

Working Group 4 Annual Meeting

3-4 July 2018, Brussels

Meeting Report

Day 1 - 3 July

Opening session

The Steering Committee member Mikalai Kvantaliani from the Association "New Group" opened the meeting and presented the agenda. He stressed the importance of the messages to be addressed to the EU stakeholders that were expected to be produced by the end of the meeting, as well as the need for revising the WG4 Annual Plans developed during the Annual Assembly in Tallinn.

New EaP architecture and upcoming changes within the Forum

The meeting started with the presentation of the new Eastern Partnership architecture and upcoming changes within the Forum. Administrative Manager Lidia Gromadzka and Advocacy Manager Vera Rihackova provided a brief explanation of the Forum's participation in Platforms and Panels as a unique opportunity to be present at the meetings between the EaP and EU Member States governments as well as the EU officials, and showcase the expertise of the Forum.

During the Q&A session it was noted that it is necessary to expand the expertise of Forum's members and to adapt the expert database taking into account the cross-cutting deliverables. The need for further alignment of the WG4 with the new architecture was also raised. The group's expertise should better address the issues covered by the panels on Research and Innovation, and Migration, mobility & IBM since they are directly related to the people-to-people contacts. Participants believe that it is important to discuss the issue of contacts between seniors even though this aspect is not included in 2020 Deliverables. In order to improve the efficiency of the Forum's activities the reality check of the subgroups' work plans was proposed. Among other issues, a member from Ukraine suggested that several Ukrainian organizations dealing with migration could be moved from WG1 to WG4 next year.

The Communications Manager Darya Mustafayeva presented the elements of the communications and visibility strategy of the Forum. With regards to improving visibility, it was pointed out that it is important to invite independent journalists to the Annual Assembly in Tbilisi. The WG4 members suggested that the Forum should start promoting Annual Assemblies earlier and engage more bloggers and vloggers in campaigning and media coverage.

Further Mr Kvantaliani and the Director of the Secretariat Natalia Yerashevich elaborated on the internal mechanisms of the Forum and the latest internal reform. While reflecting on these issues, participants highlighted that it is important to establish a mechanism, which will ensure that members take seriously their responsibilities regarding Forum's membership and participation in events and regranting. In light of the proposed adoption of a code of conduct, there should be a clear message on what is expected from every member organisation and its representatives. One of the suggestions was to send a proposal to the experts working on the internal reform to develop the code of conduct in accordance with the Istanbul Principles for CSOs Development Effectiveness. Besides, some members pointed out that organisations from the regions should be better represented both in the National Platforms and in the Forum.



Mariia Symonova provided her input based on the Platform 4 meeting she recently attended and shared six useful tips for those members who are planning to attend Platforms and Panels meetings in future. She highlighted the importance of different communication approaches towards civil society representatives and governments.

Furthermore, three projects from 2018 re-granting scheme were introduced by Mr Ghazaryan (“Youth for entrepreneurship in rural areas”, Armenia), Mr Khurshudyan (“Youth Economic Empowerment through Social Entrepreneurship”, Armenia) and Ms Poshevalova (“Creative EaP”, Belarus). While discussing the projects, participants demonstrated strong interest towards a board game on entrepreneurship that will be developed in the framework of the re-granting project “Youth Economic Empowerment through Social Entrepreneurship” (Armenia). It was mentioned that the board game should be shared with all the National Platforms if possible.

Participants also asked questions on the process of delegates’ selection for Annual Assemblies and the status of delegates.

Brainstorming on messages in small groups

The WG4 members were divided into four small groups and worked on the EaP CSF messages delivered to the external stakeholders from the EEAS and DG EAC on the second day of the meeting.

Messages on Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship (by the WG4 members Nino Khukhua (Local Democracy Agency Georgia), Siarhei Dubina (Belarussian national youth council RADA), Diana Potjomkina (Latvian Institute of International Affairs), Oleg Zhyvotovskiy (European Choice), Aliaksandra Kuzmich (Belarusian Student association), Rovan Novruzov (Regional Development Enlightenment), Igor Nosach (Partnership for Every Child))

The members welcomed such programmes as the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme since they strengthen and expand contacts between people, mutual learning and the exchange of knowledge and experience within the Eastern Partnership.

- The WG4 recommended that the EU should support the development of youth entrepreneurship through existing programs and support tools, including the following measures:
 - Prolonging the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme while introducing the focus on entrepreneurship for business development in the field of creative economy;
 - Creating similar mechanisms focused on the development of entrepreneurship in the framework of other support programs, for instance through creating Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs analogue specifically for the Eastern Partnership countries or introducing country/regional quotas.
 - Simplifying the procedures for assistance under the existing programs (especially assistance with finding partners, reducing the share of organisations’ own contribution).
 - Raising awareness of the local civil society about such programs and the results of their work, carrying out continuous assessment of the effectiveness of their work.



- The EU should support programmes on education and support in the field of youth entrepreneurship (technical and financial support, exchange of experience), including the creation of conditions for the development of national and international projects with the participation of and between the Eastern Partnership countries in this field. Programmes on digital skills and media literacy should be developed and promoted.
- The EU should emphasise the importance of recognising the results of non-formal education within the system of higher and professional education in the EHEA countries. The EU Member States should insist on the inclusion of civil society in the implementation of the Belarus Strategic Plan and the abolition of the practice of compulsory work placement as a condition for recognising the results of the Strategic Plan implementation.

Messages on Culture (by the WG4 members Tatiana Poshevalova (Center for Social Innovations) and Zaur Akbarov (Youth Club Public Union))

- In the Work Programme of the Platform 4 and the Panel on Education, Culture and Youth there is very little room for culture related issues, and the targets and priorities are formulated in a very general way. Culture and creativity issues should not be addressed only within the youth topic. Culture and in particular cultural heritage sector are very diverse and promising for the development of the dialogue between different sectors, good governance, interdisciplinary cooperation and the inclusion of innovations. In this sense, it goes far beyond the framework of youth policy. The members welcome the idea of expert meetings on creative hubs and cultural heritage, as well as music industry, and would like to be informed about their dates and agendas (goals) in time to prepare coordinated policy proposals from the EaP countries.
- In order to better apply crosscutting issues (for instance, the human rights based approach) to the culture field, the members propose to use the civil society's alternative monitoring of the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) in the EaP countries.

Context

In 2018 and 2019, the work of the Platform 4 and Panel on Education, Culture and Youth will focus on youth policy. Culture is mentioned in two measures:

- Strengthening youth civic engagement and intercultural dialogue, including in the area of cultural heritage on the occasion of the European Year of Cultural Heritage
- Promoting the development of cultural and creative sectors

To achieve the above, the following activities are planned:

2018: - 2 expert meetings on creative hubs and cultural heritage;

2019: - 2 expert meetings on support for music industry; - Events and workshops on culture and creative sectors, quality of apprenticeships and work based learning education, Make-it-Match Network delivering active support to youth (organised by partners, EAC, EMPL, ETF).



The new European Agenda for Culture

- Civil society should have an opportunity to influence the framework and content of cooperation between the EU and the EaP region, as well as the priorities and tools of the third stage of the EU-EaP Culture and Creativity programme, or any other programmes that are foreseen in this field.
- It is proposed to organise the Eastern Partnership Culture Forum as a flagship project and a tool to prepare the EaP countries' key cultural actors and civil society to participate in initiatives on cooperation between the EU Member States and the EaP countries, and to influence the framework of such cooperation. The Forum would reflect on the role of culture in addressing the main regional challenges, in fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, as well as in building social cohesion and new identities.
- There is a need to assist the EaP cultural actors in joining or communicating with the European cooperation platforms in cinema, media, cultural heritage, and other cultural and creative industries, including those established under the previous Culture and Creativity programme. The EaP CSF and its Working Group 4 should be consulted on its third edition at an early stage. The members suggested to preserve the participation of the EaP CSF in the Steering Committee of the Culture and Creativity programme in the future.
- To fully prepare cultural actors in the region to participate in the Creative Europe programmes and other major international programmes, it is necessary to provide and maintain small and medium size grants programmes in the culture field for the EaP region.
- The possibility for the development of the East-South cooperation (between the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans) should be considered.

Context

The European Agenda for Culture proposes strengthening international cultural relations by making the most of the potential of culture to foster sustainable development and peace. However, in the Agenda the Eastern Partnership region is mentioned only once - in the context of the third edition of the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme. As for other actions, the eligibility of the EaP countries is still unclear. At the moment, not all the EaP countries can participate in the Creative Europe and culture heritage research programmes of Horizon 2020. It seems like the Culture and Creativity Programme can be the only opportunity for them to cooperate. Probably the cooperation is possible within such areas as launching a preparatory action on the European Houses of Culture in the partner countries and cultural heritage protection to the tasks of Common Security and Defence Policy missions, but it is unclear yet.

Messages on Quality Assurance in Education (by the WG4 members Ludmila Ivanov (Foundation for Advancement, Moldova), Dzmitry Karpiyevich (Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment, Belarus), Seyran Martirosyan (Khoran Ard Intellectual Center, Armenia), Oksana Polivchak (Women's charity organization "Our vision", Ukraine)

In order to promote affordable and quality education and training in EaP countries and ensure their compliance with Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education



Area (ESG adopted in Yerevan in 2015), the following issues have been identified by civil society representatives:

- Recognition and accreditation of diplomas of non-formal education (such as trainings, workshops etc);
- Equal conditions of work and access to the education market for all education and learning providers, if they offer equal quality of services, including promoting tools to strengthen the role of providers of formal and non-formal education and training and their contribution to democracy building, development of competitive economy, improvement of quality of life in the Eastern Partnership countries, reduction of migration and restoring citizens' trust in governments;
- Guarantees of access to quality education in rural areas, since for the moment rural schools are mostly employing teachers who are giving classes in several matters based on the same curriculum for several decades, by:
 - better conditions, privileges/compensation for teachers willing to work in rural areas;
 - professional development opportunities and increasing salaries of academics, teachers and support staff;
- Civil society role as a watchdog of promoting quality education, especially given the region's legacy of lack of academic integrity (plagiarism, dishonesty etc);
- Assurances of autonomy and self-governance of higher education establishments (free from political and ideological influences);
- Lowering the EU projects co-funding threshold for NGOs working in the sphere of learning and skills. Right now it is 10% and because of the sheer size of the allocated grant this is often prohibitive and therefore potential applicants are not able to implement their projects;
- Inclusive education with focus on seniors (especially fighting against “ageism”), persons with disabilities and minorities;
- Perspective of instruments on monitoring/analysis/recommendations of quality assurances in education for non-AA countries, as the AA countries do it via the bilateral civil society platforms;
- E-learning + digitalization as a tool in improving access to quality education, including lifelong learning;
- Active participation of students in quality assurance procedures.

Messages on Peace Building and Contacts between Seniors (by the WG4 members Nato Bachiasvili (International Centre for Geopolitical Studies), Dilara Afandiyeva (The Association for the Protection of Women's Rights after D.Aliyeva), Pavel Havlicek (Association for International Affairs), Almaz Hasanova (Caucasus Media Investigations Center), Yaroslav Minkin (Youth organization STAN), Andrei Gaiu (Association Youth for the right to live), Antonina Volkova (Regional public union Vesta), Iulia Kharashvili (IDP Women Association Consent)



The subgroup on peace building conducted the reality check of the proposed by the subgroup coordinator Annual Work Plan, and suggested some practical measures relevant to situations in all the EaP countries. The subgroup believes that since peacebuilding is a cross-cutting issue, it should be necessarily present under the 2020 Deliverables and within the WG4. The members agreed that in all six EaP countries conflict affected population still exists with some of the protracted conflicts progressing in a slow but negative way. A large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) require urgent increase of support from the civil society.

The group members insisted that peacebuilding is an inherent part of contacts between people. People to people diplomacy is highly important and constitutes an integral part of conflict resolution. The group also pointed out that conflict resolution activities supported by WG1 deal mostly with security issues and the geopolitical dimension, whereas WG4 is mostly focused on the civil society dimension.

The civil society identified the following actions and opportunities for the Working Group:

1. Conduct a research on the effects of protracted displacements on the development of the EaP countries

The small group suggests to conduct a study on internal migration (IDPs, refugees, asylum seekers) and response to these challenges in the EaP region, to identify implicit regional problems and how they affect the development and democratisation processes in the region. Such a study would help with organising a more targeted assistance, preventing migration from these countries and identifying common challenges between long-term protracted internal displacement and refugee crises in Europe. Within research activities on mobility and migration, it is necessary to develop a set of new indicators on prevention and early warning of reviving conflicts that would further help to prevent new flows of refugees and displaced persons. The EaP CSF members should use programmes on mobility of seniors, women and youth to improve communication between the populations in the protracted conflict zones in the region and to promote the EaP messages.

2. Provide messages in the following fields that could indirectly fall within the Research and Innovation Panel:

- Identifying the common perceptions of local populations across the divides towards the same non-conflict related topics (music, family relations, tourism, etc.);
- Identifying neutral topics for cooperation within divided societies (e.g. creation of a single database of Georgian and Abkhazian de facto MIAs (Missing in Action) persons under Stalin's regime).

3. CSOs should provide trainings on improving skills for effective dialogue and mediation (for instance - youth dialogue, intercultural dialogue, exchange of best practices and lessons learnt with the participation of non-state actors, dialogues between mothers of missing persons, etc.), promote peace education, including the education of women and youth in line with the agenda on Women/Youth, Peace and Security (resolutions 1325, 2242, 2250); should conduct advocacy on gender sensitive and conflict sensitive approaches with the regional institutions and organisations (EU, Council of Europe, OSCE).

4. Identify opportunities and existing links between different social and age groups, including through: Revival of "past relations" among seniors (schoolmates, co-workers, neighbours);



- Restoration of documents for social security purposes (pension, social benefits);
- Involving youth living and studying abroad into intercultural dialogues and dissemination of peacebuilding messages.

The Action Plan for the rest of 2018 includes commitments by the members on advocacy actions aimed at bringing the WG messages across the region and to international/regional organisations:

- Regional advocacy event on the UN SC Resolution 1325 for organisations from the EaP region (Georgia, September 2018);
- Project “Gender Mainstreaming and Women’s Involvement” will help to identify common neutral topics which could be used for peacebuilding activities (Moldova, August-September 2018);
- Survey on the existing resources for different groups (seniors, youth, women) in Azerbaijan;
- Online webinars on the topic “Conflict Affected Population: Best Practices and Challenges for Peacebuilding” (all EaP countries);
- Online conference on peacebuilding practices and innovative initiatives (November).

Day 2 - 4 July

During the morning session the members attended two trainings - on Fundraising and writing successful project proposals for grants (by Grigor Yeritsyan, Armenian Progressive Youth) and on Effective Messaging and how to successfully target EU-specific audience/stakeholders (by Darya Mustafayeva) meant to boost skills of the members necessary for delivering at a required level during the official EaP meetings, and any external contacts with stakeholders.

Meeting with external stakeholders

At the meeting with external stakeholders WG4 participants had an opportunity to present the messages they developed during discussions in the small groups on Day 1. Ms Wytrykowska from EEAS and Ms Partyka from DG EAC shared their opinion on the issues raised by the participants and took note of the suggestions for future actions.

Marta Wytrykowska, Policy Officer from the EEAS, was particularly interested to hear more about the EaP Youth Conference to be held in November. She believes it is important for the CSF members to deliver their comments and messages regarding the available programmes for young entrepreneurs from the EaP countries. Moreover, she supported the idea to conduct a study on internal migration and displacement (suggested by Ms Kharashvili), recommendations from which can be further incorporated into the EEAS reports. Ms Wytrykowska highlighted that due to digital developments in labour market, Forum should work on digital agenda and improvement of digital skills in the EaP. She further advised to read the EU Digital Agenda and to have a discussion on innovation within the EaP Platforms. Finally, Ms Wytrykowska finds it useful that peacebuilding as a crosscutting issue is horizontally incorporated in the EaP CSF Platforms and Panels.

The policy officer from DG EAC **Kamila Partyka** underlined that a new approach with the focus on social entrepreneurship will be introduced soon and the process of preparing the new **Culture and Creativity programme** (which includes the EaP countries as well) is ongoing. She encouraged the representatives from the EaP countries to start thinking about concrete ideas to be implemented within



the **European Agenda for Culture**. Ms Partyka would like to know more about where the EaP countries stand on the **quality assurance of education**. As discussed, it is currently necessary to agree on methodology and standards for all six countries. Students should be a part of the quality assurance process in the EaP countries. Furthermore, the EU can only take small steps to promote changes in the education sectors in the EaP countries, but it is difficult to implement the change to the existing systems from outside. As the next steps, the EaP CSF members need to think about how civil society should be involved in quality assurance of education: whether it should have a watchdog function and if experts on higher education reform should organise trainings and be involved in the discussions on reforms. As stated by Ms Partyka, the EU currently discusses most of the issues raised by the participants on the bilateral level with the EaP partners. Finally, it was noted that the subgroup on peace building should continue to exist within WG4.

Closing session

The new format of the WG meeting was positively evaluated by all participants. In particular they found it useful to work in small groups and to later have an exchange with other members. WG4 members were glad to use an opportunity to share recommendations among all participants and pass the messages developed to stakeholders. Thus, the meeting was overall assessed as productive and the most effective to date.

During the reflection session, several participants suggested to keep this format of the WG meetings for the future and to continue including trainings/workshops aimed at upgrading skills of members.

It was also noted that more advocacy activities should be conducted and more discussions inside the EaP countries organised. One participant commented that the visibility of the EaP CSF within the EaP countries should be improved. It was suggested to further cooperate on mutual visibility between the Forum and its member organisations in the following format: members' projects are to be mentioned on the website while member organisations present Forum during their projects' events.

With regard to the re-granting, it was suggested that the re-granting scheme should support more policy projects. As further highlighted, it is necessary to focus on 2020 Deliverables to have more efficient multilateral Platforms with stronger influence within the EaP region. Finally, participants discussed the possibility to issue a statement regarding a Georgian activist who is currently under home arrest for 11 months.

Key results of the meeting

A number of messages were developed to guide the Forum's work in the specific areas of the WG4 work:

- The WG4 recommended that the EU should support the development of youth entrepreneurship through existing programs and support tools, including prolonging the EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme and the EaP quotas within the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs.
- In the Work Programme of the Platform 4 and the Panel on Education, Culture and Youth the culture and creativity issues should be addressed not only within the youth topic. Civil society should have an opportunity to influence the priorities and tools of the third stage of the EU-EaP Culture and Creativity programme, or any other programmes foreseen in this field. It is proposed to organise



the Eastern Partnership Culture Forum as a flagship project and a tool to prepare the EaP countries' key cultural actors and civil society.

- In order to promote affordable and quality education and training in the EaP countries and ensure their compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area the civil society representatives have identified the recognition and accreditation of non-formal education diplomas (trainings, workshops etc.) and equal conditions of work and access to the education market for all education and learning providers as current priorities.
- Peacebuilding is a crosscutting issue should be further addressed within the 2020 Deliverables and in a subgroup format within WG4. The small group on peacebuilding and contacts between seniors suggested to conduct a research on the effects of protracted displacements on the development of the EaP countries with the focus on internal migration (IDPs, refugees, asylum seekers) and response to these challenges in the EaP region.
- The initiative group on the EaP Youth Conference gathered in parallel to discuss the practicalities of the event, adjust the timeline and divide the responsibilities. Some members used the opportunity to network with the EaP Civil Society Facility fellows and identify the synergies between the Youth Conference in Vienna and the fellowship programme.
- Further refining the messages developed, 20 Forum members were trained in key areas of the Forum's work and contacts with EU stakeholders – advocacy and communications. Another 10 attended a workshop devised to help with grant writing. In total, 30 Forum members improved their skills.
- Members successfully used the occasion of the meeting with the external stakeholders from the EEAS and DG EAC and to pass the messages developed during the meeting, and to receive further information helping to better target the EU stakeholders.

