

**Working Group 3 Annual Meeting
12-13 September 2018, Brussels
Meeting Report**

Day 1 – 12 September

Opening session

Steering Committee (SC) members and WG3 coordinators Ina Coseru and Ana Otilia Nutu opened the meeting and presented the agenda.

New EaP architecture and upcoming changes within the Forum

The session started with the presentation of the new Eastern Partnership architecture and upcoming changes within the Forum. Steering Committee members and WG3 coordinators Ina Coseru and Ana Otilia Nutu provided a brief explanation of the Forum position in the new EaP architecture and the Forum's participation in Platforms and Panels. In particular, they stressed how this is a unique opportunity to have civil society represented at the meetings between the EaP and EU Member States governments and EU officials and influence decisions. They shared their insight on the experience of attending Platforms and Panels meetings and communicated to members the dates of upcoming meetings.

New communication manager Juulia Barthel introduced herself and shared some points about the importance of making visible the participation of the EaP CSF in every platform and panel meeting and of good communication flow between the Secretariat and members. She asked members to share with the Secretariat information about their activities, including statements and other documents produced at national level.

Internal reform

WG3 Coordinators presented the [upcoming internal reform](#). During the Q&A session, members shared some remarks and raised some questions. In particular, members asked about the possibility to introduce a mechanism to outvote individual SC members and to change or replace a delegate in case they are not working or contributing to the EaP CSF priorities. The 2-year cycle was considered a good idea and it was suggested to maintain some structures for an even longer cycle, in order to maintain stability and institutional memory. Members asked who will decide on the Code of Conduct and on the status of GONGOs. In Azerbaijan GONGOs are easily identifiable, they act according to their mission but so far they never ruled the Azeri National Platform. In Ukraine, new rules have been recently adopted for the selection of members. Applicants must submit documents proving that the organization exists, such as registration documents and financial reports, as well as recommendation letters, at least one of which should come from somebody in the same Working group to which the organisation is applying.

Discussion on the latest developments in the EaP countries

Members shared with each other relevant updates touching on the situation in their countries, and the works of their organisations and of the National platforms.

In **Azerbaijan**, civil society organisations face critical difficulties in accessing funds, as Ministries have the authority to decide whether an organisation can receive a foreign grant or not. Environmental NGOs in particular are losing influence and space, lacking funds to finance their activities. The Azerbaijan Branch office of the Regional Environmental Centre for Caucasus (REC Caucasus) is now factually a GONGO, since their statute foresees a slot for the Minister on the board. The Working Group of the Azeri National Platform did not meet this year as NGO representatives fear for their safety and prefer not to attend meetings, including the EaP CSF Annual Assembly in Tbilisi. Members asked for support and assistance in raising awareness about this situation.

In 2017, **Georgia** adopted a Road Safety Action Plan which sets the target of reducing road-related deaths by 50%. The implementation of the Action Plan is overseen by the Ministry of Economy as Georgia doesn't have a dedicated Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Economy coordinates transport and road safety issues without a dedicated Transport Minister.

The **Belarusian** NP WG 3 has obtained some good results this year thanks to the fact that the government needs input. Within the EU framework, Belarus is working on renewable sources of energy and the issue will be discussed at an upcoming conference. The conference will discuss renewable technologies and how they can enhance energy security in electricity generation in particular. In this context, CSOs and the government are both working to promote the introduction and use of more electric buses and cars.

Ukraine's Action Plan and synergy programme envisages finances for the EaP Platform and the funds are being used for research. Ministries are receptive to input coming from civil society. The CSO Green Dossier has recently published the study "Environmental Policy and Environmental Protection in Ukrainian Media", which was presented during the 6th official meeting of the Eastern Partnership Climate and Climate Panel on June 12 in Kyiv and is available [here](#).

In **Armenia**, the *Ecological and Cultural NGO Khazer* has received 150.000 \$ to implement projects from UNDP. Local communities' economic and social development is almost entirely dependent on government grants and subsidies. In order to promote the implementation of community initiatives, and in particular of investment projects, Khazer organized a contest-competition for climate projects.

Brainstorming on messages in small groups

WG3 members were divided into three small groups and developed recommendations to be delivered to the external stakeholders from the DG NEAR, MOVE and ENER and the World Bank the following day. The small groups were organised around three main topics: energy, transport and environment.

The **environment** group discussed how the implementation of the Action Plan on Environment is proceeding in each country, also in light of the upcoming Environmental Ministerial of 9 October 2018. The group discussed also how civil society can advocate for more public access to environmental information, what measures would improve forest and ecosystems protection and, finally, the Ukrainian and Moldovan NP Statement on hydropower plants. The recommendations they developed include:

1. Establish mechanisms for central environmental authorities to report back on the implementation of EaP CSF's recommendations;
2. Allow more representative from the EaP CSF to take part in the Platform 3 meetings and Panel meetings;
3. Clarify the role of RECs in the implementation of the declaration and the charter of organizations;
4. Involve the Ministries of Economy in Ministerial Conferences and Panel and Platform meetings;
5. Ensure that institutional reforms strengthen the capacities of Governments' environmental sector, rather than weakening it, as it happened as a result of the reform in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. These examples should not be repeated;
6. Hydropower should not be considered green and should not be financed by IFIs. It harms the environment and the construction of HPPs should be decided in strict conformity with EIA legislation and with the participation of civil society;
7. Stop the use of green tariffs in cases of corruption schemes for the production of hydropower energy, including in EU countries;
8. Ensure the implementation of EIA legislation and urge the development of SEA legislation in EAP countries in order to ensure the involvement of national and international expertise before the decision of construction of economic objects is made (e.g. Amulsar gold mine- Armenia, Olmany marshes –Ramsar site, Belarus);
9. Invest in waste minimization projects and support small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) and their recycling initiatives;
10. Encourage the implementation of reforestation projects in all EaP countries and increase the percentage of forest coverage to at least 30%;

The **transport** group discussed the state of play the TEN-T network in each country and the Road Safety Action Plan, in view of the upcoming Transport Panel of 18 September 2018. The recommendations they developed include:

1. Stop the restoration project of the E-40 Waterway; The E-40 Waterway project poses a threat of secondary radioactive contamination to the environment – as a result of activities in territories contaminated by radioactive isotopes after the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster (1986). The implementation of the project will have a significant impact on protected areas, including flora and fauna, valuable wetlands, landscapes, forest and agricultural land. The construction and operation of the channel will lead to the loss of habitat and stopover sites for migratory birds. For these reasons, the project should be stopped and other options considered.
2. Improve the Management and Coordination of Road Safety. Road safety is a crucial aspect of

transport infrastructures. In order to achieve better road safety, we recommend to:

- a. Establish a road safety lead agency – or improve work of the lead agency where it already exists – with responsibilities over analysis, monitoring, promotion and finances;
 - b. Allocate a budget for lead agency activities and capacity-building;
 - c. Develop a Road Safety Fund at national level to be used for awareness raising campaigns or research and funded by fines, insurance and taxes;
 - d. Set measurable targets within the Action Plan and Strategy – including criteria such as saving lives;
 - e. Improve data collection – include data monitoring and road crash investigations, accounting for the use of child booster seats, helmets, seatbelts, reflective materials and mobile phones, in each accident;
 - f. Reform driving schools' national curriculum and introduce a one-year, provisional license in order to improve novice drivers' preparation and training;
 - g. Integrate road safety education in primary schools' curricula;
3. Increase the capacity of low-carbon transport use, creating incentives for low-carbon forms of transport and road infrastructure which contribute to environmentally-friendly cargo transfers and passenger vehicles; The EaP region has a well-developed infrastructure only for petroleum and diesel – the biggest sources of air pollution. A truly environmentally friendly transport infrastructure, must include infrastructure for biofuel, e-chargers, liquid natural gas and other types of stations for eco-vehicles. While investments are key, a clear policy on transparent, environmentally friendly vehicle infrastructure in a necessary pre-condition.
4. Create a transparent infrastructure for electric vehicles development by supporting the creation of a transparent and simplified mechanism for the development of e-vehicles charging infrastructure in EaP countries through information sharing; The charging of e-vehicles is currently not regulated as a service in its own right. The service is generally identified as sale of electricity, which is covered by a different regulation. This regulation includes heavy bureaucratic procedures and licensing, which hinders the possibility of developing the service in the long-term.
- a. Regulate the import of vehicles with negative environmental impact – particularly vehicles older than 10 years;
 - b. Incentivise the purchasing of new, ecological cars – including through tax incentives;
 - c. Develop a programme for recycling and scrapping old cars in the EaP countries;
 - d. Research and assess the possibility of implementing vehicle to grid technology in the EaP region;
5. Improve transport links to the South Caucasus, by unifying tariff rates for the usage of roads across the EaP region and liberalising freight transport, especially transit between Moldova and Ukraine, as well as Moldova and Belarus; The isolation of South Caucasian countries from mainland Europe – due to geographical barriers such as the Black Sea or the Russian border to the North – presents no obvious or safe solutions, with the exception of transit through Ukraine. The development of a modern transport network between Europe and the South Caucasus is fundamental, particularly for what concerns high-speed road connections. Waterways across the Black Sea can also be used to connect the EaP region to Europe through the Balkans.

6. Formulate a EaP-wide plan for the development of public transport; Most EaP countries have very inefficient public transport systems, worsened by old fleets and the lack of internal regulation. The formulation of a EaP-wide plan for the development of public transport could bring great benefits to the entire region. The plan should include road safety measures and have a low impact on the environment, as well as foster economic development and stimulate interconnectivity between regions, cities and rural communities. Environmentally friendly public transport, with easy connections, leads to economic growth, new jobs and trade opportunities, as well as better service provision. The plan can be complemented by nation-wide initiatives and programmes focused on introducing alternative or environmentally conscious transport options, especially in cities and big urban areas – which suffer from heavy traffic, congestion and air pollution.
7. Develop a structured cooperation with civil society, allowing the structured participation of civil society organisation in the World Bank’s Working groups on Road Safety; Civil society organisations are crucial partners in achieving many Road Safety-related objectives. Awareness raising campaigns, improving road user behaviour are key aspects in which partnering with civil society is essential.

The **energy** group discussed concrete progress in key interconnectivity projects in the region and how energy efficiency and renewable energy can be integrated into national and local legislation, planning and programming. The group focused strongly on interconnectivity and energy efficiency (EE), and developed the following recommendations:

On interconnectivity:

1. Fully implement market rules and regulations, and address governance issues in the energy sector. Building interconnectors will not be sufficient to diversify supplies unless there is fair competition between incumbents and new suppliers, from neighbouring countries and new production capacities. Ways to implement this include:
 - a. Monitoring closely energy regulators;
 - b. Carry out independent audits on major players (e.g. Moldovagaz);
 - c. Ensure full transparency of energy sector (e.g. EITI);
2. Understand energy deals in separatist regions in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and fully enforce good governance in the energy sector to ensure fair competition;
3. Fully respect EU rules inside the EU, in particular in connection with North Stream 2;
4. Ensure that energy projects with EU support – as well as other energy projects –fully respect EIA and SEA regulations (e.g. Dniester and HPPs in Georgia);

On energy efficiency (EE):

1. Build local capacity for energy efficiency in households (HH), implementing the Covenant of Mayors, local capacity of NGOs to develop and monitor EE projects and policies;
2. Coordinate International financial institutions (IFI) projects – ensure that projects are not conflicting. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) supports at the same time a project for District heating (DH) and a project for individual boilers in Balti;
3. Adopt a broad approach for energy poverty, based on the understanding that local resistance to EE is connected with energy poverty, limited local capacity and conflicting policies;

Day 2 - 13 September

Training session

During the morning, members participated in a training session on Effective Messaging and how to successfully target EU-specific audience/stakeholders. The training was delivered by Natalia Mielech, freelance public policy & communications consultant, and was meant to strengthen members' ability to deliver their recommendations at during the WG stakeholder sessions, official EaP meetings, and any external contacts with stakeholders.

Meeting with external stakeholders

At the meeting with external stakeholders, WG3 members delivered the recommendations they developed working in small groups the day before.

Angela Bularga, Programme Manager for Environment, Growth, Better Governance, DG NEAR, *Veronika Líšková*, International Relations Office at DG Move, *Antonio Nunez*, Senior Transport Specialist at the World Bank, and *Marion Schiller Probst*, International Relations Officer at DG ENER shared their opinion on the recommendations delivered by the participants and took note of their suggestions for future actions.

Angela Bularga, Programme Manager for Environment, Growth, Better Governance at DG NEAR, listened to the environment-related messages prepared by members and shared with them some updates. She informed them that the European Commission is working to make the new EaP architecture more effective and would want EaP countries to have the same level of participation as the Commission (Director-level). The EC intends to monitor progress and deliverables on the basis of the 20 deliverables for 2020 and in cooperation with the Ministers of Economy. Ms Bularga stressed the importance of civil society participation at the Ministerial meeting, pointing to the fact that the outcome of Ministerial meetings is not a negotiated one like a Summit Declaration. She particularly welcomed members' recommendations on hydropower and suggested to improve interaction outside official channels and on the EU Water Initiative, linking EaP CSF re-granting projects to EU flagship projects.

Veronika Líšková, International Relations Officer at DG MOVE and *Antonio Nunez*, Senior Transport Specialist at the World Bank listened very attentively to the transport-related recommendations

delivered by members and agreed with them on several points, especially on road safety, the need to improve road-user behaviour and driving school education, and the need to strengthen EaP governments capacity. Ms *Líšková* said that the involvement of civil society organisations is particularly important for the European Commission, since the EC interacts only with state authorities on most occasions. In particular, she noted that road safety is an important topic for the EC and that civil society can contribute greatly in the development and rolling out of awareness campaigns in this realm. Mr *Nunez* agreed that road safety is the area in which civil society has an important role to play. He welcomed the recommendations presented by members, adding that focusing on practical things – such as for example increasing the number of users of seat-belts and improving road-user behaviour – is oftentimes more effective than creating and financing additional agencies. He added that the role of civil society is to guide decision-makers on what is important and what to prioritize. On decarbonisation and the improvement of infrastructures, Mr *Nunez* suggested members to further specify their recommendations and to consider also the involvement of the private sector.

Finally, *Marion Schiller Probst*, International Relations Officer at DG ENER, listened to members' recommendations on energy. Members expressed their praise for interconnectivity projects such as the Moldova-Romania gas interconnector as well as their disapproval of the North Stream, as it increases EU dependency on Russia. They added that the construction of hydropower plants in Georgia is ongoing, although the plants do not respect EU legislation, and called for more transparency in the energy sector. On north stream, Ms *Schiller Probst* said that the EC cannot stop the project as long as legislation is being respected. She agreed with the need for more transparency in the energy sector. Finally, she announced that, due to current political developments in Armenia, there have been some delays in the implementation of CEPA, but progress is expected soon.

Closing session

During the closing session, members discussed potential invitees and speakers for the upcoming Annual Assembly in Tbilisi, and brainstormed on innovative ideas on how to keep WG-related sessions participatory. Since the Annual Work plan will have to be developed again, it was underlined the importance of 20 Deliverables for 2020 as the basis for the Forum's work. There will be around 30 WG3 members in the upcoming cycle (almost a double of the current size), which means that the group will have a stronger capacity to implement projects and activities.