

Annual Activities Report 2018

THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM (EaP CSF) AND THE SECRETARIAT

Letter from the Co-chairs

Dear members and friends of the EaP CSF,

Much has **changed** in 2018 in the Eastern Partnership region. Five Eastern Partnership countries - **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine** - and some **European Union member states**, are celebrating the **100th anniversary** of their independence this year. The symbolism of the 100th anniversary of national independence for five EaP countries led then by progressive, reformist governments prompts **self-reflection and a re-evaluation** of the future for both the Eastern Partnership and the European Union.

This year, the **Velvet Revolution** in April in Armenia was a turning point for the country. After the resignation of the previous Prime Minister and his government, the newly elected Armenian government faces a numerous challenges: fighting corruption, ensuring constitutional and institutional change, securing free and democratic elections, dealing with political prisoners, as well as numerous environmental problems. This wholly unexpected change in Armenia brings **hope** that the **reform process** will not only lead to a **better future for the Armenians** but also provides a model and example of peaceful change and reform for other members of the Eastern Partnership. At the same time, the changes in Armenia raise several questions on how **sustainable** the new governance model of governance is.

This applies to all six EaP countries since the past few years have shown that the lack of **sustainable democratic institutions** is the main **cause of stagnation** in our countries. The preliminary results of our soon to be published **Eastern Partnership Index**, reveal **modest developments** in the protection of human rights, but backtracking in the important areas of media and judicial independence, public administration and in the fight against corruption. Overall, the pace of reforms remains **slow** and their **sustainability is fragile**. While **Ukraine** opts for closer cooperation with the EU and strives to use new approaches to deal with political and economic issues, **Moldova** has reversed on its European path.

The authorities in **Azerbaijan** unfortunately remain convinced that repressive policies against civil rights, the continued detention of political prisoners and tight controls on the right of free assembly and civil society organisations enable them to maintain control in the country. They are mistaken as only legitimate, freely elected governments, can secure long term growth and stability, safeguarded by legitimate institutions.

In **Belarus**, change is glacially slow as the country's ruler seeks a way to win support from the EU which would enable the country to ease its debt burden without freeing the energy of its citizens through liberal political and economic reforms. Despite the pluralistic and competitive nature of the Presidential elections in **Georgia**, where for the first time in the history of independent state a second round of presidential elections has been appointed, the electoral process is characterized by a high level of polarisation, which vividly showed the need for greater efforts for the democratic

transformations in the country.

It is also obvious that the reforms track, especially in the associated countries having EU membership ambition should be more dynamic and sustained, being accompanied by further strengthening of democratic institutions under conditions of mounting support per “more for more” principle that gives additional incentives to enhance the reform efforts. Meanwhile we are changing...

Change has also come to the Forum itself. After 9 years in existence, more and more is expected of the Forum itself. The EU institutions see the EaP CSF as a **trusted partner** that has a broad range of expertise that covering four **EaP Platforms and Panels** and operating in a **democratic and transparent manner** on all levels. Therefore, the Steering Committee has authored a broad ranging reform which was adopted as of November 1, 2018, thanks to a vote by the Tallinn delegates of the EaP CSF. This reform will allow the expertise of the Forum members to be used more efficiently and to ensure more effective participation in the EaP for all.

The EaP CSF **observes developments in the Eastern Partnership countries** and **supports the drive by civil society to push for reforms** in line with the 20 Deliverables for 2020, the guiding document for the EaP adopted at the previous EaP Summit.

As a Forum, we have participated in various meetings of the EaP starting from **Ministerial meetings to EaP Platforms and panels to EURONEST¹ and CORLEAP² meetings and various European Commission-initiated consultations**. We have been vocal on the matters of the concern of our members in the EaP countries and the EU. This year the EaP CSF has been vocal in expressing our concern about the future of EU financial assistance (2021-2027) to Eastern Partnership countries. It **advocated** for taking financial support to the EU neighborhood out of a general development aid fund and to return to a separate European Neighborhood Fund based on the existing regulations.

We believe that the **Eastern Partnership policy must be strengthened** to tackle the challenges posed by state capture, corruption and disinformation. To achieve this, **we need a more ambitious approach** and a **strong partnership between EU institutions and civil society**. The upcoming 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership initiative will provide many opportunities to discuss results and achievements, as well as challenges ahead. Halfway in reaching the milestone year 2020 – “20 deliverables for 2020”, **civil society perceives the Eastern Partnership policy and the underlying principles of rule of law, democracy and human rights** as relevant as ever not only in our region but in the European as a whole.

Krzysztof Bobinski and Alexandra Kalatozishvili

I. Steering Committee (SC) report

The composition of the SC in the reporting period has been the following: Krzysztof Bobinski, Ina Coseru, Laura Dittel, Ziya Guliyev, Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Mikalai Kvantaliani, Petru Macovei, Hennadiy Maksak, Boris Navasardian, Goda Neverauskaite Ana Otilia Nutu, Lasha Tughushi



In the reporting period the SC supported by the Secretariat have been focusing on the following priority issues:

1. Exchanges with EU officials and other stake-holders:

The SC had a number of exchanges with EU officials and other stake-holders during its 4 regular meetings conducted in 2018 (Brussels, 24-25 January, Minsk, April 12-13, Brussels 17-18 July, Chisinau 6-7, October) to discuss the situation on the EaP countries and the internal matters of the Forum.

- **Meeting with Hanna Jahns**, Cabinet of Commissioner Hahn on developments in the EaP on January 24
- On April 25, the SC sent a **letter to Commissioner Hahn** requesting to meet and discuss the status of the EaP CSF as an independent body and considerable delays in signing the grant for the EaP CSF that was supposed to start in January 2018. The meeting with the Commissioner never took place, and several members of the SC met with Hanna Jahns instead, where the position of both sides on the independence and the status of the Forum and the new grant have been clarified.
- **Discussion with Lawrence Meredith**, Director, Neighbourhood East at the directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and **Audrone Perskauskiene**, Head of Division Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, at the European External Action Service (EEAS), on developments in the EaP, place of the EaP CSF and the Forum's strategic priorities
- **Exchange with Diana Jablonska (DG NEAR) and Nils Jansons (EEAS)** on the reformed architecture of the EaP and the EU support programmes for 2018.

- **Update meeting with Vassilis Maragos, DG NEAR.**
- **Two Meetings with Sinziana Poiana, DG NEAR**, one focusing on the new funding to the EaP CSF for 2018-2020 and the details of the project and the other one – on the internal reform and the place of the Forum under the reformed EaP architecture
- **Meeting at the EU Delegation in Moldova with the EU Ambassador, H.E. Peter Michalko and Mr Mathieu Bousquet**, Head of Unit, Georgia, Moldova and Neighbourhood Cross-Border Cooperation at the EU Delegation, where the SC delivered concerns related to the pre-election period and overall developments in Moldova, offering assistance and know-how on how to engage the citizens that worked in other EaP countries.
- **Meeting with Mr Iurie Leanca, Deputy Prime-Minister of Moldova** for European Integration on the ongoing political situation in Moldova and the upcoming elections, general internal situation in the country (including the judicial system and the follow up of the banking fraud scandal), as well as energy projects and frayed relations with Turkey.
- **Meeting with opposition representative Maia Sandu** on the upcoming elections and challenges that the opposition party in the country are facing, as well as ways of mobilizing voters.



2. Collaboration with the European Parliament:

The Secretariat and individual SC members worked with the European Parliament and have provided background information for a number of reports and missions of the European Parliament:

- **Euronest Parliamentary Assembly report on social security**
Report on tackling informal and undeclared Labour and enhancing social security of employees in the European Union and Eastern partner countries, by the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment, Education, Culture and Civil Society (SOC), 9 April 2018
- **European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) reports on the Association Agreements**
Report on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Georgia (2017/2282(INI)) by AFET, 15 October 2018
Report on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Moldova (2017/2281(INI)) by AFET, 15 October 2018
Report on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine (2017/2283(INI)) by AFET, 16 November 2018

- **European Parliament’s Committee on foreign Affairs (AFET) report on EU-Azerbaijan Comprehensive Agreement**
Report on a European Parliament recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the negotiations on the EU-Azerbaijan Comprehensive Agreement (2017/20569INI)) by AFET, 23 May 2018
- **European Parliament resolution on the Partnership Agreement between the EU and European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) and Armenia**
European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 4 July 2018 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part.
- **European Parliament resolution on the implementation of the Association Agreement with Moldova.**
European Parliament resolution of 14 November 2018 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Moldova (2017/2281(INI))
- **Bologna process**
Contribution to the European Parliament resolution of 19 April 2018 on the implementation of the Bologna Process – state of play and follow-up (B8-0190/2018)
- **European Parliament’s Committee in Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Development (DEVE) on the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)**
Draft report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) by AFET and DEVE, 19 November 2018

3. SC members took the floor and channel the EaP CSF position at various events of the EaP:

- Five EaP CSF Steering Committee members: Ina Coseru, Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Mikalai Kvantaliani and Hennadiy Maksak participated in the launch [event on the new EaP architecture](#) on March 12, providing a vision of the civil society functioning within the new architecture and on the ways of how its expertise will be delivered.
- To channel the civil society vision on the renewed EaP architecture within the larger group of Brussels-based civil society stakeholders, the EaP CSF held an “Expert Workshop on the three 2020 cross-cutting deliverables”, focusing on civil society, gender and non-discrimination, strategic communication and media independence.
- The EaP CSF representatives Haykuhi Harutyunyan and Goda Neverauskaite participated in Senior Official Meetings (SOMs) in [Spring](#) and [Autumn](#), focusing on 2020 Deliverables, NDICI Regulation as well as governance issues in the region. The EaP CSF followed up by providing comments to the EaP Platforms and Panels’ Work plans that guide the work of the Platforms and Panels in 2018-2019 and actively participating in more than 60 events of the EaP policy initiative.

- Together with Foreign Ministers and Ministers responsible for [Harmonisation of Digital Markets](#), the EaP CSF representative Mikalai Kvantaliani took part in [Informal Ministerial in Minsk](#) in June 2018. The Forum was also present at two Ministerials in Luxembourg in October - one on [Foreign Affairs](#) (with Hennadiy Maksak) and another one on [Environment](#) (with Ina Coseru and Anna Golubovska-Onisimova).
- The EaP CSF Steering Committee Co-Chairs, Krzysztof Bobinski and Aleksandra Kalatozishvili addressed the 7th Ordinary Session of the [Euronest Parliamentary Assembly](#) in June.
- The Steering Committee member Hennadiy Maksak represented the Forum at the [Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership \(CORLEAP\)](#) 8th Annual Meeting in Kyiv in September.



4. Cooperation with stakeholders:

- **Council of Europe (CoE):**

The SC decided to apply for membership in the **Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)**. The positive response about the membership has been received in June.

At the initiative of Working Group 1 Coordinator, Krzysztof Bobinski, a brisk and successful campaign to involve civil society in the choice by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) of a new human rights spokesman was conducted.

The SC also continued our support, as decided at the Tallinn Assembly in 2017, for the efforts of the INGO, a Council of Europe institution, to establish a system within the CoE to monitor the 'shrinking space' for NGOs in the Council of Europe countries.

- **World Bank:**

The increased cooperation has happened during the Working Group meeting and respective panels.

- **European Investment Bank:**

The cooperation with the Corporate Responsibility and Civil Society Division of the European Investment Bank has been started.

- **Policy Forum for Development (PFD):**

Established in 2012, PFD is an outcome of structural dialogue with the EU. PFD was initiated by Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and brings together civil society and local authorities from all over the world. Several representatives of the SC took part in the 1st European group meeting in Ghent.

5. The SC produced a number of statements, addresses and letters:

- [Statement on the Hungarian "Stop Soros" law, 27 June 2018](#)
- [Statement on the Financial Support to Civil Society Organizations in Azerbaijan, 9 May 2018](#)
- [Statement on the Extension of e-declaration obligations to civil society in Ukraine, 29 March 2018](#)
- [Address at the launch event of the new structure for the Eastern Partnership, 12 March 2018](#)
- [Open letter to Syracuse University, 6 June 2018](#)

- [Statement on ensuring the safety of Fikret Huseynli, a journalist and Dutch citizen of Azerbaijani origin, and upholding the rule of law in Ukraine, 12 March 2018](#)
- [Open letter on the case of Fikret Huseynli, 4 April 2018](#)
- [Statement on the 21st FIFA World Cup Hosted by the Russian Federation, 13 June 2018](#)
- [Open Letter to Ramil Usubov, Minister of Internal Affairs, Republic of Azerbaijan, 1 June 2018](#)
- [Statement on the 100th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of Azerbaijan, 28 May 2018](#)
- [Statement on the election of Nikol Pashinyan as the new Prime Minister of Armenia, 9 May 2018](#)
- [Open letter to EU Officials on the situation of Armenia, 23 April 2018](#)
- [Open letter to Armenian Authorities on the peaceful protests in Armenia, 23 April 2018](#)
- [Open letter to Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, 7 February 2018](#)
- [Statement on the EU Financial Assistance to Moldova, 26 June 2018](#)
- [Statement on the Invalidation of the Chisinau Mayoral Election Results, 21 June 2018](#)
- [Address to the European Higher Education Area \(EHEA\) Ministerial Conference of May 2018 in Paris, May 8 2018](#)
- [Appeal on the Delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe \(PACE\) on the Discussions on the Removal of sanctions affecting the Russian Delegation, 14 September 2018](#)
- [Statement on Ukrainian Political Prisoners on territories occupied by the Russian Federation and in Russian prisons, 4 October 2018](#)
- [Statement following a visit to Chisinau, Moldova on 2-5 October 2018, 8 October 2018](#)
- [Statement on the preparations of the upcoming EaP CSF Annual assembly in Tbilisi in response to the critical comments in the media in Azerbaijan, 22 November 2018](#)

6. Advocacy:

The SC members and the Secretariat have conducted a number of advocacy activities based on the advocacy campaigns and goals elaborated at the beginning of the year. Advocacy was conducted independently or in the frames of the respective Working Groups. It focused on the following topics covering all 6 countries of the EaP and resulted in a series of policy papers, statements, meetings and events:

- Meaningful participation of the EaP CSF in the EaP architecture
- Meaningful dialogue on bilateral issues with the EaP governments and the EU stakeholders
- The enabling environment for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Eastern Partnership countries
- Justice Reform
- Youth employability
- Strategic communication
- Security
- Bologna process
- New Multi-Annual Financial Framework of the EU

7. EaP CSF Events

On **23 January 2018**, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum held the presentation of the “**Eastern Partnership Index 2015-2016: Charting Progress in European Integration, Democratic Reforms, and Sustainable Development**” at the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU in Brussels. The Representative of the Czech Republic to the Political and Security Committee **Tomáš Szunyog**, opened the session congratulating the EaP CSF on their work. **Boris Navasardyan**, Steering Committee member, featured as one of the key panellists at the event.



To channel the civil society vision on the renewed EaP architecture within the larger group of Brussels-based civil society stakeholders, the EaP CSF held an “**Expert Workshop on the three 2020 cross-cutting deliverables**” in March 2018 in Brussels, focusing on civil society, gender and non-discrimination, strategic communication and media independence. Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Hennadyi Maksak, Nikolai Kvantaliani and Natalia Yerashevich took part in the panel.

On **10 September**, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and [European Endowment for Democracy \(EED\)](#) held a joint panel discussion – bringing representatives of Armenian civil society, European policy-makers and stakeholders together to discuss progress achieved so far in Armenia, at the **EED office in Brussels**. The discussions concerned **judicial and electoral reforms**, as well as **media environment** – the key sectors for ensuring sustainability and long-term aims of the **Velvet Revolution**. Two SC members Haykuhi Harutyunyan and Boris Navasardian took part in the panel. The public event was followed by a briefing for COEST and COHOM hosted by the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU on September 11.



On **16 July 2018**, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum held the **launch event of the Disinformation Resilience Index** in Brussels. The event was hosted by the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union and saw the presentation of the results of the Disinformation Resilience Index and the report for the Eastern Partnership Region. SC members Hennadyi Maksak and Ina Coseru and Secretariat’s Director Natalia Yerashevich took part in the panel.

Held under the auspices of the **Austrian Presidency of the Council of European Union**, the **second Eastern Partnership Youth Conference 2018: “Youth for Entrepreneurship”** took place on **8-9 November 2018** in **Vienna, Austria**. Organised by **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF)**, the conference brought together **130 young activists and entrepreneurs** from the **Eastern Partnership countries, Russia, Turkey and the EU**. Together with trainers, entrepreneurs and stakeholders from all over Europe, young entrepreneurs discussed and developed key competences that can help them to boost competitiveness and growth in their regions.



Devised and directed by the members of **EaP CSF Working Group 4 “Contacts between People”**, the main aim of the conference was to facilitate cooperation and contacts between the participants and to create stronger and trust-based links for the future. Aleksandra Kalatozishvili and Nikolai Kvantaliani were in the group leading organisation of this event together with the Secretariat. For more info <http://eap-csf.eu/eastern-partnership-youth-conference-2018-youth-for-entrepreneurship/>

8. Discussion and decisions on a number of internal matters:

- **Elections of Co-chairs.** The SC members elected Aleksandra Kalatozishvili and Krzysztof Bobinski as Co-Chairs
- **EaP CSF goals and priorities for 2018** and beyond and how they translate into the EaP CSF activities in 2018
- **Brainstorming on the policy campaigns for 2018** with the targets
- Discussion on the main **EaP CSF messages 2018** and image campaign
- A round of discussions of the **new grant to the EaP CSF funded by the European Commission** and Project Advisory Committee meeting with Sinziana Poiana to discuss the project matters (members Nikolai Kvantaliani, Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Ina Coseru and Krzysztof Bobinski and Natalia Yerashevich).
- Discussing the **rules for funding to the National Platforms** within the frames of the new grant
- Planning of the **Annual Working Group meetings**
- Finalization of the **list of delegates for the Annual Assembly 2018**
- **Development of the content of the internal reform**, discussing it with members and presenting the key pillars of the reform at the Annual Assembly in Tbilisi
- Shaping the **agenda and the organisation of the Annual Assembly**
- Participation in the **evaluation of regranting proposals** of the respective Working Groups (Working Group Coordinators)
- Approval of the **revised procedure for Working Groups regranting**
- Adoption of the **annual accounts for 2017** of the Secretariat
- Approval of the **revised Nomination procedure for EaP Platforms and Panels**

- Discussion of the **results of the European Commission-commissioned audit** of the previous grant to the EaP CSF for 2015-2017 and how the findings of the audit have repercussions on the implementation of the current grant

9. Meetings with National Platforms (NP):

Meeting with members of the Moldovan NP in Chisinau, at which the SC presented the outline of the Annual Assembly agenda as well as the upcoming internal reform. Members of the Steering Committee also presented their experience with election observation tools (including electronic ones), methods to involve diaspora, ethnic minorities, and voters in rural areas in the electoral process.

Meeting with members of Belarusian NP in Minsk. The Steering Committee members shared their views on the state of the Eastern Partnership, the situation in Belarus and the priorities for 2018 with the members of the **Belarusian National Platform**. The members of the NP outlined the main points on the developments in the EU-Belarus relations.

II. EaP CSF Funding and Annual accounts

III. The EaP Secretariat's report

10. Personnel and interns:

The Secretariat operates in line with its statute and the EaP CSF strategy for 2017-2019. It currently has three full-time staff members: Director - Natalia Yerashevich, Advocacy Manager - Vera Rihackova and Communications Manager Juulia Barthel, as well as part-time Financial Manager – Iustina Haroianu (90% working schedule), Administrative and Statutory Processes Manager - Lidia Gromadzka (90%), and EaP Index and Membership Manager Tania Marocchi (80%). The work of the Secretariat is supported by interns. In 2018 the following dedicated young professionals have been interning at the Secretariat: Jakub Libiszewski, Natasha Tsiareshchanka, Daniel Casas Ballester, Connor Allen, Eduardo Garcia Cancela and Maria Baldovin.



1. Project elaboration and project implementation activities:

At the end of the 2017 and first half of the 2018, the Secretariat staff have been **elaborating the project proposal for the support of the Forum's activities by the EC in 2018-2020** in line with the approved by the SC directions of activities and the EaP CSF strategy. With some delays, the grant between the European Commission (EC) and the EaP CSF Secretariat has been signed in June 2018. The Secretariat did its best to ensure the continued activities of the EaP CSF from January 2018 to June 2018 with borrowed funds from ING bank. The borrowed funds kept the activities going until late April 2018, after which the activities of the EaP CSF had to be frozen until the new funds have been received in late June 2018.

In 2018, with the signing of the new grant with the EC, the managed budget and the responsibilities of the Secretariat have further expanded by including **the administration of support to National Platforms** that has been added on top of the traditional activities funded with the frame of the EC project. The overall amount available for two years (2019-2020) for NPs is 550.000 EUR (50.000 euros/year/NP, except for the Ukrainian NP that receives support via a different mechanism). The Secretariat has developed regulations for the administration of the support for National Platforms which include 10 documents and has formed the Evaluation Committee who is taking all procedural and financial decisions with regards to the support.

2. Support of the SC

The Secretariat supported the activities of the Steering Committee by organising **four Steering Committee meetings and ensured the follow up and implementation of all the decisions** taken by the Steering Committee, solving procedural issues, and channelling the Steering Committee's and Forum's positions at relevant points to the EU institutions in Brussels.

3. Working on the development of regulations

The Secretariat has worked with the SC on **the development of the internal reform** as well as conducted the online voting on the matter. The Secretariat has contracted consultants to support the SC in developing the internal reform including the Code of Ethical Conduct.

4. Organisation of the statutory EaP CSF events and other public events

In 2018 the Secretariat supported Working Groups by **organising and drafting the agendas of the annual 4 Working Group meetings** together with WG Coordinators. The Secretariat ensured the participation of the relevant stakeholders to the events and capacity-building sessions. In the margins of the WG meetings a number of advocacy events and meetings on the priority topics of the members have been organised.



The Secretariat staff have been leading the organisation of the **EaP Youth Conference in Vienna** with more than 200 young entrepreneurs in attendance in parallel to the **organisation of key EaP CSF event - the EaP CSF Annual Assembly in Tbilisi** (3-day event with more than 250 participants in attendance).



5. Putting together and channeling the policy input of the EaP CSF members to the EU institutions

The Secretariat has coordinated the preparation of a [Commentary](#) on the draft work plans of EaP Platforms and panels published on 20 March 2018 based on consultations with the members and ensured its wide distribution. The commentary offers general recommendations on cross-cutting deliverables and specific recommendations for each platform and panel. Overall, over 100 specific recommendations were tabled and many of them taken on board during the finalization of the work plans by the European External Action Service and the European Commission.

The Secretariat has coordinated the submission of the input and often prepared draft versions of the Forum's contributions. Secretariat's staff participated in a number of meetings to update different audiences on the Forum and its activities.

The Secretariat staff, based on the input from the members, have developed and channelled a number of recommendations that were taken on-board by the decision-makers. Out of the many issues and topics raised, the following advocacy campaigns should be underlined for 2018:

- Advocacy campaign on the situation in **Armenia** after the Velvet revolution and in relation to the CEPA implementation by the new government of PM Nikol Pashinyan – the campaign included comprehensive Briefing on the developments Armenia for the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) before their visit to Armenia that was widely appreciated; public event on the side of WG1 meeting co-organized with EED; numerous one to one meetings; active participation in the CSOs coalition on Armenia led by OSEPI; briefing for COEST and COHOM in cooperation with the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU in September 2018.
- Advocacy campaign on continuous oversight over the implementation of **Bologna Roadmap in Belarus**, including editing and promoting reports drafted by Bologna Independent Committee and Belarusian National Platform, Belarus-related amendments to the Bologna report prepared by the European Parliament before the BFUG Ministerial Conference in Paris, numerous meetings with stakeholders, coalition building with European Students' Union and letters campaign targeting the BFUG members in 2018 in cooperation with BNP.
- Advocacy campaign on **Azerbaijan**, which focused on enabling environment for civil society and human rights issues. The Secretariat contributed to comprehensive consultations on the enabling environment organised by DG NEAR, to consultations on ENP report and organised several one to one meetings for the members in relation to the human rights situation and the negotiations of the new bilateral agreement with the EU. The Secretariat provided input to the European Parliament [Report on the negotiations on the EU-Azerbaijan comprehensive agreement](#) was provided and the safeguards ensuring conditionality of the ratification in relation to the HR record and situation of the civil society were promoted. The Secretariat was also active within the informal coalition of Brussels-based CSOs working on Azerbaijan.

- Advocacy campaign on the next **MFF** and the proposal to establish a single instrument supporting EU external action – the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – following the goal outlined by the Steering Committee, the Secretariat launched the advocacy campaign promoting retaining specific funding instrument for the EU neighbourhood – **ENI 2.0**. two position papers were drafted and distributed to the stakeholders, numerous one to one meetings with the member states and EU institutions were organised. Secretariat staff attended also official consultations on the matter and the issue was raised repeatedly at the highest political level during the Forum’s representatives’ speeches at EaP Ministerial meetings, Senior Officials meetings, EURONEST and elsewhere. The Secretariat also worked on the Forum’s priorities within wider coalitions of CSOs led by CONCORD.

6. **Regranting**

In 2018, in the framework of the EaP CSF Re-granting Scheme, the Secretariat received **52 proposals**, out of which 38 passed the eligibility screening. After the evaluation process, **13 projects** were selected by the Working Group’s Selection Committees for funding – three under WG1, two under WG2, three under WG3, three under WG4 and two under WG5. The overall amount of **EUR 252.225** is disbursed to the grantees. The start of the implementation period shifted by three months due to the delays of the signature of the new grant (see point 11). Majority of the projects is currently ongoing; numerous results will be presented at the 2018 Annual Assembly in Tbilisi, including a side event focusing on Open Government Partnership implementation in selected EaP countries. For the fourth time in the history of the Forum, three best regranting projects will be awarded with a symbolic award at the 2018 Annual Assembly in Tbilisi. For the first time, the delegates of the Annual Assembly will be voting directly for the three best projects, based on their presentation at the walk-in gallery and interactive webpages.

7. **Coordination of the EaP CSF representation at the EaP Platforms and panels**

The Secretariat facilitated more than 60 Forum representatives’ participation in the official EaP Platforms, panels, and other meetings in line with the renewed focus of the EaP CSF on the quality of expertise delivered by our members at the events. The pre- and post-event briefings conducted by the Secretariat staff as well as regular circulation of the information among Working Group members have contributed to the success of the EaP CSF participation in the EaP Platforms and panels that have been commended by many stake-holders. Several position papers of the Forum were developed and presented to the stakeholders. The communication about the members’ input and participation at the meetings has intensified, as well as the cooperation with the EU counterparts. These efforts resulted in increasing number of official speaking slots in the agendas of the meetings and wider recognition of the civil society input into the EaP multilateral structure.

8. **Organisation of the delegates selection process**

The Secretariat was responsible for administration of the Delegates selection process for the Annual Assembly. Out of total 569 applicants, 156 organizations have been selected in the capacity of Delegate (Participant), in line with the eligibility guidelines (drawing on shortlists by the national platforms, working group coordinators, and European Union delegations in the six Eastern Partnership countries). This list was supplemented by around 30 observers from the EU countries and the region. This year, we received 100 applications more than in the previous year.

9. EaP Index

Works for the production of the Eastern Partnership Index 2017 has been launched in May 2018 upon the hiring of Tania Marocchi as EaP Index and Membership Manager. A methodology review has been carried out to incorporate lessons learnt during the previous edition and to reflect a better balance between law and practice. A team of about 70 people started to work on the Index and the process of data collection and country, sectoral and peer review is in the process of being finalised. Data analysis and chapters have been written and will lead to publication in December 2018. In parallel to the Index data collection and review process, a strategy has been developed to strengthen the visibility of the Index as a product of the EaP CSF. This includes streamlining Index presence in EaP CSF material, reformulating how the Index is featured on the EaP CSF website, including the results in EaP CSF external communication during the year. The strategy included also measures and ideas to strengthen its advocacy potential. Index indicators have been matched with EaP platforms and panels to produce informative one-pagers to support EaP CSF advocacy messages at EaP architecture meetings and beyond. Index preliminary results have been included in the speech delivered by the EaP CSF at the Senior Official Meeting of October 2018. Finally, a far-reaching process of data redesign and visualization has been undertaken to replace the old design and make Index data easy to explore and analyse. An online, interactive tool has been developed and is in the process of being embedded on the EaP CSF Index-dedicated website page.

10. Communications Activities

In line with the Communications Strategy for 2018-2020, the focus of the communication activities is to aid EaP CSF strategic goals and organisational objectives, effectively engage with stakeholders, demonstrate the success of the EaP CSF work, increase visibility of the organisation and enhance the EaP CSF brand. In 2018, the Communications team drafted more than 130 articles, concentrating mainly on campaigns and policy dialogue. In this period, we saw an increased coverage of our members' participation in EaP Platforms and Panels – which was supplemented by active posting on social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook. Between December 2017-2018, we received 410,762 visits to our website. During the course of the year, we attracted 1,006 new likes on Facebook, bringing them to total of 12,957 – up from 11,951. At the same time, we gained 313 new followers on Twitter, a total of 1,962 – up from 1,649. Since November 2018, we are also active on Instagram, building a new follower base. We disseminated more than 10 Newsletters and 20 email campaigns or ad hoc updates to more than 2,936 active subscribers (after GDPR). We saw more than 90 mentions of EaP CSF in the media, both in the EU and EaP countries – with EaP Youth Conference 2018: “Youth for Entrepreneurship” attracting more than 60 mentions on portals, online and traditional media outlets.

More info at <http://eap-csf.eu>