

The civil society perspective: Taking stocks of achievements and looking beyond 2020- People to People Contacts

Public event report

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Summary

The first event in the series of EaP CSF public events, dedicated to 10th anniversary of the EaP policy, focused on assessing its successes in areas such as Mobility, Research & Education and People-to-People Contacts. In an interactive World Café setting, EU stakeholders, experts and civil society discussed various aspects of Education, Youth and Entrepreneurship. Their diverse expertise enriched our discussion, allowed to exchange perspectives and provide recommendations, enabling the audience to step into face-to-face conversation with EU stakeholders.



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Achievements and Challenges in Education:

Assessing the current achievements of the EaP policy in its 10 years, the World Café stakeholder corner highlighted the establishment of a European School in Tbilisi, as one of the tangible deliverables for 2020. This success story can serve as the basis for future EaP policy in the area of education after 2020.



“We are now in the first phase. This school is open for all EaP countries. The second phase will be the assessment of the sustainability. EaP countries are interested to open other European Schools”

Jeroen Willems, DG NEAR



Nevertheless, some challenges connected to the quality of current educational programmes still remain. Some of the EaP countries have ministries for Youth, some do not – only for Education. This poses a challenge on how to approach this topic on the governmental level. Moreover, EaP countries must adapt their education systems to meet the needs of the labour market, which is also different from country to country.


“Approaches for education and youth are being reformed both in the EU member states and EaP countries. Organisations such as the European Training Foundation and Youth@Work Partnership are helping to improve policy and practice, putting more emphasis on employability and entrepreneurship ”




Elin McCallum, Director and Co-founder of Bantani Education

"Students are not only the end consumers of the educational system, but should be closely involved in shaping the educational policy. Students' communities is an option for youth to cooperate and be heard."

Adam Gajek, President of the European Students' Union



Limited access to education, especially in the rural areas of the EaP region, continue to be a matter of concern. On this issue, both civil society representatives and experts urged EaP governments to strive for more inclusive education. Particular attention should be also paid to student participation in the decision-making process. The dialogue gap between governments and civil society actors is even more visible in the case of Bologna Reforms in Higher Education in Belarus. Civil society is excluded from the reform process. The experts table supported the civil society position, highlighting some [monitoring](#) efforts done together with EaP CSF on this matter. Focusing on the Roadmap for 2016-2018, EaP CSF co-produced altogether six reports, pointing to faults in official reporting and interpretation of international commitments. Civil society should have more access to governmental meetings, concluded the experts table.




"Hackathons, digital labs, they all contribute to fostering agility - a skill that is very much needed nowadays, the only element that is essential in fostering the entrepreneurial mindset"

Mikalai Kvantaliani, EaP CSF Working Group 4

Fostering entrepreneurship skills and female entrepreneurship:

More tailored instruments to facilitate the involvement of women in entrepreneurial activities are needed. What is more, the current narrative has to change in order to give women, working in various entrepreneurial initiatives, the possibility to overcome (financial or societal) difficulties. This is a reason why monitoring the gender component and gender quotas in micro-finance is another step forward in advancing the agenda, enabling women participation in entrepreneurial activities.



"Changing the narrative in the entrepreneurial sector and putting more emphasis on the gender component requires giving more prominence to women, acknowledging their success and positive impact in their communities or in their fields."

Elin McCallum, Director and Co-founder of Bantani Education



Entrepreneurship and digitalisation are the key skills, that should be developed already now, in order to satisfy the needs of modern labour market tomorrow. The entrepreneurial mind-set can be triggered through more sustainable collaboration with the EU/business sector. To create the environment that will foster the development of SMEs, EaP countries will need to rely on more institutional support and access to finance. To pave the road toward SME development, the role of trade associations (at different levels) and sector associations is essential: they could be the facilitators that could make the 'liaison' between the two actors (SMEs and governmental bodies). Youth work is greatly contributing to building the entrepreneurial mind-set; there are various European instruments, such as 'youth@work' and Erasmus+, that contribute to building lab projects, while also developing upon various life skills.

EaP Index in a nutshell:

According to the [EaP Index 2017](#) results, the level of connectivity and people-to-people contacts between the EU and EaP countries increased and is particularly stark for Georgia and Ukraine, both of whom reaped the benefits of the introduction of visa-free travel to the Schengen zone countries. Georgia, Armenia and Moldova remain the countries with the highest participation in capacity-building projects under the Erasmus + framework. Ukraine's participation in cultural projects within Creative Europe is the smallest when calculated on a per capita basis.

