

EaP CSF Steering Committee meeting

Online, 29 March - 6 April 2021

Monday 29th March, 14:00-15:30

SC members present (8/13): Sofia Strive, Ana Otilia Nutu, Goda Neverauskaite, Tatiana Poshelova, Sintija Bernava, Ruslan Havryliuk, Irina Sukhy, Adrian Lupusor

SC members absent: (5/13) Lousineh Hakobyan, Maksym Kovariets, Natia Kuprashvili, Shahla Ismayil, Yurii Vdovenko

Secretariat staff present: François Villard, Vera Rihackova, Natalia Yerashevich

EU officials present: Jeroen Wilems (DG NEAR), Radek Darski (EEAS), Bella Nestorova (DG NEAR), Marta Wytrykowska (EEAS), Stephen Sadler (DG NEAR)

In an exchange with the SC **Radek Darski and Jeroen Willems** presented the following points:

- New political context: NK conflict, political crisis in Belarus and Georgia on top of the pandemic. Growing influence of Russia and China. New American administration.
- Joint Communication on the future of the EaP with 5 pillars released last year. No revolutionary changes offered; rather evolution.
- Joint Staff Working Document on the EaP to be issued in May-June 2021. Focus on resilience; new detailed targets that will follow 5 pillars approach. Still no concrete deliverables as of today.
- Fundamentals will have a prominent spot in the future agenda, like HR, good governance, rule of law, basic freedoms. Health is a distinct sector.
- EaP Summit: most probably to be held in September-October. Focus on the deliverables for 2020 and the JSWD with precise targets to be achieved & within what time window.
- Possible summit narrative: recovery (from covid), resilience, reform
- Deliverables will become targets in the new EaP agenda by 2025. Will have a broad and comprehensive agenda. Fewer but more emblematic targets.
- JSWD will focus on recovery, resilience and reform agenda. It will have an emphasis on the value agenda, rule of law & security + fair and inclusive society.
- CS and youth will continue to be a priority, with more support of smaller regional CSOs
- Global Europe NDICI instrument foresees innovations that will be included in JSWC, one is the massive use of EFSD+. Less resources to grants and more to leveraging EU funds to attract public and private investments.
- JSWD will also be accompanied by the monitoring of 20 deliverables for 2020. Also will contain an economic investment plan. Panels will be at the centre in terms of architecture. More ways to ensure cross-cutting possibilities between different sectors.
- Support to CS in the coming years: preparing multiannual programming under Global Europe NDICI. For CS in the East, combined regional CS facility with support for bilateral and regional level. Support to framework partners, strengthen outreach to local organisations, independent media, rapid response mechanism, European Endowment for Democracy.

- Possibly a program to run local election observation missions. Thinking of a mechanism to allow us to rapidly provide grants to CSOs.
- EU vaccine sharing mechanism with EaP countries.
- On February 11th a program to support EaP countries with vaccination strategy, monitoring, deployment, training, communication started.

The presentation was followed by the Q&A session where a number of issues were clarified and some points made from the EaP CSF side: participation of Belarus in the EaP, how to connect tracking the enabling environment for civil society and using it for policy shaping, broadening security dimension of the EaP, etc. The EaP CSF will organise an event around the EaP Summit.

Wednesday 31 March 2021

WG coordinators present: Irina Sukhy (WG3), Goda Neverauskaite (WG5), Tatiana Poshevalova (WG4), Sofia Strive (WG1), Otilia Nutu (WG3), Sintija Bernava (WG3), Ruslan Havryliuk (WG3), Laura Dittel (WG2).

Secretariat staff present: Juulia Baer-Bader, Vera Rihackova, Natalia Yerashevich, Tania Marocchi, Alexandra Sabou.

Meeting on Working Groups

WGs meetings will take place in May-June and at the Annual Assembly (29 November - 3 December). In terms of roles, WGs coordinators are in the leading position, the Secretariat in a supporting function.

Working Group meetings were assessed by an external evaluator last year, as well as by post-event surveys. The external evaluation assessed that WGs are a wonderful instrument, but there is untapped potential there. A better connection between the EaP CSF regional level and NP groups is an area which can be developed further. WG meetings are also instrumental in ensuring the connection with the EaP architecture. Input to events organised under the EaP architecture could be more balanced and include all 6 countries. Ideally, Working Group meetings can help to develop stronger input to EaP architecture. The consultants supporting each WG are to help with that and other functions. Within the overall EaP CSF strategy development a discussion on how WGs activities are integrated in the EaP CSF broader goals will be organised.

The SC agreed that the objectives that WG meetings should fulfill are the following:

1. Elaboration of policy recommendations and the consequent elaboration of activities (campaigns, advocacy visits) that would be instrumental in implementing/advancing the recommendations;
2. Discussion on concrete policy topics;
3. Networking facilitation;
4. Capacity Building (particularly WG1 and WG4);

The agenda should be built around the following blocks:

- Recommendations development: the formats so far proposed were somewhat satisfactory. Tailoring per WG available. This should continue to be done in the sub-groups.
- Country updates: should be better structured and prepared in advance. Members should be given very specific indications on what they should update the group on.

- Development of activities (campaigns, advocacy visits that would be proactively pushing for the recommendations). Some time should also be dedicated to allow members to present their activities and seek support and coalition building;
- Discussions with stakeholders or experts. Members valued exchanges with experts, too and this would tie with capacity building;
- Presentation of regranting projects: should be kept, particularly because of the particular year we are in, with regranting having changed its form and some confusion persisting. Members should also have the possibility to present projects that fit certain criteria, such as regional advocacy projects or deliverables-related ones.
- Networking: some options available within the limits of online meetings.

WG meetings dates

17 - 21 May	WG3
25 - 28 May	WG1
1-3 June	WG2
7-11 June	WG4
21-25 June	WG5

Discussion of the scope of work for WG consultants to support and expand the work of each WG

The idea of WG consultants (thematic experts), initially brought up during the Project Development Workshop (September 2020), has been integrated into the current project (2021-2023). To start recruiting the WG consultants, generic Terms of Reference have been discussed with the WG coordinators. They will serve as a template for drafting the TORs for the recruitment of a WG consultant for each Working Group.

Several suggestions were made by WG coordinators including:

- The WG consultant(s) should have a good understanding of the EaP policy and of the ongoing policy/ political processes at the European institutions level that have implications for the EaP countries and/ or the areas covered by each WG;
- The WG consultants should proactively help the WG to identify the opportunities for action/engagement of the WG based on their monitoring of the policy processes
- The WG consultant(s) should help the WG(s) work more synergistically and articulate better the policy recommendations stemming from each group;

While the WG consultants will have supporting roles, the WG coordinators will keep their prerogatives and decision-making power.

The yearly budget for the recruitment of one WG consultant is max. 7k.

It was agreed that:

- The Secretariat will prepare individual TORs for the recruitment of WG consultants for each group (five in total); the individual TORs will be shared with respective WG coordinators for their final approval;
- The Call for Applications should be launched in the second half of April to allow the recruitment of the WG consultants by the end of May - beginning of June.
- The selection of the WG consultants will be made by the Secretariat; for each WG, a list of shortlisted candidates will be shared with WG coordinators for their opinion;
- During 2021, the contracts with WG consultants will be concluded by the end of December 2021. In case of favourable cooperation, the contracts can be renewed.

Tuesday 6th April, 9:30-11h30

SC members present (8/13): Sofia Strive, Ana Otilia Nutu, Ruslan Havryliuk, Natia Kuprashvili, Tatiana Poshevalova, Sintija Bernava, Lousineh Hakobyan, Irina Sukhy

SC members absent (5/13): Maksym Kovariets, Shahla Ismayil, Yurii Vdovenko, Adrian Lupusor, Goda Neverauskaite

Secretariat staff present: Tania Marocchi, Alexandra Sabou, François Villard

EaP CSF Index presentation and discussion about the current composition of the Compliance Committee

I - EaP CSF Index methodology review

The EaP Index reviews proceeds on timeline, with explanatory notes added to the questionnaire and a revised methodology document with theoretical framework in the process of being developed. Some strategic questions, pertaining to (i) EaP Index rebranding following the methodology review and the (ii) score aggregation needed SC guidance.

The SC agreed that the EaP Index renaming should be based on the following guidelines:

- The name should continue to include “Eastern Partnership” to clarify the instrument’s geographical scope + a so-called concept qualifier (or two) to convey the idea that it measures EaP countries’ degree of closeness to EU norms. “Convergence” emerged as a favourite but to be used in conjunction with another qualifier.
- Among the suggested options “proximity” and “approximation” were considered too academic, missing the target; it was also noted that “integration” and “europeanisation” are quite tied to the concept of EU membership. “Resilience” is not a concept familiar to EaP readers.

The EaP Secretariat will create a short list of options following the suggested guidelines and propose it to the Steering Committee.

The SC agreed that the EaP Index should be composed of a single aggregated score, resulting from the three dimensions measured.

II - Challenges related to the current composition of the Compliance Committee (CC)

According to the Forum's regulations, the EaP CSF Compliance Committee (CC) is made up of 5 members (2 representing EU and 3 representing EaP-based organisations). Currently, due to the lack of applications for the CC elections held in November 2020, this body is made up of 3 members only (Elchin Sultanov (AZ), Nino Elizbarashvili (GE) and Pavel Havlicek (EU). The SC agreed that the insufficient number of CC members raises concerns regarding this body's reliability, unbiased decision-making power and compliance with EaP CSF regulations.

To avoid any potential challenges in the future, the SC agreed with:

- the relaunch of the Call for Nominations for the vacant positions in the CC (1 EU member, 1 EaP member);
- the organisation of online elections for the vacant positions within the coming weeks, preferably before the end of May;

The Secretariat will be in charge of the electoral process.

The current members of the CC, duly elected in November 2020, will maintain their positions. In case of any arguments related to the NK deescalated conflict and involving members from Armenia and/ or Azerbaijan, the CC member(s) from any of the two countries will refrain from voting or expressing their position.

Tuesday 6th April, 13:30-15:30

SC members present (8/13): Sofia Strive, Ana Otilia Nutu, Goda Neverauskaite, Tatiana Poshelova, Ruslan Havryliuk, Irina Sukhy, Lousineh Hakobyan, Sintija Bernava

SC members absent (5/10): Maksym Kovariets, Natia Kuprashvili, Shahla Ismayil, Yurii Vdovenko, Adrian Lupusor

Secretariat staff present: Alexandra Sabou, Kristina Pitalskaia, François Villard, Natalia Yerashevich

AA 2021 Annual Assembly Planning

To proceed with the recruitment of the AA 2021 service provider before the beginning of summer, the structure of the AA agenda has been agreed upon. After the presentation of the AA 2020 metrics and survey results, the following decisions were taken:

- The welcome session and the opening ceremony will be merged in 1 session;
- The networking options should be tailored around given topics for discussion;
- The General Assembly will be focused on the new strategy of the Forum;
- The Reporting session usually dedicated to presenting what has been done throughout the year will be transformed into a short movie;
- The Awards ceremony will be transformed into a pre-recorded 2 min video with the awardees;
- The number of Thematic Panels will be 3; the content will be discussed soon;

- The WG meetings are to be structured in two sessions; the two sessions will be held in different days to allow participants to work together from one session to another (however the content of the meeting was not discussed);
- The parallel trilateral country stakeholders' sessions will continue to be organised during the AA, although in some cases the expectations associated with this type of meetings and their format may be reconsidered (i.e. in the absence of national stakeholders, bilateral discussions between NP members and EU stakeholders will be held);
- The side events will continue to be organised during the AA. the selection procedure developed for AA2020 will be used in 2021 as well;
- The closing ceremony will remain in the current format;
- The option of hiring an event sketcher to cover some parts of the AA or the whole event will be explored by the Secretariat; the language options (EN/ RU) should be taken into account;
- Maximum effort will be taken to ensure that possibility to voice or send in questions/comments is available for all panels; task force will be deciding how to react in case of disruptive content.

Based on the newly-agreed decisions, the Secretariat will prepare the Terms of Reference for the recruitment of the AA service provider. The Call for Applications will be launched at the beginning of May.

To support the decision-making process around the AA 2021, more SC members are invited to join the AA task force by expressing their interest by email (admin@eap-csf.eu) before 30 April EOB.

Adopted on 20 April 2021