

Position Paper: Effective response to EaP countries expectations in the security area and the role of civil society

Prepared for: EaP Panel on Security, CSDP and Civil Protection, November 18, 2018

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Executive Summary:

- It has proved difficult for the six EaP countries to share common ground on the crosscutting security issues due to differing security perceptions and interest

EaP CSF recommendation: to cluster the EaP cooperation around common perceptions and interests and apply differentiation especially for the three AA/DCFTA countries

- Protection of conflict-affected individuals

EaP CSF recommendation: Full use of international human rights protection mechanisms

- Countering hybrid threats

EaP CSF recommendation: the methods and tools of Russian hybrid influence are similar across the region and learning from the counter measures developed elsewhere would be beneficial for all EaP countries; the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to establish a multilateral EaP Cyber-security Centre in order to enhance intra-regional cooperation should be supported.

- How to involve civil society into the EaP security agenda

EaP CSF recommendation: provide civil society perspective on the issues discussed and create an alert system for existing and emerging security threats in the EaP countries based on a network of relevant CSOs, members of the EaP CSF.

Background

The EaP region is neither stable nor safe due to a number of conflicts: Crimea and Donbas in Ukraine, Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. The population of EaP countries suffers not only from open hostility in the conflict zones, but also from methods of hybrid warfare. The society needs protection from hybrid threats. Such a protection includes developing mechanisms facilitating identification and counter-action. One of the Eastern Partnership’s policy priorities is to strive for stability and security, as singled out in the

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Joint Staff Working Document “Eastern Partnership – 20 Deliverables for 2020: focusing on key priorities and tangible results”, approved in December 2016 and attached to the November 2017 EaP Brussels Summit Conclusions.

In 2008, the armed conflict between **Georgia** and Russia caused big loss of civilian life and displacement although it lasted no more than a week. Its consequences are still felt today; out of 190.000 people affected by the conflict, 28.000 are still displaced and have a small chance of returning to their place of residence. The occupied territories are not accessible for citizens of Georgia. There are limited opportunities for interaction with Georgian society, and occupied territories are subject to russification. Continuous occupation is also one of the tools of exerting political influence.

Although **Georgia** continues to cooperate with the International Criminal Court by providing information related to war crimes and crimes against humanity, the governments of both Georgia and Russia have failed to demonstrate genuine commitment to investigate these crimes. The International Criminal Court has already started its own investigation into the situation in Georgia. It is very important this case be investigated properly because it can pave the way for solving other conflict situations. As it is the first case investigated by ICC in the region, a clear and conclusive outcome of this investigation is crucial. Establishing a set of international standards for protection of human rights under these circumstances and facilitate access for individuals to litigations before the international courts, without a need for intermediary legal support, is very important

The war in Eastern Ukraine has demonstrated that society should not be only a consumer of security but also an active actor in security preservation. The state should strengthen its own ability to withstand new challenges and threats, to keep increasing its resilience constantly. So far, the war has left more than 10.000 killed, over 20.000 injured and around 1,5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). There are also hundreds of Ukrainians who fled to Russia since the conflict erupted.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is a network of CSOs from the EaP countries and the EU, which aims at contributing to tackle the problems related to security in the region. During the last meeting of its security experts under EaP CSF WG1, the question of how the current agenda of the EaP Panel on Security, CSDP and Civil protection corresponds to the EaP partners’ expectations from the civil society perspective was discussed. For EaP countries, international mechanisms of Human Rights protection are of key importance and successful experience of the member organisations with these mechanisms can be shared with others in order to support individuals who are in great need of assistance and protection due to the current conflicts. Lastly, the experts discussed the civil society role and how can CSOs contribute to this complicated but enormously important agenda.

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Argument 1

Although the EaP panel on Security, CSDP and Civil protection has been transformed and expanded, it does not fully cover expectations of the EaP partners; the panel focuses on technical expert level of cooperation while many issues can be tackled only at the political level. It has proved difficult for the six EaP countries to share common ground on the crosscutting issues of cyber-security, civilian protection and information security due to differing security perceptions and interest.

EaP CSF recommends to:

- cluster the EaP cooperation around common perceptions and interests (in smaller settings or formats). Differentiation is needed especially for the three AA/DCFTA countries where topics like national security, military cooperation, military industry, cyber-security, information security can be discussed. The targets for the three countries should go beyond cooperation, towards gradual inclusion and integration into EU initiatives and policies (i.e. battlegroups, PESCO);
- identify topics that could be discussed jointly by all six EaP countries, like civil protection or organized crime, and promote them within the EaP agenda;
- strengthen bilateral interactions between the EU and each respective partner country by way of extending the regular security dialogues;
- enhance further the EU-EaP cooperation on preventing and combating hybrid threats, to include tailored objectives, measures and indicators related to combating hybrid threats and incorporate them into the 20 Deliverables for 2020 agenda.

Argument 2

Conflict-affected individuals have to be protected against violations of human rights.

EaP CSF recommends to:

- include to the EaP Panel's agenda topics related to the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons' (IDPs') and other citizens' rights in the EaP countries affected by conflicts (including the human security dimension and issues related to abductions of persons);
- invite civil society organisations (CSOs) from relevant EaP countries to share information and experience on cases related to protection of human rights of refugees, IDPs' and other citizens residing in the regions affected by conflicts;
- inform and help citizens to seek justice; the CSOs working in human rights field with considerable experience with protection mechanisms and international courts and tribunals can support the citizens seeking justice.

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Argument 3

- EaP CSF is a relevant information channel for the EU and the member states that can provide civil society perspective on threats and security gaps in the region. Providing the EU institutions with reliable information from the ground, as well as with comprehensive assessments and analysis of societal resilience is a key task for the EaP CSF members. This is particularly pertinent since only joint efforts of all relevant societal actors can tackle successfully the hybrid threats and interference coming from Russia.

EaP CSF recommends to:

- exchange information and experience on conflicts and security agendas;
- create an alert system for security threats in the EaP countries based on a network of relevant CSOs, members of the EaP CSF;
- contribute to the independent monitoring of security threats in the EaP countries;
- focus on EU-EaP cooperation in preventing and combating hybrid threats from Russia.

Conclusion

Deliverable 12 of the 20 Deliverables for 2020 provides the guidance on EU-EaP cooperation in security area by outlining a long list of guidelines starting with cyber-security and hybrid threats over to civil protection. This good approach has already delivered positive results at various levels. The process could however benefit from establishing regular multilateral consultations at the level of national security councils to address the pertinent issues like, for example, countering hybrid threats. Following the logic of the current approach, it also seems timely to initiate annual revisions and adjustments of the 2020 targets. The civil society suggests considering adding the following targets and milestones:

- to elaborate and implement a multilateral mechanism for protection of critical infrastructure in the EaP countries within cross-border or regional segments, the EaP panels on transport and energy could work in synergy on this agenda;
- to adopt necessary legislation for setting up IMAS based national humanitarian demining systems, particularly in those EaP countries with unsettled conflicts;
- to form an intergovernmental security platform with the involvement of the EU, dedicated to counteracting hybrid threats and settlement of lasting conflicts;
- to accelerate the adoption of the Operational Action Plan which is aimed at sharing intelligence and operational data regarding the illicit firearms trafficking, as well as to adopt the List of risk indicators;

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- to support the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to establish a multilateral EaP Cyber-security Centre in order to enhance international cooperation on cyber-security; the methods and tools of Russian hybrid influence are similar across the region and learning from the counter measures developed elsewhere would be beneficial for all EaP countries.

More Information

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region, boost pluralism in public discourse and policy making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms.

For more information, please visit the EaP CSF website at www.eap-csf.eu