

## **EaP CSF Extraordinary Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Online, 4 April 2022**

### **Monday, 4 April 2022, 13:30– 15:30**

*SC members present (9): Goda Neverauskaite, Sintija Bernava, Irina Sukhy, Lousineh Hakobyan, Ana Otilia Nutu, Shahla Ismayil, Tatiana Poshevalova, Adrian Lupusor, Mikayel Hovhannisyan*

*SC members absent (4): Maksym Koriavets, Yurii Vdovenko, Ruslan Havrilyuk, Natia Kuprashvili*

*Secretariat Staff present: Ana Furtuna, Vera Rihakova Pachta, Iustina Haroianu, Calum Thomson, Ioseb Dzamukashvili*

The session was opened by moderator Ana Otilia Nutu who briefly introduced the new director of the EaP CSF Secretariat Ana Furtuna, as this was her first involvement in a meeting of the Steering Committee since starting the role on the 16<sup>th</sup> March.

The focus then quickly moved to the main topic of this Extraordinary Steering Committee meeting and the reason for which it was convened, to make a final decision on the delegate selection process which had not been reached at the previous Steering Committee meeting in March.

The different options and challenges were presented to the SC members again and the arguments made for and against a postponement of the delegate selection process at the previous SC meeting were summarised. It was reiterated by Calum Thomson and other Secretariat staff present that the preferred option for the Secretariat is to delay the process by 12 months, as a shorter delay would interfere with preparations for other fixed Forum processes. It was also discussed that this would involve extending the mandates of the current delegates and Steering Committee by a further 12 months, and that there is procedure and precedent for Steering Committee members to step down if they do not wish to serve the additional year.

**The Steering Committee voted with a quorum of 10 votes in favour, with zero abstentions and zero votes against, to postpone the delegate selection by a period of 12 months. SC Member, Ruslan Havrilyuk voted in favour of the proposal via email.**

**Action points:**

- Prepare and distribute communications to current delegates, members, applicants for delegate status, WG Coordinators, National Platforms and any other relevant parties on decision to postpone delegate selection process and extend mandate of current delegates
- Prepare and distribute communication to Steering Committee on extension of mandate and procedure for stepping down if certain members do not wish to participate for the extra 12 months
- In November, launch process for applicants to confirm or withdraw their already submitted applications and open call to applications from other organisations

**Discussion on WG Meetings and Advocacy Event for the benefits of the EaP Policy**

Ana Otilia Nutu then moved to other points on the agenda by bringing up the topic of the WG Meetings and the confusion in the European Commission on dealing with the future of the Eastern Partnership initiative and EU membership applications of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, in light of the war in Ukraine. The possibility of combining annual WG Meetings with a special meeting advocating the importance of the EaP policy with EU stakeholders was raised.

Vera Rihackova Pachtá, advocacy manager of EaP Civil Society Forum, stated that the organisation had held meetings and obtained feedback from stakeholders and stressed that there would not be any decision regarding membership of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova (the so-called Association Trio) taken before EUCO in June. Stakeholders were not ready to discuss the future of multilateral policy considering the uncertainty of EU membership applications of the Association Trio countries. The uncertainty of the situation had been exacerbated by Ukraine's willingness for special treatment amid the ongoing war. It was highlighted that a window of opportunity had emerged for EaP Civil Society Forum to take part in discussions on how the multilateral policy of EaP would be shaped. It was emphasised that the future of the EaP initiative was in the making and some of the member states established expert groups that have been discussing the future of EaP policy and candidate statuses of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. The Secretariat discussed organising an event between EaP Civil Society Forum and stakeholders.



It was stated that the event would be a good opportunity for advocating the interests of the EaP CSF and underlined that some processes could be restructured to push for more initiatives from the European Commission and keep the attention of the EU. The EaP Index is one of the instruments that could be utilised as an advocacy tool. Organising a plenary event as a kick-off for WG meetings could be a good way to raise the important issues in question in front of external stakeholders.

The EaP CSF has received positive opinions and reactions from stakeholders regarding such event. The event could be closed, so that stakeholders would be able discuss the future of the EaP policy in a more frank manner, along with civil society representatives from the region.

On who to invite to such a meeting remains an open question. The Secretariat proposes to invite delegates, stakeholders, the European Commission, EEAS, member states and representatives of the donor community. The European Parliament could be considered as well. The Secretariat is open to discussing who would participate from EaP CSF side.

It was emphasised that logistically it would be difficult to bring all the delegates and that rather the Steering Committee and WG coordinators could come up with a position and speak with one voice.

The Secretariat agreed to organise WG meetings in Brussels ideally in the beginning of June. It was added that some Ukrainian and Belarusian colleagues might not be able to attend and that the Secretariat had to reach out to colleagues in Ukraine to get an assessment on who was able to travel to Brussels. The issue of costs and current cash flow was also raised.

### **Action points:**

- Secretariat will work on preparing a budget for this June event, by combining the budget streams of regular SC meetings and annual WG meetings
- The Secretariat will initiate the concept development process, which will be prepared by the SC with the Secretariat commenting and taking over

### **Other matters**

SC member Lousineh Hakobyan, national facilitator for Armenia, stated that it was her intention to step down so that the platform could elect a new national facilitator in order to bring in fresh perspectives and ideas. Lousineh also underlined that there is a need for increased funding for national platforms.