

# Taking stock of 10 years of the EaP policy and strategizing for after 2020 - Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability

Public event report

Brussels, 14 May 2019



## Summary

The third and crowning event of the EaP CSF Brussels Public Event Series, marking 10 years anniversary of Eastern Partnership attracted full room at the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic. Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability were in focus of the high-level panel debate with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Tomáš Petříček, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia of EEAS, Thomas Mayr-Harting and EaP CSF Working Group 1 Member Leila Alieva.

Within the world café debate, the civil society, experts and stakeholders responded to a set of questions, exploring how to ensure the democratic reforms and rule of law are not side-lined in the EaP implementation process. The ownership of the reforms and involvement of wide range of actors in order to make the implementation more effective was also proposed for discussion, as well as the upcoming changes in EU funding structure and institutional set up and staffing.

EaP CSF policy paper “[Advancing Eastern Partnership: 23 Civil Society Ideas for the Policy beyond 2020](#)” offered further food for thought on civil society engagement, tools for policy implementation and financial support.



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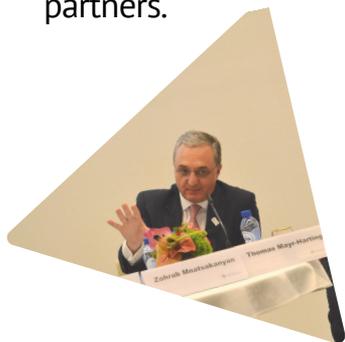
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# ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the EU, Ambassador **Jakub Dürr** opened the event by referring to the Prague Summit declaration that 10 years ago formulated the basic principles of Eastern Partnership – respect to international norms, human rights, civil liberties and rule of law, which are preconditions for prosperity and stability in the region. He reflected on the way the former Czech President, Václav Havel, described the “Spirit of Europe” – Europe is a continent that, despite encompassing a great variety of ethnicities, including different cultures and languages, has always had a sort of natural tendency to evolve towards democratic polity, and that includes also our EaP partners.

**“We are all Europeans and Europe’s civilizational values create a favourable environment for cohesion, freedom, and rule of law”**

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia



The greatest achievement of the last 10 years, according to **Zohrab Mnatsakanyan**, is that the six partner countries consolidated their feeling of belonging to the European “family”, however, there is an omnipresent sense of insecurity due to various unresolved conflicts in the region. Eastern Partnership is a considerable part of architecture that is project Europe and the next ten years will be about consolidating it. He praised the role of Armenian civil society in the last year’s changes and its interaction with the new government.

**“The key to the sustainable development of EaP countries resides in strengthening the rule of law, supporting civil society and encouraging economic development”**

Leila Alieva, EaP CSF Working Group 1 Member



**Leila Alieva** stressed that EaP is about recognising the value of the six countries by the EU and acknowledging their potential to transform their societies. Certain trends like monopolisation of power or crack on democratic checks and balances are now undermining the fundamental values that were at heart of EaP during its creation. The achievements of the past ten years are rather in technical areas like trade and people to people contacts. There is a need for ‘modernisation’ of the way of thinking, which in some aspects lag behind the changes happening in the world. These views are fed by external actors – such as Russia, which is interested in preserving traditional, pre-modern ways of living and governing. At the same time, EU is losing its position as a role-model and consequently its leverage.

## "Civil society is the bridge between the people and their government, which works both ways"

Tomáš Petříček, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic



**Tomáš Petříček**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, emphasised that all EaP countries adopted reforms that positively changed the lives of many people and brought the countries closer to the EU. He mentioned the key role civil society has played in this transformation. The major challenges come in the sphere of rule of law – a stronger economy, which benefits many is not possible without it. Minister Petříček recommended stronger focus on young generation and people to people contacts going both ways in the upcoming period of EaP implementation.



## "When it comes to fighting corruption, listen to the civil society"

Thomas Mayr-Harting, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia, EEAS

For **Thomas Mayr-Harting**, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia, European External Action Service (EEAS), the most important achievement of the last decade are the Association Agreements and the tailor-made arrangements with other countries like Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Armenia, which is the blueprint of the reform process. Major challenges turned to be good governance and rule of law, as well as oligarchisation present in all EaP countries. He recommended that fighting corruption stays as a key priority.

## THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND HOW TO INCREASE ITS POTENTIAL?

According to **Leila Alieva** an uneven success of the policy in EaP countries was a disappointment for civil society. The governments should feel responsible, not comfortable in their relations with the EU. The EU should not be afraid to upset some of its partners, particularly when it comes to rule of law and democratisation. She stressed the need for EU support to the civil society but not primarily financial – EU is the only hope for the EaP citizens to get empowered. The EU should focus on empowering the wide range of societal actors – CSOs, business community, academia. At the same time, the culture of national foundations should be established so that the transformation is supported locally, which would then lead to a greater sense of ownership of the whole process by the society.



# WORLD CAFÉ DISCUSSION

"Democracy is never finished and democratisation is about partnership; no one is the teacher and no one is the student"

Sinikukka Saari, European Union Institute for Security Studies



The experts corner represented by **Cristina Gherasimov**, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and **Sinikukka Saari**, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) stressed that It is essential for the EU institutions to rethink their conditionality principles particularly when it comes to rule of law. The civil society space has been shrinking even in the countries where it was not the case before. The EU should support the civil society, however, at the same time, be careful not to empower it at the expense of government, as it risks to create an even higher distance between the government and the society. It should also reach out beyond the “usual suspects within the civil society” and engage with the business community, youth, diaspora and the forgotten ones – such as the church and all those who are hesitant and reluctant to or against the EU-driven reforms. Having no individualised EU funding instrument dedicated to the region is a worrying trend and is a reflection of the developments happening within the EU, rather than an effect of the stagnation happening in the EaP region.

"For the future, we commit to shared core values, improving communication and developing further the cooperation in successful areas like trade or connectivity"

Radosław Darski, European External Action Service



**Radosław Darski** from EEAS, representing the stakeholder corner emphasised that the ownership and responsibility for the implementation of the reforms should be broad. Eastern Partnership will remain an important element regardless of the new structure or funding channels. No substantial changes will be made in the future and the civil society remains to be the essential component of the Eastern Partnership.

"The lesson the civil society in the region can learn from the backsliding of Moldova is not to accept silently the division of the state institutions among governmental forces that monopolize power"

Ion Manole, EaP CSF Working Group 1 Member



Good examples and role models are needed to ensure democratic reforms in the EaP countries, concluded **Ion Manole** and **Lousineh Hakobyan** – WG1 members of EaP CSF. A tailored bilateral approach should be kept at the same level with the regional approach. As for the civil society as a real and an equal partner in policy-making – the composition of the civil society should be scrutinized and well analysed before assuming that the civil society is always on the bright side of the story.