

## EaP CSF Position Paper on the EaP R&I strategy

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**Prepared by:** Oleg Shatberashvili (Association European Studies for Innovative Development of Georgia - ESIDG), Volodymyr Nochvai (Civic Union “Center for innovation development”, IMMSP NAS of Ukraine) through consultations with EaP CSF members.

For the last 10 years, the EU has been providing EaP countries with generous assistance in the sphere of Research and Innovation (R&I), showcasing and explaining the existing tools available in the EU, as well as ensuring access of EaP countries to them (e.g. Horizon 2020, Erasmus, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, COST – European Cooperation in Science and Technology, PSF – Policy Support Facility, COSME – Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Smart Specialization). EaP Panel on Research and Innovation is one of the most important instruments for R&I cooperation in the EaP countries and creation of the future agenda for collaboration and policy alignment with the EU. However, despite the above-mentioned efforts and the continuous support, **the results of the EaP countries are not convincing**. We observe **a worsening of the situation in all the EaP countries’ national research systems** that affects the research organisations’ ability to benefit from the tools and programmes offered by the EU.

**The EaP CSF expresses its concern on the absence of workable national R&I strategies, systematic underfunding and negative trends in national research systems in EaP countries.** None of the EaP countries has an effective R&I strategy. None of the EaP countries ensures growth of financial and organisational support for development of R&I sphere. Their Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as percent of GDP stays on the same very low level: 0.18 – 0.30 % in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova and about 0.5% in Ukraine and Belarus for many years, while average for the EU is growing steadily: 2.06% in 2017 (1.77% in 2007).

The EaP countries’ governments do not perceive the R&I sphere as one of the most important tools for overall country sustainable development including education, good governance, economy and security. Moreover, the current EaP policy has limited instruments to ensure the fulfilment of governmental obligations in the R&I sphere as well as for monitoring the implementation of such obligations. All six EaP countries have a number of common shortcomings in the field of R&I, which affect the integration into European Research Area (ERA) and development of effective cooperation among research, governments, education and industry<sup>1</sup>.

- Many years of under-funded research, and as a result, continuing negative trends of the research systems indicators (e.g. number of researchers per thousand of people, the average age of researchers, etc.)
- Limited involvement of other than of Education and Science ministries into R&I activities

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of them are listed in PSF missions’ recommendation for [Moldova \(2016\)](#), [Ukraine \(2017\)](#), [Georgia \(2018\)](#), and [Armenia \(2019\)](#).

- Lack of coordination among the policy makers, executive agencies, academia, business and civil society in resolving key strategic issues related to R&I development
- Regulations defining the legal status of research organizations, as well as functions of other key players in the R&I sphere inconsistent to best EU practices
- Lack of strict procedures for evaluation of R&D activities, in particular for career advancement of personnel
- Outdated research infrastructure and facilities
- Brain drain – particularly among young scientists
- Aging of the most qualified researchers
- Low level of PhD training that negatively affects overall performance of the education systems
- Lack of efficient mechanisms of research commercialization, as well as of data and knowledge sharing, particularly among authorities, scientific community, economic actors and society
- Lack of awareness and understanding of the role that R&I plays for a modern sustainable development. This sector is perceived more as a budgetary expenditure than a strategic investment for tackling societal challenges and stimulating economic growth
- Insufficient level of dialog between knowledge producers

At the same time, the EaP countries have scientific and technological potential, which is not fully used and needs to be expanded. Therefore, a targeted support from the EU side is highly needed to align R&I policy of EaP countries with the EU standards and to ensure practical support of projects from EaP region focused on achieving these high standards. In this regard, EaP CSF Research and Innovation experts see two main areas in which we formulated recommendations and proposals.

1. **Critical need to stop the EaP countries' national research systems decline.**

The EaP CSF recommends **to the governments of EaP countries:**

- to introduce the R&I policies coordinated with education and economic policies, as well as with measures focused on the good governance (including participation of all ministries in R&I activities) as a clear programme agenda linked to a long-term sustainable and secure development of countries, as well as of the whole region.
- to increase gradually General Expenditures on Research and Development (GERD) to a level corresponding to the EU average of 2% of GDP. The EaP governments' obligations in this regard must be stated in the EaP post 2020 Roadmap.

The EaP CSF recommends **to the European Commission:**

- to ensure in the EaP post 2020 policy a detailed reflection of the EaP governments' obligations in R&I sphere in the Association Agreement and in bi-lateral documents on cooperation with the EU in R&I sphere
- to introduce more conditionality of the assistance rendered to EaP countries in R&I sphere and monitor tightly the fulfilment of governmental obligations part in the next phase of the EaP Initiative (similarly to that of democracy, good governance, etc. in the current EaP activities)
- to use better the CSF capacity for the monitoring purposes through growing support to CSF organizations working on the R&I policy and governance issues, which will

lead to development of strong specialized CSOs in the same way as it is done in the democracy and environment protection spheres.

**2. Development of national strategies aligned with the EU R&I strategy: integration into European Research Area and joining Open Science Agenda**

Since weak national research systems are the key obstacles, which hinder the progress in R&I in the EaP countries, the extent of their integration into ERA should become an important benchmark of success. The EaP CSF believes that the ERA integration should become the driver of R&I policy development activities of the EaP Initiative, focused particularly on the national research systems.

The EaP CSF recommends **to governments of EaP countries:**

- For development and implementation of R&I strategies at national levels it would be helpful to coordinate R&I activities of the EaP Initiative at the intergovernmental level of EaP countries. This would further contribute to alignment of the relevant national strategies to EU's R&I strategy.
- The ERA integration should become the key driver in R&I policy development activities. National ERA roadmaps should be prepared and agreed with new narrative/paradigm for the ERA 2020-2030<sup>2</sup>.
- Despite the lack of the most basic components in the EaP national R&I systems, the new progressive approaches to R&I, like Open Science Agenda, should receive more attention by the national governments of the EaP countries.

EaP CSF recommendations **to the European Commission:**

- Currently, monitoring of the implementation of the Association Agreements' chapters, which include Cooperation in Research, Technological Development and Innovation, is disproportionately weaker than monitoring of items related to democracy, good governance, human rights, and climate change. The EaP CSF calls on the EU to add a monitoring and coordination components of their R&I activities by establishing the EaP R&I regional coordination body<sup>3</sup>. That means providing financial support to it to cover necessary activities: coordination, advocacy, analytical work, and monitoring. The first important result will be the roadmap<sup>4</sup> for future (after 2020) collaboration between EaP countries and EU in the field of R&I.
- Implementation of a research project aimed to identify and study the current pitfalls and mistakes common to the EaP countries' R&I systems and analyse their causes. It could serve as a solid base for drawing further recommendations and measures applicable to all EaP countries, as well as summarize the EU and EaP countries' experience in the transformation of their R&I infrastructures, legislations and strategies.
- Organization a high-level conference on developing EaP countries national research systems as the first step towards the ERA. Our suggestion is to organize this event in 2020 or 2021 under auspices of the EaP R&I Panel or in any other appropriate format. The

<sup>2</sup> [https://era.gv.at/object/document/5053/attach/item\\_4\\_-\\_Draft\\_Opinion\\_Future\\_of\\_ERA.pdf](https://era.gv.at/object/document/5053/attach/item_4_-_Draft_Opinion_Future_of_ERA.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> It could consist of 4 members from each country (one representative of each: the National Academy of Science, Government, EaP CSF National Platform and innovative business).

<sup>4</sup> It should cover national R&I policies, ERA, EU R&I Instruments (Horizon, Smart specialization etc), Open Science and Research Infrastructure, Knowledge society (science for citizens, democracy and better governance).

conference should focus on the future ERA 2020-2030 objectives and priorities, as well as how EaP R&I systems could be incorporated into that objectives.

- Implementation of a pilot project aimed at establishing the Eastern Partnership Open Science & Innovation Center - a network of thematic centres of competence in each EaP country to provide R&I services, facilitate access to research and e-infrastructures, explaining and helping local R&D centres to use opportunities given by the European Open Science Cloud.
- The EU sees the European research infrastructures, including e-infrastructures as the primary tools for internationalization of research. EaP countries do not participate in the majority of the European research infrastructures. There is a lack of collaboration with the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). Development of an EaP regional programme dedicated particularly to support/save the existing 'islands of excellence' in the region could be a solution to increase the collaboration between the EU and EaP.

#### **More Information on the EaP CSF**

*The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is 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. The EaP CSF is a non-partisan bona fide non-governmental organisation.*