

[Check against delivery]

28 February 2019

Speech by Marianne Sokolova, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) member at 3rd Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy in Bucharest, Romania

Excellences, as Commissioner Hahn has put it recently, “implementation of 20 Deliverables for 2020 is not just a technical exercise; it is about delivering tangible results for citizens”.

In this regard, the Civil Society Forum sees its specific contribution in empowering citizens to participate in digital economy and society. Digitalisation should not further split the society into a few winners and many losers – but rather help develop skills that benefit local communities, while promoting civic activism and participation in processes leading to deeper democratization.

In this context, we see two imperatives:

First of all, when it comes to transparency and accountability of businesses, governmental institutions and civil society groups, we believe that compelling monitoring and evaluation tools for compatible spheres of digital skills and e-services should be introduced, both on national and EaP levels. We, the CSF, maintain that such tools are an important prerequisite for an inclusive and efficient multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Secondly, in line with the cross-cutting Deliverable on gender equality and non-discrimination, we consider gender equality in the digital field as an essential element of the EaP HDM strategy. Therefore, we propose to include digital gender equality in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI).

Excellences, we would like to conclude by underlining that the civil society is ready to work with governments of Eastern Partnership countries on delivering on this very important and ambitious agenda.