

Annual Activities Report 2017

WORKING GROUP 1

Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability Activity report for 2017

THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE WG1 IN 2017 HAVE BEEN:

- The **discussion on risks and opportunities for civil society** during the WG1 meeting highlighted areas in which cooperation and pressure from EU partners is needed, in order to support civil society.
- **EaP Think-tank Forum in Chisinau**, bringing together EU and EaP think-tanks, created a much-needed link and joint discussion on the role that cooperation between think-tanks can play in developing Eastern Partnership.
- The practice of *ad hoc* **monitoring missions** to the countries where human rights are at risk (Belarus in March 2017).

KEY TOPICS ON WHICH THE WG FOCUSED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED

Elections in Armenia (April 2017)

The pre-election environment, the implementation of 2016 new electoral code and the elections in April 2017 were the topics of advocacy events organised on the side of WG1 meeting (May 2017):

- Closed briefing for COEST on elections in Armenia in cooperation with the Permanent representation of the Czech Republic to the EU
- Public Event **Armenian elections from the civil society perspective** organised in cooperation with EED
- One to one meetings with the EU stakeholders

Situation in Belarus

The violent suppression of protests in the spring of 2017 by the Belarusian authorities has led EaP CSF Steering Committee to send a monitoring mission to Belarus. The mission (led by WG1 coordinator Maria Golubeva) met with civil society representatives, EU Delegation and other stakeholders on 31 March-1 April 2017.

- [Report](#) of the **EaP CSF Monitoring Mission on civil society, media and human rights situation in Belarus**
- Advocacy based on the Report on the side of WG1 Meeting in Brussels (May 2017). One to one meetings with stakeholders (MEPs, EEAS, European Commission)

As a result of the discussion at WG1 meeting, points on the need to address repressive policies towards opposition and civil society in Belarus were included in the draft Civil Society Declaration of the 2017 Annual Assembly of the EaP CSF.



Enabling environment for civil society and how to improve the situation in the EaP countries is a long-standing priority of WG1 was raised again during the WG1 meeting in Brussels (May 2017). The debate drew attention to the

risks and opportunities for civil society in EaP countries. Panel discussion included MEP Rebecca Harms (Euronest Co-chair), Dirk Schuebel (EEAS) and representatives of civil society from Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Ukraine.

Also, the follow-up discussion around the model law presented by Mauricio Angel from the “Protection International” on protection of human rights defenders was held. The participants discussed the situation of the **human rights defenders** in EaP countries and learned about the model law developed based on the research of 40 jurisdictions. The participants also talked about the possibilities of adoption of such model laws in EaP countries.

On the side of the WG1 meeting, six one to one advocacy meetings targeting especially the situation in the area of **human rights** and enabling environment for civil society in **Azerbaijan** took place.

The situation of civil society in **Moldova** was also presented to the stakeholders on the side of WG1 meeting.

Security Reforms in Ukraine as well as the recurring topic of **Crimea** were the topics of the WG1 meeting in Brussels, and of a self-standing advocacy visit in September 2017 respectively. During the WG1 meeting, western security assistance was discussed as a factor contributing to reforms in Ukraine (provided the right governance). Participants in the discussion included experts from Independent Defence Anti-Corruption Committee (Ukraine), Transparency International, Ukrainian Prism. The major topic of the advocacy

visit on Crimea was the situation of the media freedom and human rights issues. Recommendation for Brussels stakeholders were developed and presented at one to one meetings, public event and closed briefing for COEST and COHOM co-organised with Estonian Presidency.

Gender equality in EaP countries - Yulia Mitskevich (Organization of Working Women, Belarus) delivered a contribution to the debate of the at the Joint Meeting of the **Euronest PA Committee** on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy and Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society on the issue of gender in EaP countries in March 2017. On 12 June 2017 a meeting on the issues of gender equality in EaP countries was held in Yerevan. The participants discussed the Resolution that was adopted at the last Assembly of the CSF as well as EaP CSF 2017 re-granting project **Capacity development for gender subgroups of National Platforms in Armenia, Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine**. The concept of development of the EaP CSF Gender Policy was presented.

The state of **media in EaP countries** was another long-standing topic. WG1 expert **Boris Navasardyan** (Yerevan Press club) contributed to the Joint Meeting of the **Euronest PA Committee** on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy and Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society in March 2017 on the issue of Freedom of the Media in the EaP Countries. Later on, his comments to the Euronest report on the same subject were taken on board.

WG1 experts were contributing to the development of the [EaP CSF Policy brief](#) on EU's **20 Deliverables for 2020** published in May 2017.



Bridging Think-Tanks in EaP and the EU

The issue of much-needed cooperation between think-tanks in EaP and in the EU, in order to assist reforms in EaP countries and to promote their European agenda, was discussed at the **Think-tank Forum** in Chisinau. The Forum has been one of the activities of EaP CSF 2017 Re-granting Project “Eastern Partnership Think-Tank Forum 2017”.

On 27 June 2017 a representative of the sub-group on the **Public administration Reform** participated in the International Forum “**Decentralization reform: relevant issues of regional development and experience of the EU member states and EaP countries**” organized by the NGO "Platform of Civil Initiatives", together with *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*.

The study on Public Administration and Local Government Reforms in Eastern Partnership countries was presented and discussed. The report was developed by the sub group in 2016, as a result of the project funded in the frame of the re granting scheme of EaP CSF.

WG1 ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES IN 2017

During **WG1 annual meeting**, working group members had the chance to meet representatives of European institution and to raise several issues, also thanks to two side events:

- *Landmark elections in Armenia: turning the tide or preserving the status quo?*”, organised in cooperation with European Endowment for Democracy
- *“How Security Assistance Can Contribute to Defence Reform in Ukraine: Civil Society Perspective”*, organized in cooperation with the Independent Defence Anti-Corruption Committee (NAKO), Transparency International Defence & Security Programme



Participation of the WG in EaP Panels, Platforms and other official occasions

A representative of WG 1 took part in the **EaP Platform 1** meeting on December 12 2016

Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting on the CSOs perspectives on the implementation of the ENP security dimension – Hennadyi Maksak participating, January 31 2017

On March 1 2017 the First **Rule of Law Panel** took place focusing in Cybercrime

On March 2017 representatives from the WG took part in the Joint Meeting of the **Euronest** PA Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy and Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society.

On 27 April 2017 the **EaP Platform 1 Meeting** was held, where two representatives of the WG 1 have participated.

In March 2017 the **Panel on Common Security and Defence Policy** was held, where one representative of the WG 1 has participated.

In March 2017 three representatives from WG 1 took part in the **Panel on Public Administration Reform**.

On 27 April 2017 the **EaP Platform 1 Meeting** was held where the representatives of the WG 1 have participated. The participants presented the problems of the judiciary and corruption in the EaP countries to be considered during the decision making. At the same time, they learned about the new EaP architecture and cross-platform linkages.

In April 2017, a representative from WG1 took part in the seminar “**Development and management of databases in civil service**”

In May, the Czech MFA organised the **Seminar on public administration reform on local and regional level for Eastern Partnership countries**, in which a representative of WG 1 took part.

In June 2017, a representative from WG1 took part in the forum **Decentralisation Reform: Relevant Issues of Regional Development and Experience of the EU Member-States and Eastern Partnership Countries**.

At the beginning of October, two members took part in the **13th EaP Panel about Public Administration Reform**, held in Tallinn, Estonia.

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE WG:

In 2017, **five regranting projects** covered the key topics for Working Group 1:

1. Adopting Experience on Bilateral EU-Moldova and EU-Georgia CS Platforms to Armenia
2. Eastern Partnership Think Tank Forum 2017
3. Cooperation between civil society and governments in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia: challenges and way forward
4. Inclusion in Action
5. Capacity development for gender subgroups of National Platforms in Armenia, Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine

During the working the period December 2016 - October 2017 under the WG1 the following sub-groups were created:

1. Human Rights
2. Election Monitoring
3. Local Government and Public Administration Reform
4. Anti-Corruption
5. Judicial Reform
6. Gender Equality

7. Democracy and Cooperation
8. Civil Society Participation in Decision-Making Processes
9. Media Freedom and Security

Sub-groups elaborated the thematic working areas for the year and combined their efforts to implement some activities in regard to thematic priorities.