

Key Points from EaP CSF Address at 2nd Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change

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We point to the urgent need to strengthen environmental governance and monitoring of the reforms, enhance environmental institutions, implement environmentally friendly decision-making within the governments and communicate it strategically – in order to promote environmental awareness, transparency and public participation on environmental matters.

In this light, we call the **EU**, and **EaP stakeholders**, present to consider the following subject-specific points:

1. **Luxembourg Declaration Implementation:** at the first Ministerial, EaP CSF requested a clear definition of its targets, together with an implementation schedule. We are satisfied with 20x20 targets but so far, only Ukraine developed a national roadmap to implement the Declaration's provisions. We are concerned about the implementation process, as we expected all EaP countries to prepare separate national implementation frameworks – linking long, mid- and short-term policy goals with 20x20 targets. We call upon EaP environmental ministries to draft their own national soft documents – which could, inter alia, help to organise and communicate the new policy approach and legislation to wider society.
2. **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) legislation:** all EaP countries adopted new EIA and SEA legislation, with the associated three – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, practically starting to implement the corresponding EU Directives. However, monitoring work done by civil society organisations shows that developers are attempting to ignore, or get around, new assessment procedures – which also applies to big infrastructure projects, such as E40 waterway, Amulsar gold mine in Armenia and Svydovets ski resort in Ukraine (which additionally requires a transboundary assessment).
3. **Deforestation:** deforestation is a continuing trend in the majority of EaP countries, a phenomenon attributed to illegal logging, even in nature reserves. We are concerned about the lack of systematic measures in putting a stop to illegal logging. The problem is rooted on limited government inspections in the forests – proving that this “de-regulation” comes at a cost to the environment.
4. **Hydroelectric power plants (HPPs):** EaP CSF is concerned by the rapid expansion of HPPs in EaP countries, fuelled by green tariffs – with grave consequences, especially in Georgia. The harm they cause to environment does not make them “green”, or an environmentally friendly source of energy. Green tariffs should not apply to these projects – and likewise, should not attract International

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Financial Institution (IFI) funding. Regardless of the scale of construction, big or small, any future projects should be built in strict conformity with EIA legislation. What is more, they should seek to actively engage civil society. We hope that the planned project, involving the expansion of Novodnistrovka HPP will take full account of the EIA studies, currently conducted by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Moldova and joint Working Group within the Moldova-Ukraine permanent commission on sustainable use and protection of the Dniester river basin.

- 5. Environmental governance and Institutions:** we see a significant progress in developing policies on combating climate change, reforming water and waste management system or the expansion of protected nature areas, which includes the Emerald conservation network. Not only this, there are positive signs on enhancing accountability, openness and public participation. We do, however, notice a trend of losing previously “attained” positions, which continues to persist. We advocate for a comprehensive approach to the environmental governance issues because environmental governance (GEG) is an important prerequisite to enable, promote and sustain environmental reforms in EaP countries. To this aim, we cannot allow mergers between the ministries of agriculture and environment – as evidenced in Georgia or Moldova. In fact, our position is that strengthening existing institutions should be a priority – in promoting cooperation on environmental issues, included together with core policy objectives.
- 6. Circular economy:** at the moment, EaP countries have a very low recycling rates, and in order to tackle this issue, need a stronger institutional and legislative framework. We welcome the Law on Waste, drafted in line with the EU Waste Directive, adopted in Georgia and Moldova. A similar law is being finalised in Ukraine. No old, or obsolete technologies, should be allowed to enter the territories of EaP countries. Similarly, authorities in EaP countries should ban the use of single-use plastics.

There is more to be done in promoting the circular economy, among local authorities and the general public alike – in the EU, we see a number of successful initiatives, such as the Green Week or LIFE and Green Cities awards, which attract considerable attention each year. The important point is that the public is informed about its benefits and its role in circular economy, taking an active part in the implementation process. Existing flagship projects, such as EU4Environment Programme or EaP CSF Re-granting Scheme can and should perform a similar function.

- 7. Environmental conditionality in cooperation:** environmental conditionality clauses should be a part of the Associated Agreements (AA) and Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) monitoring implementation process, which should also apply to micro-financial assistance. These measures can be used to improve environmental protection in EaP countries, promoting a result-driven agenda.

It is difficult for Moldova and Georgia to implement their AAs on points relating to environment – after their respective Ministries of Environment were merged with the Ministries of Agriculture. We

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need stronger environmental institutions and better cooperation to increase political weight of environmental sector within the government. In fact, our position is that strengthening existing institutions needs to be a priority – in promoting cooperation on environmental issues and included in the core of planned actions.

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