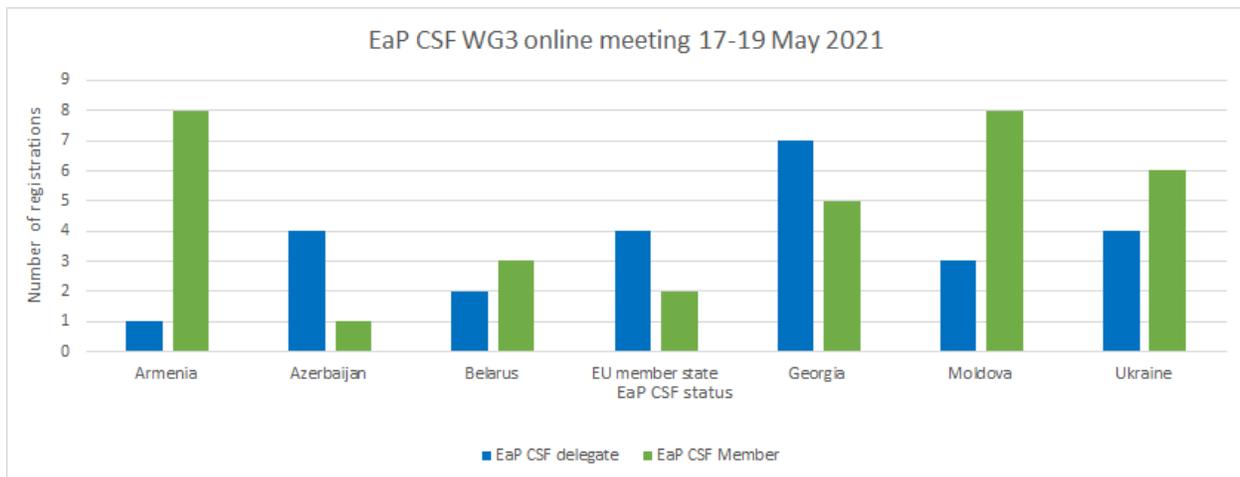


Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Working Group 3

Online Meeting, 17-19 May 2021

Report

EaP CSF Working Group 3 met online between May 17 and May 19, 2021. Spread over six online sessions, the meeting included a meet & greet session reporting on updates, regranting and presenting project proposals, a session covering thematic updates from the WG3s of the six EaP countries, three policy debates on transport, energy and environment within the European Green Deal and one meeting with EU stakeholders to discuss policy developments and the participation of civil society in the areas of expertise of WG3. The online policy debates and the meeting with EU experts were open to all WG3 members and delegates. Out of 58 registrations, 25 were current delegates and 33 were members. The chart below shows the distribution of these attendees between the 6 EaP countries and EU member states.



Meet & Greet Session – policy updates and funding opportunities

Monday 17 May, 09:30-11:00 CET

Power Point Presentation [here](#).

The Meet & Greet session began with opening remarks from Working Group 3 coordinators **Ruslan Havryliuk** and **Ana Otilia Nutu**. The agenda for the day and the following days was covered with participants reminded of the schedule for subsequent sessions. There followed a light-hearted ice-breaker session on sli.do. Participants were keen to network with fellow members from other Eastern Partnership countries and EU officials as well as exchange information, ideas and project proposals. Thereafter, **Kristina Pitalskaia**, new Grants and Membership Manager at EaP CSF introduced herself to the participants. As Membership

manager, Kristina will be in frequent contact with the members. Members themselves can reach her directly at kristina.pitalskaia@eap-csf.eu.

Updates from EaP CSF were presented with important changes to organisational operation and structure highlighted, as well as a summary of recent and forthcoming EaP architecture meetings. **Ana Otilia Nutu** explained the structure of EaP architecture meetings, as well as the EaP CSF's unique position as sole civil society representative at the table, fulfilling the role of watchdog. The 3rd EaP Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate will take place online on June 22. The dates of the Environmental Ministerial and Platform 3 related meetings are not yet known. Members are encouraged to apply to represent the Forum at these meetings and to answer the call for expressions of interest, providing input from their country to be presented at the meetings. They can also encourage their colleagues to [subscribe to the EaP CSF database of experts so that they can also receive the relevant calls](#). EaP CSF Advocacy Manager **Vera Rihackova** continued on from this introduction with specific advocacy updates on EaP policy processes, focusing on Human Rights Dialogues in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine, EURONEST, the [Covid-19 papers series](#) detailing the opportunities and policy solutions to be harnessed in the EaP region and Covid-19 vaccines for the EaP as part of #PrepareEaP4Health.

Looking ahead, the main EaP policy process milestones for later in 2021 will include: in May, the publication of the EU Joint Staff Working Document (JSWD) on EaP implementation between 2021-2025 based on the [Joint Communication “EaP policy beyond 2020 - Reinforcing Resilience”](#), on June 21 a discussion in the Foreign Affairs Council on EaP policy and in July the meeting of the EaP Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting (27+6). This meeting will be preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting. The Steering Committee Members will be able to deliver speeches at the EaP Ministerial and SOM alike, delivering key messages from the Forum. The EaP Summit Declaration will be in the process of drafting from June up until the EaP Summit itself. In September a EURONEST resolution addressing the EaP Summit is expected and the Forum plans to contribute with its ideas. The EaP Summit itself will take place between October 21-22. EaP CSF plans to organize an event back-to-back with the Summit. Re-granting was then briefly covered, with the new FSTP (Financial Support for Third Parties) EaP CSF re-granting to members for 2021-2023 explained and changes and similarities from previous re-granting covered. The maximum allocation remains at EUR 240,000 per year and the distribution is via three lots. Lot 1 - Monitoring EaP deliverables. Lot 2 - Addressing the Forum's strategic advocacy priorities. Lot 3 - Strengthening the linkage between EaP CSF's members. For Lot 1, there will be one selection procedure for 2021-2023 and one multi-annual grant. For Lot 2, two calls are envisaged in 2021 and 2022. For Lot 3, the call for 2020 is already closed and [four projects](#) have been selected for implementation. There will be a call open for Lot 3 in 2022 and 2023.

In 2021, WG3 will also benefit from the support of a new figure, who will assist the WG supporting the analytical work for EaP CSF representatives in the EaP architecture meetings, the preparation of WG meetings, the formulation of position papers and recommendations and the identification of new formats and topics that WG members can use and find interesting.

The session continued with the presentation of three projects, for which members are seeking partners.

1. **Project 1 ‘Community sustainable capacity for air quality management’ - Ruslan Havryliuk, NECU, Ukraine.** *Members who are interested in cooperating on this project can write to havryliuk@necu.org.ua.*
2. **Project 2 - ‘Public Monitoring of Government Commitments on CEPA, Green Deal, International Conventions’ - Inga Zarafyan, EcoLur, Armenia.** *Members who are interested in cooperating on this project can write to ingazarafyan@gmail.com.*
3. **Project 3 - ‘Waste separate collection in EaP countries’ - Ina Coseru, National Environmental Centre, Moldova.** *Members who are interested in cooperating on this project can write to ina.coseru@environment.md.*

The sessions closed with a summary of the other project proposals. Details on the project proposals and contact information can be found in the [PowerPoint slides](#). (Slides 22 and 57)

Energy, Environment and Transport – policy and activities update from the six EaP countries

Monday 17 May, 14:00-15:30 CET

Power Point Presentation [here](#).

In the afternoon, the discussion focussed on policy and activities updates in the fields of environment, energy and transport delivered by Working Group 3 coordinators in the six EaP countries. All countries highlighted a mix of progress and stalling in various areas, with progress often being recorded in terms of adoption of legislation which is not often matched by effective implementation. In all of the countries, WG3 appears to be quite active on a number of issues and there is a shared wish for further cooperation with their respective groups across the EaP region.

Ukraine - Ruslan Havryliuk: the country is seeing many positive changes in the realm of environment and climate, most notably in its participation in the European Green Deal as well as the development of environmental strategies. Problems remain when drafting laws, as many important ones have not yet passed through Parliament. Energy and urban transport show the least progress overall, though a cycling strategy was recently adopted. Looking ahead, Ukraine’s main priorities in WG3-related areas include: the implementation of the EGD in Ukraine, the integration of environmental and climate issues in the response to COVID-19, the greening of national policies, adaptation to climate change, the introduction of integrated water resources management, biodiversity conservation and sustainable transport.

Ukraine’s Working Group 3 is quite active, holding close talks and participating in meetings at governmental and parliamentary level. At the same time, the group could benefit from holding regular offline meetings and improving levels of communication among members and with WG3 from other EaP countries. Until now, cooperation among WGs in different EaP countries was limited to regranting projects; WG3 needs to increase its involvement in projects like EU4Climate or EU4Environment. In 2021, Ukraine’s WG3 will focus on: promoting the goals of the new EaP policy; promoting reforms and advocating EU membership for Ukraine; strengthening

cooperation among WG3 and members. In terms of analytical research, the group will work on sustainable transport, environmental and climate sustainability, and the SEA of community development strategies. Strengthening the cooperation between the EaP CSF and the UNP and the Ukrainian platform of the AA should be a priority going forward. More support from the Secretariat will also be welcome.

Moldova - Lilia Curchi: Moldova recorded good progress in the energy sector. The legislation on energy efficiency and renewable energy has been fully transposed from the EU acquis, and the country is conducting a mid-term evaluation on the implementation of its energy strategy for 2030. In the transport sector, the application of the legislation is inadequate and 2020 saw some setbacks for legislation on hybrid cars. In the area of environment, Moldova has submitted its NDCs and developed and approved a strategy document mainstreaming climate change and risk reduction. While waste management remains a challenge, progress in water management can be seen thanks to the provisions of the AA. Modest results were recorded in the integration of sectoral policies and the country still lacks air quality control stations. The national ecological fund lacks transparency and rules for the selection of projects and financing. Looking ahead, reforestation will soon become a top-level priority in the country and Moldovan authorities are committed to facilitating investment in the energy and transport sectors. Proper monitoring of forestry and water resources should be ensured.

Moldova's WG3 advanced on environment and transport issues. It conducted a study on investment bias in energy efficiency and campaigned against the passing of a law allowing the use of underground water for irrigation, although this was ultimately unsuccessful. The MNP called on the governments of Ukraine and Moldova to negotiate on the functioning of hydropower complexes in a way that preserves the Dniester river. Advocacy-wise, the WG elaborated an advocacy plan and members attended various civil society events. The group will be focusing on reforestation and members are interested in waste management, especially medical waste. Going forward, WG3 would benefit from closer regional cooperation on the Dniester river, reforestation and in general on common problems, such as hydropower and using water for electricity. The WG would like to have more thematic meetings and more support for the production of analytical material at the regional level. In the country, both the WG and the NP cooperate closely with EU officials and institutions, who usually take part in NP meetings, since the EU Ambassador follows the developments of the platform. Through their assistance strategy, the EU is committed to stronger cooperation for the next 7 years and its engagement should be matched by civil society since the national government is not as keen to cooperate on these topics.

Georgia - Murman Margvelashvili & Nino Chkhobadze: Georgia is advancing rapidly in terms of adopting legislation and strategic plans. It has harmonised a lot of its legislation on waste management with the EU acquis and has taken steps to implement the provisions of the Paris Agreements. Since 2019, 5 new laws on energy alone have been passed (law on water supply, energy efficiency, RES, energy labelling and energy efficiency in building). The country now has action plans on energy efficiency and RES. However, such advances are fragile as the capacity of both government and civil society to implement and adapt to all these changes is limited. Keeping reforms intact is a challenge in itself: powerful interest groups often promote amendments seeking to slow down or halt reforms. Going forward, the biggest challenge remains the proper

implementation of laws. Civil society should monitor implementation more closely and lead awareness raising campaigns among the population. Local decision making and decentralisation should be promoted. The transport sector needs better infrastructure and legislation. Lastly, climate change is having a disastrous impact on countries in the region, and land degradation needs attention.

The WG has been very active since 2019 and held 12 meetings in 2020, although with lower than desired levels of participation. The group is composed of 40 organisations but only a few work on transport, making it a marginal issue within the group. The fragmentation of civil society in Georgia remains a problem: there are many associations that regroup CSOs, making it harder to coordinate and cooperate. Hydropower remains an issue of contention, with several protests taking place against hydropower development in Kutaisi. Development around this, with polarisation and fighting among various CSOs and parties, shows the lack of a coordinated approach among civil society in the adoption of the sustainable development principles.

Belarus - Uladzimir Zuyeu: the country is facing obvious difficulties due to serious breaches of the rule of law and human rights, affecting many members of the group and environmental activists as well. In this ongoing context, many civil society activists, including from the NP, have been repressed and CSOs are having trouble operating. Cyclists tried to organise a procession to inaugurate the cycling season, but authorities strongly opposed this imposing very stringent rules for the registration of participants. Authorities are actively trying to prevent cooperation between civil society and EU institutions and EU member states. EU4climate was launched recently in Belarus and some progress has been recorded on the national green energy plan. The plan is harmonised with EU legislation, 80% of it foresees the participation of civil society and 90% of funding should come from the EU. It is unclear to what extent a similar implementation is realistic in the current situation.

Zooming out from these underlying issues, the Astravets nuclear power plant, inaugurated last May, remains the group's main concern. It was launched without a nuclear waste management plan. CSOs tried to influence decisions participating in public hearings but soon realised there was no actual possibility to influence the project. Cooperation with the authorities remains difficult if not impossible within the current political context. The second most pressing issue is a battery plant in Brest. The referendum on the plant promised before August 2020's elections never took place and the plant is currently operating. The group also scored some victories: thanks to public activism, the country now has a technical code on waste management especially for pharmaceutical waste. The Minsk City Council created a programme for the installation of containers for the collection of pharmaceutical waste in pharmacies. At the same time, plastic waste remains an issue, as single-use plastics are still allowed in canteens and other places.

Azerbaijan - Elchin Sultanov: Azerbaijan's civil society and government pay little attention to environmental matters. Working Group 3 is quite small - composed only of 12 members - but has organised a number of initiatives, including a seminar on Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) in areas pertaining to renewable energy. The group is planning to be more active on ESIA and some positive developments can be noted as ESIA was taken into consideration for the planned construction of wind farms near Baku. The group also prepared a

position paper analysing and providing recommendations on the main environmental issues Azerbaijan is facing, reflecting on the 13 biggest ecological problems in the country. These include the intensive development of agriculture, problems created by hydroelectric plants, desertification as a result of climate change and other reasons, the provision of drinking water to the population, the development of the green economy (sustainable development), the protection of the Caspian Sea from oil pollution, overgrazing, deforestation, decreasing biodiversity, and air pollution.

The group has carried out an analysis and developed recommendations on how to deal with the decreasing water levels of the Kura river, the country's main water source. According to the analysis, the Kura river's lack of water is caused by the illegal use of water reserves by oligarchs in the regions close to the river delta. Under the pressure of civil society, the government took some measures which will be necessary to address the water problem in those regions. Last but not least, the group prepared a document on the status of nature in Karabakh after the conclusion of recent military action, which was adopted by the Board as a Statement of the ANP. The document points to the total destruction of the unique forest of *Platanus orientalis* in the Basitchay Nature Reserve (Zangilan district), the destruction of 110,000ha of forest and arable land as a result of regular burning, and the prevention of water use from the Sarsang water reserve for citizens of neighbouring districts.

Armenia - Mari Chakryan: Armenia is recording considerable progress in the realm of renewable energy and energy efficiency. The use of renewable energy potential is at a maximum and the country has several plans to develop solar power plants. This is positive but the recycling of solar panels will soon become an issue. The chances for further development of hydropower plants in the country are limited as there are already plenty and norms are not respected, causing great damage to fauna and flora. The WG is monitoring the areas of special conservation interest included in the Emerald network. On transport, a priority remains the ensuring of Armenia's right of free access to the sea, an issue perpetuated by the poor conditions of vehicles and roads, since only about 20% of roads in Armenia meet international standards. On the environment, Armenia is developing a new EIA law as well as a national plan for climate change adaptation.

The WG is focusing on a) improving EIA legislation and processes, b) ways to apply the provisions of the EGD in the country and c) the promotion of environmental security. The ecosystem approach is being viewed as a guideline to that end. Some WG3 members are directly involved in the Public Council under the Minister of Environment and the group participates in public monitoring, inquiries to governing bodies and the organisation of awareness raising campaigns. Work is mainly done online and there is a shared feeling that the pandemic has weakened cooperation among national WGs, as it reduced opportunities for networking and experience sharing. Cooperation with WGs from other EaP countries would be welcomed, particularly in identifying best practices in EU member states and other EaP countries when it comes to the compliance of NDC Commitments (NDCs) with the requirements of the Paris Agreement and local self-government practices.

Policy debate: Environment within the European Green Deal

Tuesday 18 May, 09:30-11:00 CET

Power Point Presentation [here](#). Paper at the basis of the discussion [here](#).

The session kicked off with an introduction from WG3 coordinator **Ruslan Havryliuk** who stated the broad aims of the debate; identifying ways in which civil society actors can influence EaP governments and the EU so as to ensure reforms are stuck to and more efficient.

Ruslan then reminded the participants of [previous recommendations developed by Working Group 3](#) directed at the European Union and the governments of the EaP countries. The WG asked the European Union to:

1. Focus on the integration of good governance into projects directed at EaP countries;
2. Insist that EaP authorities work on creating strong institutional structures in the fields of environment, transport and energy, that could in the future integrate the new European standards that we are currently seeing within the framework of the new European Green Deal (EGD);
3. Create monitoring mechanisms and tools that show the true situation in the EaP countries to ensure better support is provided and that the wider population has access to more information, raising awareness and educating them about the aims of the EGD;

The WG recommended EaP governments:

1. Work on new institutional reforms;
2. Identify and create specific responsibilities for the ministries to improve dialogue between government and civil society actors on the implementation of the EGD;
3. Focus the financing of projects that have a significant impact on the environment, review the distribution of internal resources, deploy environment monitoring systems and to integrate the principal accord whereby the polluter is responsible for covering the cost of the impact their pollution has on the environment;

The session continued by assessing EaP countries' ability to respond to the European Green Deal, and debating whether the European Green Deal can be a stimulus for reforms in EaP countries.

A member from **Ukraine** stated that for the country, following the principles and targets of the EGD is deemed to be extremely important, despite the fact that Ukraine and the other EaP countries are not original parties to the agreement and have a different (lower) starting point vis-a-vis infrastructure and practices to EU Member States. Businesses and ministries still need to understand how the EGD works, its potential benefits and risks, and how wide-ranging its implications are, but some factors are concurring in making these and other actors realise the importance and consequences of climate change and the EGD. A more pessimistic intervention noted that many people in Ukraine simply do not want to understand the meaning of the EGD in-depth, and as such are unlikely to try to implement its aims. This pessimism was not shared by

all. Pilot projects involving the modernisation of primary schools, street lighting and the private sector installation of a power plant in the city of Kherson were mentioned. Indeed, 24 different pilot projects have been implemented and used as a showcase that green policies are good and can be beneficial in multiple ways, some schools became more efficient and spent less money for example. Projects are advancing quite rapidly and there was an expression of optimism about the future. A quote from the former Minister of Energy of Saudi Arabia was cited; *“The stone age did not end because the world ran out of stones and the oil age will end long before we run out of oil”*. As technology becomes more and more modernised and as the indicators are improved significantly there will be a natural progression to cleaner, more renewable forms of energy, however this still requires a collective effort from everyone. The progress made by Ukraine in integrating the EGD into national policy strategies and legislation was praised, while it still has a long way to go, it should become an example for the other EaP countries to follow.

Members from **Georgia** reiterated that persisting institutional weakness – worsened by the merger of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environmental Protection – hampers the implementation of the EGD. EU institutional support is an essential precondition to enable Georgia to implement EGD aims and standards. Monitoring needs to be drastically improved to identify areas that need preventive protections. New laws on water resource management and carbon control monitoring in accordance with European standards have been introduced but do not make up for weak institutional structures. The integration of the ‘polluter pays’ principle is difficult to promote in the country and energy producers have been advocating for such decisions to not be taken at a government level, whereas the EGD and European directives obligate companies to make these payments. The system of environmental protection is not oriented towards real results: it applies sanctions hesitantly due to weak institutions and does not adopt preventative actions that would avoid sanctions in the first place. The participation of wider society in decision making is superficial at best and as a result it is impossible to say that society actively participates in any field. Hearings have been held online and technological barriers prevent the participation of most elements of society in these online meetings. Moreover, civil society is often used as a scapegoat on which to pin the blame for Georgia’s faltering economy, resulting in scepticism among some ordinary citizens towards NGOs. Lastly, thriving corruption is also deemed to be thwarting progress and the work of civil society and European support is needed to fight corruption among national authorities. An example used was that while half of Georgia was suffering from floods, the figures for MW electricity production from hydropower were impossibly high and thus, falsified.

Much like in Georgia, the need for a very strong institutional framework and the reality of having a very weak institutional framework was highlighted for **Moldova**. Weak institutions often prompt civil society to step in in place of the government, with examples from civil society-led reforestation initiatives being given, but this is not enough. Overall, it was deemed that the EGD cannot be a stimulus for reforms in EaP countries as even though several have Association Agreements with very clear deadlines and obligations, there is little evidence of positive evolution. While new laws are adopted, little is done to enforce and implement them. Deliverables are not enough by themselves and indicators need to be implemented. Achievable declarations based on Action Plans should be made in the future. EaP countries should focus on more specific targets

than simply ‘reducing pollution’ or ‘reducing waste’: such targets are too broad and can end up alienating EaP countries as they are faced with massive, seemingly unachievable targets straight away. ‘Zombie’ thinking was criticised, governments and policy makers should not blindly copy foreign principles and targets in climate change policy and should really think about achievable targets, specific to the energy mix and resource availability of individual countries. In Moldova and other EaP countries waste strategies have focused on storing waste as opposed to actually disposing of it in an eco-friendly way like the zero-waste strategy implemented in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Best practices like this one should serve as an example for the EaP region. Manufacturers must also be targeted by legislation since they are responsible for the excessive use of plastic in the packaging of products.

As for **Armenia**, the country lacks a clear and coherent national strategy for the future due to confusion over target dates and different international obligations. The principles that Armenia follows now are in line with the EGD but there is some confusion as to whether the EGD should take precedence over the targets of the Paris Accords or vice versa. Armenia’s recent increase in emissions is also not promising in terms of the country’s ability to reach any target.

For **Belarus**, it was reported that many civil society actors in the country are currently at an impasse as they cannot work with a government that is now deemed to be illegitimate following controversial elections last year. This situation is not expected to change soon and civil society in the country remains quite pessimistic about the future.

Looking ahead, and reflecting on the contribution that WG3 can give to these issues, the group discussed the idea of carrying out an analysis of what projects and reforms have been proposed, what worked and why and vice versa. This analysis should be noted down for future reference and could be a joint project for all the participants, representing all the countries. The integration of the EGD in several sectors of the economy means that new objectives need to be established with different working groups, namely WG2 with business economy as this is intertwined with green activity. The members of the WG all understand the advantages of this programme and the WG must do its best to promote this as the participation of WG members in annual and multi-year programmes is not enough and wider society must be made aware as well. In Moldova, programmes and projects are being used to create linkages at the national level between civil society, young people and the government. The number of events per year should be increased and the positive results of these projects should be wider publicised. Colleagues from WG3 and the National Platforms should engage themselves in this to create a permanent dialogue that can strengthen the cause. However, the challenge comes back to the systemic and pivotal issue of institutional weakness and that no matter how ambitious the plans, strategies and objectives are, if institutions are weak then implementation will be very difficult or even impossible.

Policy debate: Energy within the European Green Deal and energy security

Tuesday 18 May 14:00-15:30 CET

Power Point Presentation [here](#). Paper at the basis of the discussion [here](#).

WG3 coordinator **Ana Otilia Nutu** kicked off the session by asking participants how the EGD can contribute to civil society's energy priorities and whether it can stimulate reforms in key energy sector institutions in EaP countries. Different views were voiced during the debate. The EGD is seen by some as a symbolic move from the EU, which provides incentives and momentum for other countries, technological advancements, and strong support for decarbonisation. Currently, the goals set by the EU and EaP countries are not harmonised, as the EU is committed to carbon neutrality by 2050, Ukraine has made a similar pledge by 2060, Armenia's target is to reduce emissions by 50% by 2050.

Overall, participants shared a general scepticism about EGD prospects within the EaP countries. A point was made that the EGD can act as a stimulus mainly at the level of advancing strategic policy and legislation, but the adoption of laws will not be enough when weak environmental governance persists. More positive views were shared about possibilities for the EGD in **Ukraine**, as the country could play a major role in implementing EGD provisions, given that a lot of progress was made in recent years. Court cases were instigated against companies' bad practices and the country would benefit greatly from strategic planning in sustainable development. At the same time, new ways must be found to replace current energy sources. Nuclear power plants still in use are either old or in bad shape, which will soon become a costly issue. Regarding **Moldova**, it was pointed out that thanks to the Covenant of Mayors, attention to renewable energy is growing from both civil society and local authorities, as both are cooperating closely on these issues. In **Armenia**, solar energy is being developed quickly. According to the national plans, the share of renewable energy should double quickly. Power plants are efficient in general, but there are many that do not work properly and need more attention.

For the EGD to be successful, several participants emphasised the strong need for further research and development towards solutions tailored to the region and each specific country and national context. Civil society should remain active in promoting research on sustainability and renewable energy forms, and raising awareness, including on how people can get access to these technologies. Participants have also raised the fact that EaP countries need strategies dealing with hydrogen and hydro energy, which is widely used in the region.

Policy debate: Transport and Urban Mobility

Wednesday 19 May, 09:00-10:30 CET

Power Point Presentation [here](#). Paper at the basis of the discussion [here](#).

The session began with a presentation of the draft paper "[Never waste a crisis: how EaP countries governments and cities can capitalise on COVID-19 to improve urban mobility in cities in the long term](#)". Participants discussed the draft recommendations presented in the paper, bringing in new supporting arguments and views.

The discussion focussed strongly on the recommendation suggesting the amendment of traffic rules to ensure a reduction of speed limits in cities to a maximum of 30 km/h, which would increase the safety of various road users. Participants agreed that a 30km/h limit around schools should be implemented, given plenty of evidence showing that the number of accidents are reduced by 40% when the speed limit is 30km/h. Bringing the speed limit to 30km/h would also reduce noise pollution by allowing a more constant speed in urban areas and reduce air pollution due to the emission of fewer particles. However, such reforms would certainly be met by resistance in EaP countries and should therefore be paired with civil society-led awareness raising campaigns aimed at promoting gradual change, carefully explaining the ins and outs to the population. Speed buffers across EaP countries should also be revised. Some EaP countries allow a buffer of up to 20km/h above the speed limit, which is considered too high. Participants suggested either getting rid of it altogether or replacing fixed buffers by a percentage of the speed.

The role of traffic police was discussed, as it was deemed generally inefficient. Participants agreed that cities need to rely on technology solutions – such as speed cameras – to enhance the enforcement of traffic rules, although the efficiency of such tools was also questioned.

Traffic jams remain a major issue in most EaP cities, as public transport is very poorly developed as well as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. A strategy to develop public transport in Chisinau and create green corridors for cyclists has just been launched in Moldova. Ukraine has also launched a project to further develop bicycle infrastructure in Kiev. Georgia benefits from international support on this topic and has recently elaborated transport plans. EaP countries have seen the number of individual electric scooters grow quickly in their cities. These scooters operate in a grey area of legislation and cause many accidents and should thus be regulated.

Public transport at moderate price and mobility should be a basic right, and civil society should be better integrated in local transport associations. Transport companies must meet safety, service and environmental standards. The issuing of licenses and transport services must be made transparent as should the recording of transport fees and their use.

The paper will be amended following the recommendations raised at the meeting and will be shared with EU officials and institutions, relevant stakeholders and in the proper thematic panels of EaP policy. WG3 members can still send their suggestions or studies to support these recommendations to tania.marocchi@eap-csf.eu.

Meeting with EU stakeholders on civil society's contribution to the green agenda

Wednesday 19 May, 14:00-15:30 CET

WG3 coordinators **Ana Otilia Nutu** and **Ruslan Havryliuk** introduced the session by welcoming the representatives and briefly recapping the discussions held by WG3 over the previous sessions. The EaP countries have not always utilised the opportunities they have been presented with. Civil society through the EaP CSF could become the link between EaP national

governments and the EU in a way that is mutually beneficial, however EaP civil society relies heavily on EU support in order to advance reforms. There is a general will to integrate with the EU and for the EaP countries to forge a closer relationship with the EU.

Anna Rapullo Grau, Political Officer for the Eastern Partnership with the European External Action Service (EEAS), began by summarising the recent work of the EEAS in intensifying relations within the framework of the multilateral architecture, including of course, members of civil society. There is a strong willingness to discuss priorities at the annual summit later in the year. The climate is at the core of future priorities and this has only been made more acute by the pandemic which has shifted the focus to strong and sustainable economic recovery. The Portuguese presidency of the European Council has accepted that the postponed Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change will go ahead this semester, official invitations will be sent soon and civil society will be closely involved and consulted in the organisation and participation of this meeting. The intention is to further support the capacity of civil society to work in encouraging their governments to bring about reforms, particularly in the field of climate change where transforming the mindset is so crucial to this issue of critical importance. The revision of Association Agreement annexes and updating of existing legislation is expected to be completed before the summit, including new pieces of environmental and climate policy, currently the process is still ongoing.

Andrzej Januszewski, Policy Officer at DG ENVIRONMENT, stated that civil society is essential in bringing about massive change in climate policy and attitudes, forcing governments to take notice and act accordingly. This demand was also a stimulus for the EU to act. The EGD is a key priority for the EU and for the first time, social and environmental concerns have been put ahead of economic ones: the economy must work for human beings and nature and not the contrary. The EGD will be the blueprint for environmental work in the future so when new targets are made by EaP countries, they will surely be measured against the EGD. Issues of sustainable and circular economy will be promoted and there is now a new circular economy action plan. Agricultural reforms and a chemicals strategy will provide enough food while not permanently damaging biodiversity. Civil society has a key role in promoting these strategies and seeing that they are adopted. In Ukraine there is clearly a very strong intention to align with the principles of the EGD, also from Georgia and Moldova which have of course signed Association Agreements with the EU. The EGD is not just the European Union green deal but is about the entire continent so there must be collaboration with all EU neighbours and wider partners. The Association Agreements with partnership countries are now being revised and there is ambition for legislation updates. The EU is not too worried if they do not succeed in getting all of the legislation in place, it should not be underestimated how difficult it is to change opinion and attitudes on the ground and it is better to achieve this than implement meaningless legislation that is not acted on. The support for civil society is enshrined in original programmes and bilateral relations with the EU and the EU will always remember that civil society is the driving force behind change in these countries.

Angela Bularga, International Aid/Cooperation Officer at DG NEAR, expressed a personal and institutional belief that frequent dialogue and cooperation with civil society is absolutely essential and shared updates on the current status of several processes. The EU4Environment programme

is being implemented and work has begun on mainstreaming circular economy, regulatory changes and measurement of the green economy. As of 2021, the EU is happy to have added a fifth element, which concerns biodiversity protection and sustainable forestry; it is hoped that activities will start soon. EUWI+ is another programme that is close to being finalised, the final event will be in June and the WG is invited to attend; this initiative and others will continue. EMBLAS-Plus (Improved Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea) programme began in April. Upscale is the word that will characterise the next phase of work, but this will depend on the current situation in the EaP countries themselves. A big part of it is going to be green finance and this is going to constitute a key issue for discussion at the Environmental Ministerial Meeting coming up in June. Cooperation on communication is very important, and civil society remains instrumental in reaching out to people outside the expert community.

Asked whether additional instruments that can be used to **strengthen institutional capacity** in the face of heightened expectations from EGD targets and pressure from investors or other parties to water down implementation, Repullo Grau stated that strengthening institutional capacity will remain a key part of the policy and the moratorium on key deliverables for 2020 will soon be made public. There are still key targets that were not met and work to be done. Bularga added institutional capacity will become an element of EU4Environment, with the goal to identify where there are gaps and what actions stakeholders and governments need to take to increase capacity in tackling environmental challenges. In terms of infrastructure development, energy efficiency was one of the top objectives and substantial investment and funding has been directed at tackling this through IFIs, the neighbourhood investment platform and the E5P multi-donor fund, projects are being implemented across the region as a result. Very often policy reforms would impede investments even when funding is available, it is very important therefore to speed up reforms if funding for environmental infrastructure needs to be available. In the post-Covid world, regional governments should not underestimate the capacity of the green transformation to bring about green jobs. Green jobs are related to energy efficiency, particularly in public and private sector buildings, sustainable urban transport and other areas. The multiple benefits of green transformation should be understood and presented to wider audiences. Analysis from the EaP GREEN programme has shown that presenting the economic development benefits of a green transformation is often more interesting for the governments of the EaP countries.

Asked about the **next declaration related to energy, environment and transport and what the process of including new priorities** and concerns would look like, Repullo Grau responded that these processes will follow the usual EU institutional steps and will be based on the proposals outlined in the JSWD and other joint documents and hopefully the declaration will be published before the summer. Therefore, there is no concrete answer as the direction and guidance comes from the EU Council.

To a question enquiring how ambitious can the EaP be in **minimising pollution** as there is support from a number of different EU programmes and laws have been adopted, Januszewski stated that we have no choice but to be ambitious as the size of the challenges we face are so great. In spite of funding availability or administrative ability, there must still be a push for ambitious targets, particularly in reducing pollution which is a major objective. The people and the resources are often there but frequently mismanaged. The recent pandemic which seems to be in decline

must be a lesson that is not forgotten, the green transition must be a green recovery and vice versa and there must be no return to the practices of the past.

Asked about the perceived **lack of coordination between different European tools** and how this could be addressed and improved in not only Ukraine but across the whole EaP region, Repullo Grau acknowledged that indeed, among the myriad tools and projects, stakeholders and citizens often get lost. There are many different, overlapping tracks and the ambition is certainly to streamline and synergise coordination between initiatives and programmes. Januszewski added that coordination is a kind of eternal quest, since actions from various stakeholders, private entities, other states and different EU departments are hard to map. Fulfilling international obligations is always encouraged and expected and this must be kept high on the agenda.

Asked about the status of **biodiversity conservation** in discussions and strategies between the EU and EaP governments as concerns are mounting that this area is often side-lined in favour of other priorities, Januszewski responded by stressing the importance of biodiversity conservation as a key element of ambitious plans and cooperation frameworks.

In many EaP countries, particularly in Georgia, governments consider **HPPs** a green/renewable source of energy, however, civil society has been disputing this as their environmental impact often leads to the degradation of ecosystems. Asked to share a view on this issue, Januszewski cited the example of the Balkans as a region that faces very similar problems with electricity from hydropower, with some countries depending on hydro for 100% of their electrical power. The EU does not encourage the use of small hydroelectric plants and urges countries to be very careful in their approach to hydro. Comparing the contribution of the small hydro plants to the energy mix with the damage they do to surrounding nature and the limitations they put on other activities like fishing clearly highlights the problematic nature of this power source. Brownfield sites and expanding or renovating existing hydro capacity should be prioritised over the construction of any new hydro projects.

As concerns were raised over the **European Investment Bank and other EU funding mechanisms** still considering **controversial plans for a new project in Ukraine**, Januszewski responded that EIB and other EU funding mechanisms abide by European standards: if these withdraw then the vacuum is typically filled by private entities who will not necessarily have the best interests of the environment at heart. Sometimes, it is best if EU funding remains in place with these sometimes unavoidable or necessary investments in order to best protect the environment.