

**Minutes of the EaP CSF Steering Committee Meeting
Brussels, 24-25 January 2018**

1. **In attendance:** Steering Committee members Krzysztof Bobinski, Ina Coseru, Laura Dittel, Ziya Guliyev, Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Aleksandra Kalatozishvili, Mikalai Kvantiliani, Petru Macovei, Hennadiy Maksak, Boris Navasardian, Goda Neverauskaite, Ana Otilia Nutu, Lasha Tughushi

Absent: N/A

Secretariat: Administrative Manager Lidia Gromadzka, Financial Manager Sophie Huguenet, Communications Manager Darya Mustafayeva, Advocacy Manager Vera Rihackova, Director Natalia Yerashevich.

2. **Adoption of the agenda**

Acting Chair of the Steering Committee (SC) Hennadiy Maksak opened the meeting. Director of the Secretariat presented the agenda. The agenda was adopted by unanimity.

3. **Practicalities of the operation of the SC and the Secretariat**

The importance and legally binding nature of the minutes of the meetings under the Belgian law was reiterated by the Director of the Secretariat.

The need for a better information exchange between the Secretariat and National Platforms (NPs) was mentioned.

Concerns and suggestions expressed by the SC members:

- reduced communication between the SC members with the high-level EU stakeholders
- need for decision-making procedures (limited time for voting, silence means agreement, etc)
- need to find ways on how to better exchange information from the Secretariat to the SC members and vice versa

Actions:

Secretariat:

--The template with the yearly reporting indicators will be shared with the National Platforms (NPs) and Working Groups (WGs) after the new project agreement with the Commission is signed.

--Drafting the yearly action plan for the SC and the Secretariat

--Creating a platform where the key documents for common use will be uploaded

--Thinking of a way of updating the SC more on what is happening without overburdening with information

SC members:

--NPs to send to the Secretariat updated strategic documents and action plans so that they can be shared and everybody can access them

--NPs to send to the Secretariat monthly newsletters if produced anyways and inform about the planned activities on the monthly basis for better coordination.

4. Updates from the NPs:

Armenian NP:

- Working on the creation of a new platform under CEPA
- 2 General Assemblies since Tallinn
- Creating working plan for the platform
- No funding for NP since October 2017
- The government seems to be open for the discussion on the bilateral platform, NP is communicating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economy mostly.
- The first meeting of the interagency committee for CEPA implementation was held.

Azerbaijani NP:

- Action plan to be adopted by mid-February
- Follow the negotiations of the agreement with EU; plans to produce a shadow agreement
- Large membership but the members are divided between GONGOs and genuine NGOs
- Suggestion to hold the annual WG2 meeting in Baku in 2018

Belarusian NP:

- Signing the contract with the EC for funding for this year focusing on 20 deliverables for 2020
- General Assembly to be held on 24 February
- Discussing the possibility of registering the NP
- Suggestion to have a Forum's event this year in Minsk (for example a SC meeting)
- Plan to engage more grassroots organizations from the regions into the work of the NP
- In December 2017, EU-Belarus Coordination Group meeting took place in Brussels with the participation of the Country Facilitator. The BNP prepared a non-paper with the position of the civil society, contacts with the MFA improved.

Georgian NP:

- Sectoral meetings have been conducted within the frames of 2nd memoranda with Government and the Parliament
- The presidential election is expected in October-early November

Moldovan NP:

- Good relationship with the EU Delegation
- Two NP meetings have been held – one specifically on environmental issues – plans for building the hydroelectric station by Ukraine.
- A meeting on the synergies between two CSPs will be held
- NP funding is the biggest challenge; 3-million EC-funded technical assistance project implemented by a consortium with REC Moldova involved cannot support the NP.

Ukrainian NP

- Privileged position because there is financing, however absorption capacity is limited
- Developed 3-year strategic plan; 2 new procedures on membership and communications; action plan will be developed by February.

- Paper on Deliverables 2020 from Ukrainian perspective - presentation of an updated document to be done in Brussels
- Good relations with MFA and Government Office of European integration

Actions:

Secretariat:

- find out about the funding to Armenian NP for 2018
- find out about the legal implications of registering a branch in an EaP country
- ensure that NPs strategic documents are shared with all SC members

SC members:

- Moldovan SC members will provide information to the SC and the Secretariat about the project that is to support the NP in Moldova and which actions of NPs were refused to be funded by it
- NPs coordinators send to the Secretariat all their strategical and procedural documents

5. Exchange with Diana Jablonska (DG NEAR) and Nils Jansons (EEAS) on the reformed architecture of the EaP and the EU support programmes for 2018

Diana Jablonska presented the 2020 Deliverables as a clear roadmap for the EaP that is supposed to break institutional divides. The EC expects the EaP CSF to provide expertise and substantial input, and will try to send invitations well in advance. She inquired where and how the SC would see the cross-cutting deliverables to be implemented and priority of actions for 2018. The EEAS and DG NEAR are now working with line DGs on the timeline for preparation of the Work Programmes 2018-2019, the draft will be shared with the Forum.

The architecture aims to not only follow regional level, the link with NPs should be made.

Example of what can be the role of the EaP CSF: tell us how to implement youth package and what to do in 2018, mapping of the situation and the key actors, a reality check.

She also praised the BNP participation in the Belarus Coordination Group, including the prepared paper. Diana Jablonska proposed to have a separate meeting dedicated to NPs.

Nils Jansons mentioned the importance of appropriate representation while keeping in mind political sensitivity during the high-level events of the EaP. This could be the approach for the SOM and EaP Summit level. He also acknowledged the need to address the adhocism of the Forum's participation and place to speak at the events. He mentioned the possibility of the format for joint engagement of the 3 AA countries as referenced in the Summit declaration. He stressed that the new architecture should provide a delivery system, not a workshop system.

Concerns and suggestions expressed by the SC members and the Secretariat:

- the EaP CSF status being renewed every year, which creates some ambiguity and is problematic
- need at least a month notice to identify delegates for events
- will develop policy briefs for those meetings
- linkage between the Deliverables and the work of EU Delegations in countries
- parallel funding of similar civil society projects in EaP countries, which are not cooperating with each other
- role of the NPs in the input for the renewed architecture

- gap between the EC expectations and the NPs funding
- linkage between the re-granting projects outputs and expertise needed for the platforms and panels
- fora for 3 AA/DCFTA countries
- clear reporting and evaluation mechanism for 20 deliverables
- side event to the “big bang” launch of the new EaP architecture in March 2018.
- a task force of all WGs to share expertise in implementing 2020 deliverables
- The role of NPs in countries and how EU-funded projects cover the mission of NPs (for example in Armenia); such funding decisions raise question if the work of the NP is considered valuable by the EU.

Actions:

Secretariat:

- alignment of the projects selected via regranting to work plans of platforms and panels when possible
- written input to the EC on the concerns of their funding in countries
- getting more info on big bang event and the possibility of the EaP CSF involvement
- after the decision of the SC working with the task force on the template for NPs to produce the paper on priority of 2020 deliverables

SC members:

- set the goal of what we want to achieve by conducting the side event to the launch of the new EaP architecture event
- info for the written input to the DG NEAR on EU-funded projects in countries and how our cooperation with them might be and other suggestions
- A concept of the EaP CSF event in the frames of big bang EaP architecture launch - Hennadiy with the task force. Possible format: a panel, presenting civil society views on the new architecture, during the launch; pre- or post-event.
- Decision on the approach to the paper focusing on which areas out of 20 deliverables for 2020 the civil society sees as priority for 2018 to be possibly presented at the event

6. EaP CSF goals and priorities for 2018 and beyond and how they translate into the EaP CSF activities in 2018

The SC members brainstormed on the 2 enabling and 3-4 policy campaigns for 2018 with the targets.

Actions:

Secretariat:

- share with the SC the results of the brainstorming
- develop the implementation plan

SC members:

- Finalise the document

7. New cycle of the EaP Index

Jeff Lovitt, the Editor-in-Chief of the publication, suggested to plan the advocacy work in the middle of the project together with the SC.

He suggested the following timeline for 2018:

February/March - refining methodology and questions, updating sources

April/May - gathering the data

June/July – publishing the data

September/October - publication

Other suggestions by Jeff Lovitt:

- breaking the data by section and thinking about message opportunities
- using Index data as a teaser before publishing
- building advocacy plans around the findings
- improving the introduction of the Index
- agenda setting piece (op ed etc)

Concerns and suggestions expressed by the SC members:

- annex on implementation to see what is happening not only on paper
- public opinion surveys as the basis for Index (if the budget allows)
- involving the NPs experts, co-ownership by the NPs
- Delay in producing the publication. The data gets old. The publication should be produced in the first half of 2018
- Armenian, Belarusian Georgian, and Ukrainian NPs expressed readiness to promote the Index in their countries
- The Director of the Secretariat raised the issue of funding of the Ukrainian part of the Index via Renaissance Foundation's grant with a Ukrainian CSO and whether it makes sense from the management perspective to keep this arrangement for the future.

Actions:

Secretariat:

-Reporting to the donors for the previous cycle

-Recruitment of the Index Manager

-Printing of the extra publications for the use in Brussels and NP events on Index

SC members:

-Finalising the timeline of the Index and involvement of NPs in it.

-Conducting Index events in countries if needed.

8. Statutory matters

Elections of Co-chairs

The SC members elected Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee:

- **Aleksandra Kalatozishvili (EaP Co-Chair)**
- **Krzysztof Bobinski (EU Co-Chair)**

SC members were informed that 3 persons currently hold permanent functions within the Forum structure (Jeff Lovitt as President, Andrei Yahorau as Treasury, and Hennadiy Maksak as

Secretary) according to Moniteur Belge. There is no need for those permanent functions. The information is changed on an annual basis following the elections at the General Assembly.

Decision: SC members unanimously voted to remove the above-mentioned persons from their positions.

9. Discussion of the new grant to the EaP CSF funded by the EC

The Secretariat presented the indicative action plan drafted within the proposal for the DG NEAR. The message from the EC is that all activities should be streamlined so that the EaP CSF delivers expected input into the implementation of 20 Deliverables for 2020 and revised EaP architecture (EaP Platforms and panels). EaP CSF membership should be balanced and expert-based, covering most of the areas of 20 Deliverables for 2020. There will be a support for the NPs via the core grant to the Secretariat. The criteria for awarding funding have to be set so that the funding is transparent and awarded on competitive basis. Draft indicative budget was approved by the preceding Steering Committee in Tallinn but modifications will have to be done due to the decision of the EC to fund the NPs via this grant rather than the EU Delegations in countries.

10. Meeting with Ms Sinziana Poiana, DG NEAR

Ms Poiana introduced the new funding for the Forum for the next 3 years with new elements in the form of the support to NPs and propping up initiatives such as the monitoring missions. She mentioned the need to develop a clear set of criteria against which support for NP will be granted (who makes the selection, based on what etc.) and the need to address concerns about the Forum's participants' selection process. She floated the idea of possibly reforming the annual assembly with introduction of videoconferencing and other new formats that will allow the Forum to get rid of the discussion who gets sent to AA. Selection as it is now brings discrepancies with expectations on expertise from the EC. She underlined the importance of the gender balance with in the Forum and clarified on the expectations from the NPs on the level of reporting: work plans developed, and general visibility that the NP has at the local level, important to inform the EU delegation. She cited the Forum's paper on deliverables 2020, paper on the EaP as good examples of expected expertise.

The suggestion from NPs was to increase the funding to NPs in 2018-2019. Also it was mentioned by the SC member that CSF's role should not be limited to expertise provision.

11. Lessons learned from the EC audit

The SC members were informed about the ongoing audit of the 2015-2017 EC grant to the Secretariat and the strict interpretation of EC financial rules that auditors are using. The findings will be known in March. It is necessary to plan carefully all procedures (regranting, funding to NPs) so that all costs are accepted.

12. Developing rules for funding to the NPs within the frames of the new grant

The pre-set of criteria was discussed and developed during the meeting.

Discussion about non-registered NPs - who can apply on its behalf and how to fund the AZ NP.

Issue of Secretariat's capacity to manage another regranting was raised.

Actions:

Secretariat:

-to send the draft budget to the SC and inform on the progress on the negotiations with the EU and their requirements.

-to finalise the list of criteria for NP funding based on the SC members submissions and the EC requirements

SC members:

- Further refinement of the criteria and mechanisms for each NP's funding to be sent by email to the Secretariat by February 5 (more specific details will be elaborated throughout 2018)

- Hennadiy will discuss with the EU Delegation in Kyiv about the extension of the Synergy project and inform the SC about it

13. The EaP CSF internal reform discussion

Natalia Yerashevich updated the SC members on the current status of the recruitment process for consultant(s) that will continue the work on the reform proposals developed by the previous SC. The SC decided on the mix of "internal" and "external" consultants to accomplish the task. The SC members expressed their wish to be consulted on the selection process of the internal reform consultant(s).

The ideas of the SC members on the reform proposals developed by the previous SC are collected in a separate document and will be shared with the SC and the consultants.

14. The next Annual Assembly

The SC discussed possible locations for the next EaP CSF Annual Assembly. The secretariat briefed the SC about the meeting with the Austrian EaP Ambassador and their interest to organise a civil society event during their EU Presidency.

Date for the next AA: mid-November

Location: Tbilisi, Brussels or Vienna

The final decision will be taken based on the further feedback from the Austrian EU Presidency on their interest to host the event.

Theme: tbc (related to 5 campaigns, implementation of 20 deliverables for 2020)

Decision: to include in the next call for application for the Annual Assembly a sentence about the obligation to attend all sessions of the event (AA) (or be disqualified - issue with the quorum in Tallinn).

15. The EaP CSF representation at the bilateral civil society platforms (under AA/DCFTA)

SC members were informed about the EaP CSF having one slot for EU organizations in each of the platforms.

Actions:

Secretariat:

-Send out the email to all EU members of the Forum with the request to express interest to be part of the platforms and with information what that participation entails

16. Annual Working Group meetings

Actions:

SC members:

-WG Coordinators should identify the dates of annual WG meetings (earliest April) and start planning the meetings bearing in mind the annual WG work plans developed in Tallinn and EaP platforms and panels schedule (to be available shortly)

17. Policy Forum for Development

Established in 2012, PFD is an outcome of structural dialogue with the EU, 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 and briefed other SC members on it. The next PFD meeting will take place second half of March.

18. 2018 Re-granting selection

The Secretariat shortlisted 5 external evaluators per WG. A selection committee will be formed by 2 external experts and one WG coordinator. They will score the proposals by 19/2 and will send the scoring to the SC. 20-27/2 a skype call of the evaluators will take place to finalize the selection.

The SC members expressed willingness to participate in the selection of external evaluators and would have preferred to know about the change in the procedure.

The Secretariat responded that in order to avoid conflicts of interests the open call for selecting evaluators have been chosen and approved by the preceding SC. WG are already represented in the selection committee via a WG Coordinator.

19. Other matters

The WG4 and the Secretariat are working on the **EaP Youth Conference** to take place most likely in September 2018 in Vienna. This year theme is youth entrepreneurship, which is a cross-cutting issue for three WG. The Secretariat requested to have a clear division of responsibilities among all the people involved and a good system of information-sharing.

EaP CSF is to apply for membership in **Conference of INGOs**. The SC decided to delegate the preparatory work on the application to the Secretariat.

20. Task forces

Actions:

Secretariat:

-Share the document with the areas/tasks (including 5 campaigns) that need to be covered by the SC members

SC members:

-identify the areas for which s/he wants to be responsible

21. Next SC meeting

The **second SC meetings** will take place in **Minsk** (doodle will be shared with the SC members), the **third SC meeting** will take place on the side of the OGP Global Summit (July 17-19 2018) in **Tbilisi**.