy sector for Eastern partner countries.

Driven by the changes in the educational sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Working Group 4 capacity building session will dwell on the e-education experiences. The session will take place in early 2021, focusing on the existing best practices and successful tools for formal and non-formal education.

EaP CSF Re-granting to Working Groups

The Re-granting scheme funds multi-country projects of the EaP CSF members in one of the thematic areas of the EaP policy. At the beginning of 2020, the selection committees evaluated 31 eligible proposals. A total of 11 projects were selected: 2 relating to WG1, 2 to WG2, 2 to WG3, 4 to WG4, and 1 to WG5. The total budget of these 11 projects amounted to €259,604. The topics the projects cover include ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention, assessment of LEADER approach in EaP region, ecosystem services and hydropower, transparency in the energy sector, youth inclusion and youth employment policy solutions, debunking of myths related to the EU and COVID-19 through gaming, or promotion of labour rights of people with disabilities. Many project teams had to adjust to the new pandemic-related reality on the course of the project implementation and added new aspects and activities reflecting both on the transition to online mode of work and cooperation and on the imminent information and assistance needs of their target groups. All projects can be viewed on the dedicated [EaP CSF website](#).

EaP CSF Youth Conference

The third edition of EaP CSF Youth Conference “Youth4Environment” that we conducted in September focused on discovering methods, strategies and tools to cultivate environmental behaviour and knowledge, advancing environmental education and activism among peers in the Eastern Partnership. It gathered around 130 participants, including 90 young people from the EaP countries, EU member states and Russia. In various sessions, young people debated with national and international policy-makers, produced a set of recommendations to be presented at the EaP environmental ministerial in 2021 and developed 3 projects, which received funding for their implementation by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Regional Office “Dialogue Eastern Europe”. The report of the event can be viewed [here](#). This conference was organised by the EaP CSF Working Group 4 preparatory team with the financial support of the European Union, German Presidency to the EU and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Regional Office “Dialogue Eastern Europe”.



EaP CSF statements and Campaigning

The EaP CSF has continued to adopt Forum-wide statements via the statements of the Steering Committee to attract attention to the developments in the region. This year 18 statements have been developed, circulated among the relevant stake-holders and used for further meetings and developing positions. Finally, National Platforms of the EaP CSF have been active in voicing the views of the matters of importance for their country and have developed more than 15 statements.

Overall on the course of the 2020, EaP CSF has launched 4 umbrella online campaigns, highlighting our successes and delivering our message to the external audience.

The EaP CSF #CivilSocietySays campaign focused on promoting the key messages from the civil society in EaP and the EU on the future of the EaP policy, collected via inclusive structured consultations in autumn 2019.



Shortly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, EaP CSF launched a #PrepareEaP4Health, aiming to highlight the needs of six EaP countries to fight the outbreak of COVID-19, which has major impact on both – political and economic developments of the EU and EaP countries.

#EaPYouth4environment campaign strengthened the efforts of the Forum in promotion green agenda in the EaP region. At the same highlighting the role of younger generation as an important actor in policy dialogue on the implementation the European Green Deal in the Eastern Partnership countries.

#EaPAA2020 – Forum’s annual online campaign, focusing on the key event of the Forum – Annual Assembly. This year, due to impossibility to meet in person, this campaign emphasises community engagement, focusing on increasing our reach out online, allowing some sessions of the event to go beyond EaP CSF membership.

In 2020, the Forum and its National Platforms were mentioned 50 times in various media outlets in the EU and across the EaP region. Our Social Media activities reached up to 21K viewers. The number of followers on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram increased steadily throughout the year.

EaP Index



Works on the latest edition of the [Eastern Partnership Index](#) – the EaP CSF monitoring tool charting the progress made by the six Eastern Partnership countries towards sustainable democratic development and European integration – have been

ongoing and publication is scheduled for December 2020. The Index measures steps taken on the path towards good governance, including the observance and protection of democracy and

human rights, sustainable development, and integration with the European Union. During the course of 2020, a comprehensive process of re-evaluation on the tool's methodology has been launched, with the objective of strengthening its analytical and advocacy potential. The review will take into account of ongoing EaP policy processes that point to a re-organisation of the Eastern Partnership policy on the basis of newly defined priorities.

EAP CSF REGRANTING TO NATIONAL PLATFORMS

All National Platforms benefit from the Forum's Regranting to National Platforms scheme, receiving 100,000 EUR for the period 2019-2020.

Funding to NPs is contributing to strengthened mechanisms of trilateral dialogue, with the participation of civil society on the national level dedicated to sectoral reforms in the framework of the EaP.

The Armenian National Platform of the EaP CSF has supported its members in producing of policy papers and conducting events related to CEPA, 20 deliverables for 2020, Covid-19 pandemic, and key issues in the Armenian socio-political life. The WG activities not only contributed to the reinforcement of the Working Groups but also ensured major engagement of the regional CSOs. Throughout the year the Armenian NP has been active on the developments around the Constitutional Court: the Armenian NP members have participated in a number of online and offline meetings of the Professional Committee on Constitutional Reforms coming up with their proposals. The Armenian NP has called for a resolution of the Constitutional Court crisis with a Statement.

Due to the persecutions of the colleagues from the EaP CSF **Belarusian National Platform**, it organised a protest action in front of the Belarus Embassy in Yerevan demanding to release our civil society colleagues. This was an important gesture of solidarity among the EaP civil society and evidence of the CSF members' mission to act for the sake of democracy and respect for human rights.



To address COVID-related crisis **Azerbaijani National Platform** commissioned three assessment reports on COVID pandemic influence on the vulnerable groups: people with disabilities, youth and children in relation to their access to technologies. The Platform conducted an assessment of its activities and its member organisations, which is currently being translated. In June 2020 representatives of WG1, WG2 and WG3 discussed current problems of civil society in Azerbaijan, challenges to small and medium business in post-pandemic period, and EIA and renewable energy. With the support of the EaP Civil Society Facility-Regional Action, the NP organised a webinar on “How to Develop a Good Project and what is the grant policy

of the EU” for members of WG4 and 5. In September 2020, the NP participated in a meeting with Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan - Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Presidential Administration, which gathered heads of 300 NGOs to discuss importance of closer and more effective participation of NGOs in public life of Azerbaijan. A set of seminars for young human rights defenders has been conducted in November 2020.

Between January and November 2020 **Georgian National Platform (GNP)** conducted 10 Coordination Council meetings, Workings groups and its subgroups met 19 times. 10 GNP member



organisations developed comments/proposals on draft document of the Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia for 2021-2027. In line with the memorandum concluded with the EU Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia GNP member organisations and its representatives followed their actions plans and undertaken concrete steps: they took active part in Committee hearings, meeting with the Chairperson of the EU integration committee in June, developed proposals/recommendations on the draft laws and participated in extended sittings. Chairperson, with the WG1 coordinators actively participated in the hearing “Changes to the Electronic Communication” law. Sides agreed to conduct sectorial meetings in order to discuss important issues arisen during the event. Within the frame of ongoing project, GNP supported six organisations. Up to 40 organisations benefitted from the project support scheme (phase 1 and 2). Between January and October 13 new members joined the GNP.

In January 2020, **Moldovan National Platform (MNP)** organised General Meeting of NP to discuss its commitments and future activities. In February 2020 the NP took part in the 6th meeting of the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform, which resulted in Joint Declaration of the EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform. In March 2020 NP took part in an on-line informational seminar “Raising awareness about the Eastern Partnership and the work of the MNP” with CSOs from Gagauzia regarding EU opportunities and granting schemes. In June and July NP conducted a series of events and videoconferences related to COVID-19 crisis and to World Environment Day. Throughout June Working Group meetings (3, 1 and 4) were taking place. In August and in September MNP gathered in front of the Embassy of Belarus to Chisinau in an Act of Solidarity with the population of Belarus protesting against falsified presidential elections and police violence. In August MNP members participated in a workshop devoted to developing Advocacy, Strategic Communication, and Analysis Tools. Online General Meeting of the Moldovan NP and Working Group Meeting 4 took place in September 2020. In October 2020 MNP participated in presentation of the Shadow Report on the main progress, constraints, and priorities in the implementation of the Association Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova. In November 2020 MNP organised a press conference on Environmental Problems caused by the exploitation of mineral resources. Throughout 2020 MNP supported initiatives increasing public awareness about advantages of joining the EU for the Republic of Moldova and cultivating European values, increasing accountability

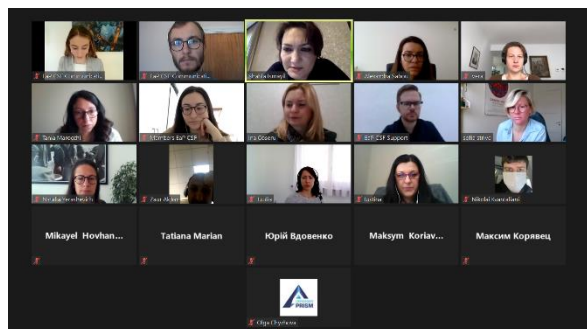


among Moldovan authorities in terms of reforms in the areas of good governance and human rights, judiciary reform, anticorruption effort and bank fraud investigation and monitoring the implementation of DCFTA among others.

The Ukrainian National Platform is preparing the fourth edition of the monitoring report on Ukraine's implementation of "EaP 20 Deliverables for 2020" to be published in December 2020. On October 28, 2020, the National Platform of the CSF East held an open panel discussion "The Role of the EU in Resolving International Conflicts in the Eastern Partnership countries". UNP members took part in the meetings of the parliamentary Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the European Union and used this possibility to express their opinions on the legislative drafts. Overall, UNP held 11 meetings with government officials. The UNP is actively cooperating with the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform created under the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Two of the Statements of the WG3 were prepared in cooperation with WG5 of the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform: on emission reductions and on the development of sustainable transport. Overall, UNP prepared 5 statements on different issues. At its Annual Conference in October 28-30 the UNP adopted changes to the UNP Statute and the Code on Ethical Conduct. All working groups held their meetings before the conference where they discussed their action plans. The delegates elected the new UNP Steering Committee: National Coordinator of the UNP and new coordinators of the working groups.



Steering Committee activities and its new composition



In 2020 the Steering Committee had 4 meetings – in [February](#), [May](#), [July](#) and [September](#) –, three of which were conducted online. During these meetings, the Steering Committee members discussed a number of important issues for the life of the Forum, including the advocacy strategy for 2020, the reprogramming of funds and adjustments to the Forum's operations due to COVID-19, the

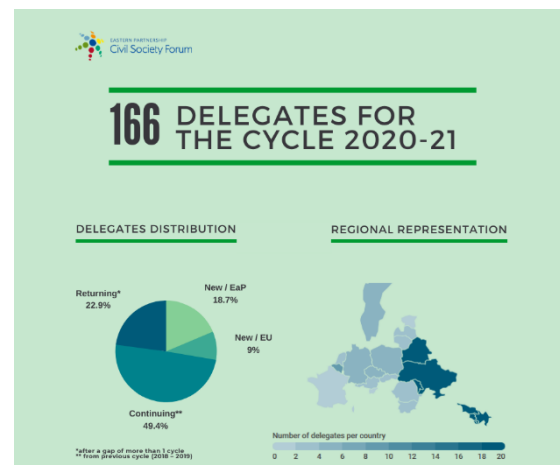
annual accounts of the EaP CSF Secretariat, the prolongation of the auditor's mandate, and many others. The Steering Committee also discussed the results of the project evaluation, and initial plans for the new project of the EaP CSF, to be funded by the EC for 2021-2023, while engaging in dialogue with stakeholders, and making contributions on behalf of the Forum to high-level meetings, such as the [EU-EaP Foreign Ministers meeting](#) in June, and the [Senior Officials Meeting](#) in October.

This autumn has seen the leadership of the EaP CSF change. We thank the previous members of the Steering Committee – Zaur Akbar, Olga Chyzhova, Ina Coseru, Lousineh Hakobyan, Mikayel Hovhannisyanyan, Rasul Jafarov, Maksym Koriavets, Mikalai Kvantalani, Natia

Kuprashvili, Tatiana Marian, Ion Manole, Sofia Strive, and Yurii Vdovenko – for their service. In addition to Shahla Ismayil and Adrian Lupusor, who were elected as National Facilitators for Azerbaijan and Moldova, respectively, before the end of the previous mandate, the [new members of the Steering Committee](#) who will perform their duties until spring 2022 are: Sintija Bernava, Ruslan Havryliuk, Shahla Ismayil, Lousine Hakobyan, Maksym Koriavets, Natia Kuprashvili, Adrian Lupusor, Goda Neverauskaitė, Ana Otilia Nutu, Tatiana Poshevalova, Sofia Strive, Iryna Sukhii and Yurii Vdovenko.

Delegate selection 2020-2021

The call for delegates launched in November 2019 by the EaP CSF Secretariat received 523 eligible applications from 24 countries (6 EaP countries, 18 Member States). Following [revised selection criteria and guidelines](#), the current delegates of the Forum (2020-2021) were selected based on the votes of National Platforms, Working Group Coordinators and EU delegations. The list of delegates for the cycle 2020-2021 is available [here](#).



Extension of the EaP CSF Strategy

[The current strategy of the Forum](#) is due to expire at the end of this year. The development of the new strategy, which is a lengthy process and usually lasts 4-5 months, was planned to start in March 2020 and be offered for adoption at the Annual Assembly. Since brainstorming on a revised strategic vision at the level of National Platforms and Working Groups would have been particularly challenging in current circumstances, delegates were offered to vote on the extension of the current Strategy until the end of 2021. Out of 166 delegates that compose the General Assembly, 129 delegates (78%) participated in the polls and 124 (96%) agreed with the extension of the strategy.

The work of COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

The [Compliance Committee of the EaP CSF](#) has been operational since July 2019. It provides members with a mechanism to address grievances and ensure transparency and accountability. Its members for the period 2019-2020 were Iulian Groza (chairperson), Jan Cingel, Mihaela Padureanu, Lasha Bliadze, and Grigori Yeritsyan. No complaints have been submitted to the CC during their term in the office. Following elections held in November 2020, the new Compliance Committee members for 2020-2022 are Nino Elizbarashvili, Pavel Havlicek, and Elchin Sultanov. The Armenian, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian National Platforms have established similar mechanisms at the national level this year, bringing the number of NPs with a Compliance Committee (locally known as Ethics Council) or at least one Code of Ethical Conduct Advisor to four.

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

The [Code of Ethical Conduct](#) was adopted at the 2018 Annual Assembly, and the period 2019-2020 has been a time for the implementation of its provisions. Each EaP CSF body (i.e. the NPs, WGs, Compliance Committee, Steering Committee, and Secretariat) conducted its self-assessment of the implementation of the Code in November-December 2019, giving each body the opportunity to deliberate on the ethical aspects of their operations.



A GENDER-FAIR FORUM

In light of the Forum's commitment to the promotion of gender equality and equity, and diversity and inclusiveness – as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct – the EaP wants to lead by example on equal opportunities for men and women. To this end, in 2020, we have developed a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (GMS) for the Forum in collaboration with EaP CSF members working in the field of gender equality and an external consultant. The GMS was adopted in an online vote of all 166 delegates of the EaP CSF in November 2020. The implementation of the strategy – which envisages a series of action points over the course of the next project implementation period (2021-2023) will start in 2021.

Outreach to members

Over the course of 2020 the EaP CSF further consolidated the internal communications channels. Members received a bimonthly Members' update featuring the most relevant news on EaP policy cycle, EaP CSF-led advocacy activities, opportunities for engagement, internal consultations as well as internal updates on the Forum's statutory processes. The September and November 2020 editions of the Members' update integrated information from each National Platform, in the effort to further consolidate cross-network and cross-platforms communication.

The process of consolidation and segmentation of the EaP CSF membership database (now counting 1203 member organisations, +22 from March 2020) continued over the course of 2020 and will be carried out further during 2021. This process will enable targeted outreach and more effective consultations with members on narrow subjects. A database update was run over the summer in cooperation with the National Platforms. Last but not least, the [list of EaP CSF members](#) has been made more accessible on the EaP CSF website to make it easier for members to search for possible partners on the basis of a set of criteria which includes country, working group, expertise among others.

Our Funders

In 2020 the EaP CSF has been funded by the EU with the co-funding provided by NED and the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More can be found in the Financial Report for 2020.