

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Working Group 5 Annual Activity Report 2021

Introduction

This document consists of three parts. Part I represents a summary of the answers by the WG5 National Platform's coordinators and WG5 members from the EU to the questionnaires jointly developed by WG Coordinators. These two categories of respondents were provided with two different questionnaires to provide their thoughts and feedback with the view of the upcoming EaP CSF Annual Assembly. Their answers were not anonymous.

The respondents had an option to decide on their preferred language (i.e. English or Russian). The respondents were allowed to choose either written answers or an online interview. In the latter case, all but one interview was recorded.

The questionnaires were shared with all relevant participants indicated above. The response rate was the following:

- Four out of six national coordinators responded. Among them, a representative of Azerbaijan opted for an online interview. Representatives of Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine sent their answers in written form. The answer from Ukraine was largely incomplete. Despite several reminders, no answers were collected from the Belarusian and Moldovan NPs.
- Three out of four WG5 members from the EU-based organizations responded. Two of them delivered the answers in a written form, while another WG5 participant found it difficult to answer the questions due to the context of his personal situation.

All written answers and interview recordings are kept with the WG5 Consultant and can be provided upon request.

Part II addresses the issues discussed during the WG5 thematic session at the EaP CSF 2021 Annual Assembly.

Part III provides conclusions and offers recommendations for the future WG2 activities based on the answers from Part I and a summary of the discussion and proposals raised during the WG2 AA thematic session covered in Part II.

Part I **WG5 National Platform Coordinators**

Objectives and assessment of their implementation

Armenia

Armenian representative specified three objectives of the WG5, namely:

- "restoration of the post-conflict situation, a stable society," addressing the problems of the vulnerable population due to the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, the COVID-19 pandemic, and earthquakes;

- "sustainable and integrated economy," aimed at the creation and development of social enterprises, increasing the market volume, improving the quality of services and exports;
- social dialogue between employers, trade unions, CSOs, industry experts.

Yet, the assessment of this performance ranged from little (related to the first two objectives) to moderate (the third objective extent). The reason for that was an inability to solve the conflict situation related to the war. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic caused additional problems, including growing unemployment. It resulted in increased poverty, restriction of educational rights for children, and increased vulnerability of the displaced families from Nagorno-Karabakh, prisoners, and other marginalized groups. The war also caused the need for social and psychological support for the displaced persons, as well as the people who lost their family members. Especially affected were the children from Nagorno-Karabakh, as they were subjected to stress caused by military activities. Furthermore, the social enterprises operating in Armenia faced serious financial difficulties due to the pandemic. Training and consultations, dissemination of information on state programs among the population, and joint ventures were conducted online.

Cooperation has been established with the government, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, local governments, the private sector, CSOs, and volunteers. The priorities of the campaigns in 2021 involved civil society capacity building, social and labour policy, social dialogue, the creation of social entrepreneurship, a safe and supportive business environment, and similar issues. In early October, WG5 members submitted their proposals and recommendations to the draft governmental decree on approval of the programs aimed at the integration of individuals recognized as refugees and granted asylum in Armenia. This was made via the platform e-draft.am. Out of 13 recommendations, nine were fully or partially accepted to get incorporated in the document. WG5 members also participated in discussions with the public authorities on identifying problems pertinent to control over labour legislation and improving the efficiency of the Labour and Health Inspectorate activities. Previously, it was also involved in the development jointly with ILO of the National Decent Work program. WG5 members also participated in the seminars on Covid-19 vaccination and meetings with the OGP EU4Integrity representatives. The Armenian Trade Union Confederation is currently engaged in drafting changes to the Armenian Labour Code.

Despite these endeavors, a low level of activity of WG5 members in Armenia can be identified which is linked with political, social, and economic difficulties the country currently faces. It was also mentioned that the WG5 monitors the situation in education, the social sphere, and health care. In August 2021, a study based on six commitments to be fulfilled within the framework of the OGP Armenia Action Plan 2018-2020 was presented. It was organized with the support of the US Embassy to Armenia.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, WG5 is small. It works in an unfriendly environment. It is related to the specifics of Azerbaijani legislation on CSO registration and grants. Additionally, all recent changes in the

labour legislation were in favour of the employers. Thus, the assessment of the possibilities of the WG5 in Azerbaijan should consider these opportunities.

Yet, some positive changes were made to the unemployment insurance legislation to be extended to temporary contracts so that they can register as unemployed. It is also planned to create an electronic system on labour relations and employment which will result in the digitalization of labour law.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected different sectors of the Azerbaijani economy, incl. culture, tourism, transport, consumer goods, and adjacent spheres. As many people are involved in these spheres, incl. informal labour, the rise of unemployment accompanied by serious protection shortcomings for the formally employed workers, and especially those active in the informal sector.

Taking into account, the specifics of the Azerbaijani economy, the OWRPO conducts regular monitoring. One of the dimensions is based on the issues related to the implementation of labour legislation and other normative acts in the oil sector. It confirms that the authorities do not consider CSOs and individual experts' proposals pertinent to the possible improvement of the situation of the labour force. Furthermore, the employees are often unaware of their rights or have a fear not to address them in order not to lose their jobs. The monitoring is based on the appeals of employees working in the oil sector, complaints, verified information, responses to surveys, available media information, and litigation.

Georgia

In Georgia, the main objective of the National Platform covered by WG5 themes dealt with labour rights' compatibility with the AA frame. Its success is assessed as moderate. Among the main achievements of the policy dialogue, the official statements, addresses to the government, recommendations, and preparation of a policy document were specified. As for the EU level, the main focus was made on providing the EU bodies with the information and developments pertinent to labour relations and social dialogue in terms of their compatibility with the AA provisions.

Challenges were linked with the process of labour rights protection and dialogue with the relevant governmental bodies. The passiveness of the business sector being is also a serious challenge as businesses do not use this platform as an important actor for dialogue.

The communication with the representatives of legislative bodies was more active and effective. Several WG5 CSOs provided specific recommendations to the parliament of Georgia on labour legislation changes, and 90 percent thereof was accepted.

A WG5 member, the Georgian Trade Union Confederation conducted an awareness-raising campaign on labour relations, labour safety, and the introduction of new legislation (Occupation safety and health). WG5 was also actively engaged in the legislation analysis and studying of specific cases pertinent to the areas where labour rights violations occur. The main focus of the monitoring is on the changes included in the legislation and their implementation in practice. For example, Georgian law stipulates that the country's Labour Inspection is entitled to check the

labour contracts in any domain so that the number of working hours does not exceed 40h/month. The WG5 collects relevant information from several sectors.

Ukraine

Ukrainian WG5 dealt with the issues pertinent to social policy, labour markets, social rights, social dialogue, socio-economic problems of the EP countries, awareness-raising of the social dialogue and its practical implementation in EU member states, and promotion of EU norms and international standards set out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Social Charter, and the ILO documents. No specifics were provided, while the success was defined as moderate. The interlocutors underlined that the role of active civil society is crucial in times of crisis, both when it comes to providing assistance in emergencies or strengthening social cohesion. It was stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic forced CSOs to embrace a creative approach to developing or adapting tools for their functioning under quarantine. As mentioned above, the answers provided no further details.

Ways to overcome existing challenges

Generally, advocacy campaigns and discussions with the domestic stakeholders were mentioned by all interlocutors. This involves MPs and relevant representatives at different ministries and other public bodies, as well as working groups and other consultative bodies under their auspices. Stable cooperation within the triangle CSOs - businesses - authorities should be maintained. Different situations in each country in terms of the intensity of possible advocacy and their channels and these specifics should be taken into account.

At the EU level, the most effective way seems to be the development of relevant position papers, country updates, and similar documents where problems are indicated and recommendations for improvement are presented. The lobbying of the EU-based partners, as well as their services as points of contact, should be used more actively where possible.

Future priorities and EaP CSF involvement

In the context of Armenia, the following issues were identified: labour relations, social entrepreneurship, support of the civil society monitoring over the CEPA implementation, creation of a bilateral Armenia-EU CSO platform, support of the cooperation, and mutual learning within the triangle CSOs, trade unions and businesses.

An Azerbaijani representative underlined the need to address the country-specific problems that stem from the absence of independent trade unions, the existence of employer-friendly legislation, and the limited capacities of CSOs to influence the situation. There is a need to provide support for the CSOs in their activities. Moreover, the need for communication and knowledge exchange was expressed.

In the view of the Georgian WG national coordinator, the priorities should include more pronounced encouragement for social dialogue between employees and employers. The same applies to the need for more awareness campaigns, better communication with the executive and legislative bodies on the issue pertinent to labour dialogue and its importance. Further

strategizing should include the effectiveness of recommendations provided for the authorities as well as the need to attract new members from the business sector. The EaP CSF's role is seen as the distribution and delivery of the messages to the relevant stakeholders.

The interest level and financial sources

In Ukraine and Georgia, interlocutors indicated high interest. In contrast, in Armenia the interest level is low. It could be enhanced through the organization of meetings, events, and discussions on the relevant topics, capacity-building endeavors aimed at CSOs and their activists, participation in training. Furthermore, interest should be motivated and it could be achieved through the capability to effectively involve relevant stakeholders, including businesses and policymakers, as well as achieve legislative changes and effectively control relevant policy implementation. In Azerbaijan, there is an interest but it is hampered by the conditions under which the CSOs function. The lack of independent trade unions is also an important factor that affects the capabilities for workers' rights protection.

The main funds come from donor organizations and are project-tailored. These entities include the EU, individual EU Member States, USAID, WB, OGP, UNICEF, Open Society Foundation, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, and local embassies, specifically that of the US and Germany. Some organizations are financed through membership quotas or personal funds of their members.

Visibility and the position of NPs concerning national and EU policymakers

All interlocutors acknowledge the need to strengthen the NP's visibility and position vis-a-vis domestic and EU policymakers. Specifically, the need for knowledge exchange among the EaP countries and with the EU member states was mentioned. It also implies the need for CSOs capacity building to process the information, as they are aware of a significant number of country-specific developments which could be useful for other countries. It seems that policy and position papers, presentations, country updates, and other relevant publications can be effective tools in this process.

Role of the EU-based organizations

The need for strengthening the role and engagement of the EU-based organizations in WG5 activities is also demanded. Their experience and knowledge are essential for changes in the EaP region. At the same time, it is suggested for the EU-based organizations to enhance their knowledge about relevant EaP countries to increase the efficiency of their activities in the region.

Key messages

- More attention to WG5 and its agendas;
- More active involvement of CSOs in domestic policies and international processes pertinent to WG5 agendas;



- For that, more support for the CSOs endeavors on political participation, reform monitoring, and creation of favourable legal framework;
- For that, more support for CSOs participation in social dialogue, as it has no alternative to since it brings social peace
- For that, more support for CSOs vis-a-vis repressive actions of the states where it is particularly relevant.

EU-based WG member organizations

The total number of EU-based organizations currently involved in the WG5 activities is as low as four. Only two of them filled in the questionnaire, all in a written form. In the case of Winnet Sweden, the organization's main focus is gender equality between women and men. This thematic focus explains the issues addressed in their answers. The answers from the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) addressed a more diverse scope of topics.

Scope of recent activities

Being a membership-based organization, ITUC works with the Trade Unions in all six EaP countries. Contents of work are tailored to country-specific needs. It lobbies the EU bodies to focus more on the social issues within the EaP policies. During the last year, ITUC addressed the situation, labour issues, and ILS implementation in Belarus. It coordinated information to the EU institutions and as well as relevant stakeholders beyond the EU. With ITUC coordination, the situation in Belarus was discussed within the CAS ILO. In Ukraine, the progress of labour legislation changes is being observed. Relevant information is provided to the EU stakeholders to prevent changes that either contradict ILS or worsen workers' rights. ITUC is a party to all three AA DAG, representing the EU.

In the case of Winnet Sweden, the main focus was made on Armenia where the work in the promotion of gender equality and women's rights was conducted. Specifically, Winnet Armenia operates in Women Resource Centres as a model from Sweden aimed to increase women's participation in the labour market, both as employed and entrepreneurs. In the case of Belarus, an online seminar focused on women's entrepreneurship and innovation was held. In general, the organization continues a SI project to establish a EUSBSR Forum for gender equality and Growth 3.0 with connection with EaP.

Main progress

In the ITUC view, the biggest progress was encountered in Moldova and Georgia where Labour Inspections became functional again. Yet, all six EaP countries face significant shortcomings. According to Winnet Sweden assessment, Armenia was capable to create a WRC organization covering all the regions of the country to ensure women's participation in the labour market, businesses, media, politics, etc. This approach was distributed in other EaP countries, and Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova demonstrated interest in it. It was done in cooperation with OSCE, with funding coming from Swedish MFA and SI.

Main challenges

The main challenges are encountered in Belarus and Ukraine. The former found itself in among the worst ten according to GRI for workers, due to repressions, restrictions to assemblies and strikes, arbitrary arrests, and registration of legal entities. The latter lacks the real guarantees of workers' rights. In this context, the EaP CSF can be seen as a medium that includes demand for a strong social dialogue on national levels in its documents.

As for Winnet Sweden, Covid-19-related issues restricted cross-border cooperation and brought activities online.

Prospective priority areas

The ITUC answers do not specify the priority areas. Yet, it can be presumed they remain the same provided the demand for a stronger social dialogue is addressed by the EaP CSF and more focus is being paid to the WG5 agendas.

As for Winnet Sweden, their suggestions were focused on gender equality in all policy areas covered by the EaP CSF. They emphasized that gender mainstreaming should be promoted and operationalized in the labour market and business. The argument is that the growth in the EaP countries could be ensured by the confident participation of women in the labour force.

Possible support from the EU-based organizations

As the ITUC works with labour rights in all countries, it is ready to provide relevant and issue-tailored support, both in the EU and beyond. It includes lobbying, national missions, organization of meetings between the EU institutions and representatives of the EaP CSOs.

The Winnet Sweden underlined the need to expand the knowledge on gender equality through know-how on What to do, How, methods and tools, impact and influence on policy and strategy, and action plans. It is essential to combine theory and practices in research and development, addressing women's participation and contribution to sustainable growth at all levels. In these domains, Winnet Sweden eagerly offers its expertise.

Recommendations

- support for a strong social dialogue on the national level (also if you are not a trade unionist), as decent working conditions affect not only the economic situation of individual workers, but also their families, communities, and countries;
- fight for and promote freedom of association and right to assembly;
- support for solidarity actions as the common goals could be achieved only through collective efforts and solidarity;
- ensuring gender equality, introducing gender budgeting, and addressing gender mainstreaming in legislation, policies, strategies, and action plan, incl. operationalization with positive action and policy, strategy, and action plan

Key messages

- More focus on and support for the promotion of social dialogue and collective bargaining, consistent with EU values and principles (including social policies, COVID-19 healthcare, and economic measures);
- Equal application of skills of all citizens to develop the democracy and to contribute to growth in all areas, through strong cross border partnership and network.

Part II

WG5 AA thematic session

The WG5 thematic session took place on December 1, 2021, from 9:30 to 10:45. The EaP CSF responsible staff members included Laura Ponikelska and Calum Thomson. The session was moderated by Goda Neverauskaitė, WG5 coordinator.

The structure of the thematic session was designed as follows. The section started with introductory remarks by the moderator. It was followed by a presentation of the intermediate version of the WG5 activity report by its author, Kiryl Kascian. Specifically, the presentation included the report's Part I as well as preliminary conclusions and recommendations from Part III. The subsequent part was attributed to the country updates. The discussion on the WG5 next steps and priorities for 2022 were cancelled due to the lack of time. Instead, the moderator asked the participants to deliver their views on the WG5 further development and visions of how the WG5 activities could be improved. Participants could express their views in the form of documents, comments, and opinions.¹

In her introductory speech, Goda Neverauskaitė underlined the special nature of WG5, as it was formed not in compliance with the EaP multilateral track. The WG5 goal is to more specifically address social issues and labour policies in the EaP countries and advocate them at the domestic and the EU levels.

Presentation of WG5 Activity Report

Presentation of the main findings of Part I and preliminary conclusions and recommendations formulated in Part III of this report was made by its author, Kiryl Kascian. This part of the report omits the contents of the presentation, as a reader can get acquainted with these issues in Part I and Part III of this report.

¹ All references to the contents of the participants' speeches are based on the WG5 AA thematic session minutes compiled by Ion Cantea.

Country-specific updates

All country-specific updates were planned according to the same structure. Before the session, the country coordinators were asked to prepare their answers to the following guiding questions²:

- *from the civil society's perspective, briefly focus on up to three developments in the areas pertinent to WG5 agendas in your country and explain why they are especially significant;*
- *briefly address the domestic measures related to countering the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the labour market and the social partners' involvement (if any) in these processes.*

Due to the short duration of the thematic session, the answers to each question were expected to be limited to the key messages.

Note: *Country updates were presented in the alphabetical order of the EaP countries in question but not on the extent of the changes that occurred in a particular EaP country or specific successes of each country in the topics covered by the WG5.*

Armenia

The situation in Armenia was determined by the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war consequences accompanied by internal political instability. As a result, more people left the country to find a decent job elsewhere. The war resulted in the situation that people lost their homes and jobs whilst the number of social help funds available for them did not increase. In the domain of social dialogue, some positive results could be observed. The cooperation between the ILO, Armenia's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, CSOs, and volunteers resulted in the campaign aimed at addressing the major problems of the country's labour market. Inter alia, it involves CSOs capacity building, social entrepreneurship, safe and friendly business environment. Despite this progress, the government's engagement in this process remains insufficient to more effectively tackle the major challenges in this sphere. This is multiplied by the consequences of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war and the Covid-19 pandemic. As for the Covid-19 pandemic, the country enjoys a low level of vaccination which makes it necessary to promote it.

Azerbaijan

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic over half a million infections were recorded in Azerbaijan. Approximately 8,000 deaths were recorded caused by Covid-19. Slightly less than half of the population is fully vaccinated. Special quarantine measures remain in force at least until January 2022. Masks are obligatory in all indoor public spaces. Social places, including places of worship, shopping malls, and restaurants are open. Since October 2021, they are available only for the vaccinated. Covid-19 harmed employment, particularly those who work in the informal economy. Also, it reduced the opportunities to find a job. The tourism and entertainment sectors were also significantly affected. In addition, female workers were more vulnerable due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, the government's response to the Covid-19 resulted in

² For details, please consult the EaP CSF Annual Assembly 2021 Working Group 5 Meeting Agenda.

support measures for individual entrepreneurs, temporary exemptions, and payments to the workers who work in the spheres affected by the pandemic.

It was reported that the authorities introduced reforms and designed new programs. In this regard, the activities of the Agency for Sustainable and Operational Social Security (DOST) were mentioned.

Azerbaijan also faces the consequences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. The authorities designed several programs to help the people affected by the conflict. They also provide housing and transport for the war veterans and arrange psychological support for those in need.

Belarus

The implementation of the WG5 thematic agendas in Belarus can be described as an illusion, particularly after the 2020 fraudulent presidential election. Currently, social dialogue is almost disabled. Everyone who actively or passively confronted the regime faces a threat of punishment, irrespective of the professionalism or experience. Virtually all social programs are either disabled or do not work. The Covid-19 pandemic is also an effective manipulation tool for the regime which uses it for its own advantage upon necessity. Even the obligatory wearing of face masks was abolished within less than two weeks after it was sanctioned. Moreover, in July 2021 Lukashenka's regime started a campaign aimed at mass liquidation of independent CSOs. Currently, at least 275 CSOs have been liquidated or face a threat of liquidation by the regime. The regime also imposes travel restrictions on the Belarusian citizens under the Covid-19 pretext. It was reported that WG5 in Belarus worked mainly online. Yet, the political conditions in the country are worsening and it is difficult to predict how the CSOs and their members will further work in current circumstances.

Georgia

In Georgia, the level of vaccination is about 35 percent. The authorities introduced Covid Green passports that are used as a tool that identifies an individual's Covid status necessary for access to public places and travel. Still, Georgia's statistic regarding the Covid-19 pandemic does not look very good, and some categories of the population are being paid for being vaccinated. The Covid-19 pandemic also affected the economy, including the tourism sector. Currently, the country's economy is gradually recovering, and the government tries to support businesses. Yet, the number of those who migrate from Georgia increases. Covid-19 also resulted in the situation when many employers cut salaries which produced strikes and other forms of protests by the employees.

Starting from 1 January 2021, the rights of the Labour inspection pertinent to labour standards were increased. Specifically, it started functioning as an independent body. Its representatives received the right to enter without warning to any company and check the labour safety and the fulfilment of the Labour Code provisions. It is expected that by the end of 2021 there will be the first report by the Labour inspection. Yet, the organizational changes of the status and capacities of the Labour inspection changed the strategy of the CSOs in this domain. Previously, they were

trying to advocate for better working conditions, while currently they monitor the Labour inspection's activities and progress in this field.

Moldova

Priorities of the WG5 in Moldova included the issues of social policies, labour market, social rights and dialogue, and the impact of the Covid-19 on these domains. In October 2021, Moldova's government, the ILO, the National Trade Union Confederation, and the National Confederation of Patronage (employers) signed a memorandum of understanding on the implementation of the Decent Work Program for 2021-2024. Being based on the 2030 Developing agenda, the program envisages the increase of employment level and reduction of the skills gap. The program has three major objectives, namely inclusive employment for youth, effective labour protection, and improved social dialogue.

It was confirmed that the social dialogue between continues to be an essential issue during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was also emphasized that the legislation reforms are the main tools to improve the labour market situation. In spring 2021, Moldova ratified the Occupational Health Services Convention (No. 161) which can be interpreted as the success of the trade unions. It will enter in force for Moldova on 25 May 2022. It envisages the implementation of the Occupational Health Service which is to contribute to the improvement of medical care for workers, working conditions, and workers' health. Moreover, it will address such issues as accurate identification of occupational diseases, sickness with temporary disability, and injuries at work. Another important aspect to work on is the improvement of the labour inspections system.

In general, Moldova faces deficits pertinent to the spheres of healthcare and education. It is merely caused by the payment level and work environment. In July 2021, the National Trade Union Confederation and the National Confederation of Patronage (employers) signed a memorandum of understanding in which they agreed on the need to change the legislative framework about the revision of the guaranteed minimum wage in the real sector through collective bargaining between social partners at the national level.

Still, Moldovan society suffers from a high level of emigration, informality in the economy, and unemployment. These issues need to be resolved through social dialogue

Ukraine

In the case of Ukraine, the main issues at stake were the Covid-19 pandemic, unemployment, and emigration. The pandemic caused an increase in the number of unemployed. The situation also demonstrates that remote work cannot prevent or reduce unemployment. Moreover, late salary payments became common practice in 2021.

The vaccination of the population started in February 2021 in Ukraine. At the end of November, almost one-third population received the first dose of the vaccine and almost 27 percent were fully vaccinated. In Fall 2021, the vaccination trend was increasing. It was merely caused by the restrictive measures introduced by the authorities. Specifically, since late October 2021 public

transport can be used only by those who possess vaccination certificates or a test no older than 72 hours. Moreover, since 8 November 2021, the compulsory vaccination applies for those employed in central authority bodies and their territorial units, local administrations and their structural divisions, and educational institutions of all levels regardless of their type and form of ownership. It was reported that some representatives of these categories demanded to solve the problem with compulsory vaccination. Yet, the perspective to get unemployed because of their Covid-19 status stimulated many representatives of the above categories to get vaccinated.

It was reported that some projects of reforms pertinent to social dialogue and labour legislation are currently but not approved. In the context of the WG5 activities, a study on the pandemic impact on Ukraine's tourism as well as two further projects were mentioned. One of them deals with the decrease of the gender gap while another one focuses on the improvement of social dialogue in the local context.

Part III

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the information received from the WG5 national coordinators and representatives of the EU-based CSOs, the following conclusions can be made:

- ✓ There is a demand for a stronger and coherent social dialogue in each of the EaP countries, while all of them face deficits in the areas covered by the WG5 agendas;
- ✓ Despite the crucial role of social dialogue for economic sustainability and resilience, the WG5 agendas remain underrepresented in the domestic policies and international integration processes;
- ✓ There is a need for a more targeted comprehensive support of the CSOs dealing with the WG5 agendas to ensure their effective participation in policy development and reform monitoring, and, where necessary, counter the non-supportive, repellent, or even repressive actions by the states.

The author of this report proposes the SMART criteria for the improvement and strengthening of the WG5 performance

1. Specific - the WG5 priorities should be based on the common challenges the EaP face in the domains of social dialogue, labour migration, and employment policies, taking into account the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Measurable - regular evaluation and monitoring of the state policies is an essential element for effective addressing of the existing problems in the areas related to the WG5 agendas;
3. Achievable - feasibility of the WG5 priorities tailored to the specific EaP countries is essential for the effectiveness of the endeavors related to the WG5 agendas;
4. Relevant - the activities should correspond to the current challenges, being both region- and country-specific. It implies consideration of the Covid-19-related issues, the political situation in the countries, and practicalities of the proposed solutions vis-a-vis the actual situation of its addressees based on the principle "help as much as you can but do no harm";

5. Time-bound - all the activities should be structured based on feasible short-, mid-and long-time results and accompanied by regular performance assessments.

In practical terms, the following results can be expected:

- enhancement of the capacity-building and professionalism of the CSOs in the EaP region, including EaP CSF members and their partner organizations, to make them more capable of effectively handling different planning, development, advocacy, and watchdog processes in their countries;
- identification of multidimensional linkages between different stakeholders, representing authorities, businesses, CSOs, academia, and think tanks, and applying their potentials, with a more welcoming and supportive approach towards new and lesser-known organizations;
- establishment of closer networking not only within the WG5 member organizations but also between other EaP CSF WGs.

In addition, a crucial role belongs to WG5's **visibility** linked with the information, monitoring, and campaigns. For that reason, it is suggested to implement position papers, country updates, and similar documents as a primary tool to bring domestic and international attention to the issues that fall within the scope of the WG5 agendas, particularly when it comes to the EU-level stakeholders. Online media and social networks also proved their efficiency, particularly in the countries where CSO activities are more challenging. It is therefore essential to increase the number of relevant conceptual publications pertinent to the WG5 agendas produced under the EaP CSF architecture. The demand for these types of publications and analyses is substantially higher, as they may serve as one of the most effective ways to address the relevant issues at the EU level. Collaborative synergies with other relevant stakeholders (like business, think tanks, or academia) could create more potential for a more systemic approach towards these campaigns. Furthermore, for many CSOs that collect relevant information, particularly those lesser-known ones and/or with insufficient capacities for processing this information, it could be an effective tool to distribute this information and address specific issues in a more systemic and overarching way before a wider audience of relevant decision-makers.

In addition to the recommendations expressed by the national WG5 coordinators and representatives of the EU-based member organizations, the following specific **recommendations** are suggested for WG5:

- More actively use mutual capacities and the potential of the current networks to expand the training, knowledge exchange, and analysis to practically address the existing challenges related to social dialogue, migration, and employment policies.
- Mainstream the problems of vulnerable groups, including those with multiple characteristics (women, IDPs, minorities, people with disabilities, etc.) to increase their participation in the labour market through training and knowledge activities.
- Increase the number of thematic analytical publications addressing the WG5 agendas and enhance their visibility at the domestic and the EU levels.

- All endeavors within the WG5 agendas should be consistent and pertinent, as well as further supported by the WG5 members on their own when the donor funds ended or are not available anymore.

The report was compiled by Kiryl Kascian, EaP CSF WG5 Consultant