

## **Working Group 1 (XII 2012 – IX 2013)**

### **Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance and Stability**

Two working group coordinators were elected at the Stockholm Civil Society Forum (Krzysztof Bobinski from Unia & Polska (Poland) and Tamar Chugoshvili from Georgian Young Lawyers Association (Georgia). After several months Ms. Chugoshvili went to work for the Georgian government and Anar Mammadli from the Election Monitoring and Democratic Studies Centre (Azerbaijan) was elected at the WG1 meeting in Brussels in an interim role.

The working group as a whole met in Brussels in May just before the Platform 1 meeting between EU and member state diplomats and EaP officials. The Platform meeting was attended by Boris Navasardian (Armenian National Platform coordinator and Media sub group head) and Krzysztof Bobinski as well as Natalya Yerashevich, the head of our secretariat.

The working group while in Brussels participated in a conference attended by Jerzy Pomianowski from the newly established European Endowment for Democracy, Jeff Lovitt, a former steering committee member and Orysia Lutsevich a former Bosch fellow at Chatham House in London.

Apart from sub group activities the WG concentrated on watching elections in Armenia in February and sought through protests to react to civil rights infringements in Azerbaijan where a presidential election is to be held on October 9<sup>th</sup>. The group is also planning to participate in election monitoring in the Georgian presidential election on October 26<sup>th</sup>. The group lobbied for the European parliament to send election observers to Azerbaijan (originally the Parliament decided not to go) and sought through personal interventions and media articles to explain to observers from European parliamentary bodies their responsibility for present an honest and fair picture of the elections they are sent to observe. Representatives of the group also raised concerns about the human rights situation in Euronest meetings in the European Parliament. The elections sub group also facilitated an election observation initiative in Azerbaijan which won the support of the EU delegation in Baku. However the decision to provide the funding was taken so late as to make the project impossible to implement. The elections sub group was also dismayed to learn that an observation project presented by the Election Monitoring and Democratic Centre for the Azerbaijani election was rejected by the EU delegation.

The situation in the WG subgroups was uneven. The judiciary reform sub group is in a state of hibernation because of a lack of support from members of the working group. This is an important issue for the Eastern Partnership and it is hoped that this situation will be rectified. The human rights sub group also showed few signs of life after the resignation of Marek Svoboda. The media sub group headed by Boris Navasardian from the Yerevan Press Club concentrated on media monitoring in the region providing inputs into the European Integration Index and elsewhere. The anti-corruption sub group, which appears to be staffed

mainly by colleagues from Transparency International, was involved in a major consultative session in Chisinau with the Home Affairs section of the European Commission which is taking over responsibility for anti corruption issues in the EaP. The visa facilitation group will be presenting the results of its work at the Forum. A priority for the group is now to secure the lifting of visas for Moldova. The Local Government and Public Administration Reform sub group has been busy in the second half of the term in lobbying for fiscal decentralization in the EaP countries working in close cooperation with the Association of Local Democracy Agencies which is a European group of local government associations. However it is doing nothing about public administration reform at the central level which is a major challenge in all the countries. This is a problem which has to be addressed at the Forum.

During the year proposals were made about initiating a sub group devoted to issues related to the areas in the EaP which are disputed and where confidence building measures are in train but where also nongovernmental organizations are excluded for political reasons from main stream activities as represented by the CSF. There is also an initiative to establish a sub group concentrating on issues of minorities. The CSF is also missing a sub group which would like at gender issues including women's rights. These are all issues which the Working Group will address in Chisinau.