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УСХОДНЯГА ПАРТНЁРСТВА

Short Activity Report 2011-2012 Belarusian National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum

Belarusian National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum has been actively operating during the last working year of the Forum 2011-2012. National platform in Belarus has numerous challenges in expanding its role and activities because of extremely passive participation of Belarusian authorities in the Eastern Partnership initiative and also unsolved political problems in Belarus-EU relations (political prisoners, repressions against representatives of opposition, Civil Society and independent media, EU sanctions against top Belarusian bureaucracy, diplomatic scandals etc.). Despite all these problems local CSOs see Eastern partnership and other relevant formats of Belarusian-European cooperation as promising opportunities to bring closer reforms and positive social and political development of Belarus.

Nowadays Belarusian NP includes 58 civil society organizations and initiatives which signed Memorandum on cooperation and have status of permanent participant of the National Platform.

Conferences of the National platform – key format of the platform communication

During the last year of EaP CSF activities participants of Belarusian National platforms met at least three times in conference or round table format.

December 2011

Round table “Eastern Partnership and Belarusian Civil Society: new challenges and perspective of development” was organized in Minsk on December 20, 2011. It was aimed to conclude some results of the last EaP CSF Forum in Poznan (November 2011) and also to build some vision of possible development of this initiative in Belarusian context.

One of the key issues discussed at the round table was popularizing ideas and activities of the National platform among Belarusian CSOs and expanding number of organizations that signed Memorandum of cooperation initiated in October 2011 just before the Poznan Forum at the conference of the National platform. Institutional development of the platform as well as its priority areas of development were actively debated at this round table by both experts and CSO representatives.

June 2012



The Conference of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum took place in Minsk on June 29-30, 2012. Belarusian CSOs assigned their leaders, discussed the strategy of its development and adopted a series of final resolutions on the most pressing issues of today.

During the Conference The Coordination Committee of the National Platform from 7 members was formed by open vote, as well as the head of the new composition of the Committee for the coming year was elected.

It had been expected that the Concept of Development of the National Platform would also be adopted at the Conference. However, under the discussion of the draft of the Concept, proposed by the International Consortium "EuroBelarus", some comments and proposals from the Conference' participants were pronounced, and therefore the adoption of this document has been postponed until the next Conference of the Belarusian EaP CSF National Platform, which was scheduled to hold in autumn. Based on the decision of the Conference, the Working Concept Group of the NP was established. In a few months it should take into account the wishes and recommendations of all stakeholders, resulting in a draft of the new Concept of Development of the National Platform.

During the Conference, civil society organizations of Belarus have been defined, recommended by the NP to take part in the forthcoming meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in Stockholm. The National Platform recommended the list of 32 organizations for further selection.

Another outcome of the Conference was the adoption of several final resolutions: "On the release of political prisoners", "On the European dialogue on modernization with Belarusian society" and "On ensuring the freedom of the electoral process".

November 2012

How to develop the National Platform of EAP CSF, what should be done for that and which guidelines to follow – these were the issues discussed at the one-day conference of the Belarusian National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum in Minsk on November 16, 2012, which was devoted to the annual meeting of EAP CSF that will be held for the fourth time in Stockholm at the end of November.

At the last NP conference in November 2012 Concept of Development of the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum was adopted.

Among the priorities in the strategic development of the National Platform, the concept reads expansion of operations of the National Platform activity for settlement of world-wide problems not only within the scale of the Eastern Partnership, but within the European Dialogue on Modernization with Belarusian society and other borderline formats and topics of



Belarusian and European cooperation where the presentation of civil society position is also required.

The conference resulted in adoption of the resolution by its participants, where they declared their intention to promote the expansion of the EU-Belarusian cooperation and also stated that the main obstacle to the development of such cooperation is the attitude and the actions of the Belarusian authorities, including holding political prisoners, repressions of social and political activists, absence of the

will to cooperation on signing of agreements related to the launch of the visa dialogue and small cross-border movement, despite the respective proposals of the European Union.

Besides, during the conference special attention was attached to the goals and objectives of the Belarusian delegation at the fourth meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum at the end of November in Stockholm.

Statements of the National Platform

During the reporting year several NP statements have been published as a reaction to some important social and political developments in Belarus:

- *Statement on the diplomatic conflict between the authorities of Belarus and the European Union (March 2, 2012)*
- *Statement on the fact that the death penalty for the case of a terrorist act that took place in April 2011 at the Minsk metro station (April 11, 2012)*
- *Statement on the issuing of non-grata status by the Republic of Lithuania to Belarusian anti-nuclear activists (September 27, 2012).*

Unfortunately most of the statements are more reaction of Belarusian CSOs to some unaccepted developments in Belarus aimed to pay attention of the society and international community to these facts than the way to change situation to a better.

Unique case of influence

Unfortunately due to complicated social and political environment Belarusian CSOs are limited with their opportunities to be more involved into EaP processes. At the same time some possibilities are open - mostly in advocacy field. One of the most promising cases of that is activity of Belarusian Public Bologna committee which acts on the basis of Belarusian EaP CSF National Platform and unites more than 10 CSOs and also experts in Higher education.



Representatives of the expert community and a number of CSOs decided to establish the Bologna Committee in order to develop country roadmap on integration of the Belarusian higher education in the Bologna process. The Committee succeeded to achieve development of Alternative Report on the state of the Belarusian

higher education inclusion which was included in the agenda of the Bologna process summit in 2012, along with an official report of the Ministry of Education of Belarus. As a result of it Belarus' accession to the Bologna process was postponed for two more years and conditioned by a series of reforms and, above all, non-use of higher education as a tool of political repression. Now Belarus has two years to prepare itself to a more responsible inclusion into Bologna process, which can be started via more active dialogue of state and non-state experts and stakeholders.

During year 2012 Public Bologna Committee also implements monitoring of academic freedoms violations in Belarus. This monitoring is aimed at retrieving the actual information about the situation on academic freedoms in Belarusian Higher Education Institutions. The Monitoring is implemented by the students and teachers in all the regional centers of Belarus as well as the other cities. For more information about activity of Public Bologna Committee, please, see their website www.bolognaby.org

European Dialogue on Modernization with Belarusian society – new opportunities for the National Platform



EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle on March 29, 2012 launched the European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarusian society at a meeting in Brussels with representatives of Belarusian civil society and political opposition. It is a multi-stakeholder exchange of views and ideas between the EU and representatives of the Belarusian civil society and political opposition on necessary reforms for the modernisation of Belarus and on the related potential

development of relations with the EU, as well as possible EU support in this regard. The dialogue will focus on key areas for EU-Belarus relations: political reform; reform of the judiciary and people-to-people contacts; economic and sector policy issues; and trade and market reform.

From the very beginning of EDM numerous representatives of CSOs participating in the National Platform activities have taken active part in EDM consultations and meetings of working groups.

Representatives of the Belarusian National Platform for the EaP CSF are ready to become the customers, inspectors and performers of the expert proposals created under the Dialogue on Modernization. This announcement was made during a round table, "The program of development of the European Dialogue on Modernization with Belarus", which was jointly organized by the National EaP CSF platform and the EU Delegation in Minsk on October 17, 2012.

Following this intention NP Coordination Committee in November 2012 addressed the letter to EU delegation with expression of interest of the National Platform to be involved into activities of EDM coordination group as one of key stakeholders of EDM process.