

7th CORLEAP ANNUAL MEETING

12 September 2017, EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Dear Co-Chairs, CORLEAP members, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour for me to address you all today on behalf of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The Civil Society Forum welcomes the concept of resilience, incorporating the rule of law, human rights and good governance, as well as a long-term commitment to civil society, as the basis of the EU foreign policy towards its neighbours. The importance of civil society platforms in strengthening societal links should not be underestimated.

The 24-27th October the EaP Civil Society Conference and 9th Annual Assembly of the EaP Civil Society Forum will be held in Tallinn. For the first time this year, the Conference – a biennial event conducted in conjunction with the EaP Summit – and the Annual Assembly will be held as one event with common title “Tangible Results for People: Envisioning the Eastern Partnership in 2020 and Beyond”.

Not only CORLEAP, but also the CSF will adopt the Declaration to the Summit, a collaborative document that will identify the major obstacles to further democratic development within the EaP countries and to the smooth implementation of the 2020 Deliverables, while offering specific recommendations on how governments and CSOs can work together to overcome them.

The common objective is to reflect and develop the important role played by civil society organisations within the Eastern Partnership countries while identifying ways in which civil society and government can better cooperate in delivering effective results to the citizens of the region. Those results are supposed to be in keeping with the concrete set of the EaP 2020 Deliverables as approved in December 2016 and revised earlier this year.

For this purpose EaP CSF has conducted Analysis of the EU Paper on 20 Eastern Partnership Deliverables for 2020. I would like to briefly present some key points of it.

- 4. Priority I: Economic development & market opportunities. Deliverable 6. New job opportunities at the local and regional level (plans for local economic development, PAR, stakeholders participation, agricultural development strategies).

The targets are achievable but rather programme-based and technical. Civil society participation in planning the local economic development should be ensured through the use of the principles and instruments proposed by the Council of Europe’s Code of Good practice for civil participation in decision-making processes.

In order to promote economic growth at the local and regional levels the use of the EU instruments for Territorial cooperation could be applied to the EaP region. It is one of the essential pillars of the EU Cohesion and Development Policies. The Eastern Partnership process could be strengthened by implementing programmes of territorial cooperation, which engage multi-stakeholder components of communities into strategic vision for sustainable development and democratic empowerment.

Territorial cross border cooperation has proven to be a useful instrument in all the EU regional policies. Within the EaP (with intra cross-border programmes) but also across the EaP and EU borders and territories, the instruments should be further strengthened considering the value of the community approach, bringing together public, private and civil society perspectives. The territorial cooperation programs (cross border or matching broader territories) and the instrument of EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) or EEGI (European Economic Group of Interest) could be promoted further.

- 5. Priority II: Strengthening institutions and good governance. Deliverable 9. Rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms.

The targets could be reached only if a complementary “bottom-up” approach is introduced. The “bottom-up” targets might include local actions, small in size, but systemic and sustainable, such as developing working anti-corruption mechanisms in selected regions or municipalities, or within economically and socially important areas (schools, healthcare establishments, etc.). The civil society can play an important role in this process and should be added to the list of main actors.

- Deliverable 11. Implementation of public administration reform in line with the Principles of Public Administration

The targets are feasible but less ambitious than they could be with a priori reduction of a number of the EaP countries involved. Public administration reforms are being implemented in Ukraine and Georgia and could have a positive spillover effect across the EaP region. Citizens’ engagement is mentioned but more can be done in this area, especially in the capacity building and widening citizens’ participation practices. The target to improve communication and dialogue with civil society, aimed at reinforcing transparency and accountability in economic governance, seems to be both ambitious and realistic. The Ukrainian National Platform of the CSF has also prepared the Expert review “Ukraine in the Coordinates of the Eastern Partnership 2020: between Ambitiousness and Achievability”.

- The deliverable dealing with new job opportunities at the local and regional level needs adjustments regarding its milestones and targets.

For example, clarification is needed on the resource base the developed projects will have to rely upon. Financing project initiatives from the European Regional Development Fund could become a progressive step.

- Priority II: Strengthening institutions and good governance

Most of the milestones here have been partially reached in Ukraine: an electronic declaration system launched, three anticorruption institutions, novel for Ukraine, established (the National Agency on Corruption Prevention, the National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Specialized Anticorruption Prosecutor's Office) and a number of laws adopted. In the context of the targets by 2020, the main challenge for Ukraine is to ensure smooth and independent operation of these systems and institutions.

- Under the “Implementation of public administration reform” deliverable, Ukraine has realized most milestones by 2017 in line with the Principles of Public Administration.

At the same time, the following targets would be important for Ukraine: increased strategic capacity of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and improved methodology of state policy making that takes into account the Principles of Public Administration.

I hope both of these documents will be useful for identifying and strengthening policy measures that can be agreed on at the Summit.

Thank you for your attention.

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