



# EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

## The Azerbaijan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

Annual report , 2013

### Brief information

ANP combines 51 NGOs. Six organizations in the Platform represent regions and 45 NGOs are from the center. They are working in groups: 16 organizations in WG 1; 11 organizations in WG 2; 8 organizations in WG 3; 12 organizations in WG 4 and 4 organizations in WG 5. Additionally, 60 % of Platform members are operating within 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> thematic groups. Currently, ANP has become the leading active Alliance of CSOs in public life of Azerbaijan. The prominent NGOs of the country are gathered in this Platform.

### Activities

#### Institutional and organizational activities:

During this period three General Assembly and two elections of the National Platform were held. They are as following:

- The General Assembly of the National Platform organized on December 12, 2012, February 09, 2013 and September 30, 2013.
- The Management Board of the National Platform was formed at the fourth General Assembly of the National Platform held in December 12, 2012.
- On February 09, 2013, the fifth General Assembly of the National Platform was arranged and the updated version of the Statue of NP was adopted, including 2013 Action Plan was ratified.
- At the sixth General Assembly held in September 30, 2013 the Strategy of Civil Society Forum for 2014-2016 years was discussed and approved.
- On June 02, 2013, the National Platform identified the short list of Platform members through ballot voting who will attend to Chisinau Forum.
- On August 20, 2013, the National Platform identified the delegation members through ballot voting to attend the Vilnius Summit.

#### Program activities:

During this period four statements were issued on behalf of the National Platform. They are as following:

- On January 28, 2013 –National Platform made statement on protesting against freedom violence and increase of political repression in Azerbaijan.
- On February 12, 2013 –National Platform published statement on draft amendments to

the legislation regulating the activities of NGOs and civil society organizations in Azerbaijan.

- On April 04, 2013 –National Platform made statement about the detention of members of NIDA Civic Movement.
- On May 21, 2013 –National Platform made statement on protesting against the participation of NGOs representing conflict and disputed territories at the next Civil Society Forum.

#### **Meetings and discussions:**

- On February 15, 2012 – Members of the National Platform attended to the information session for grant calls on human rights and freedoms of the European Commission.
- On March 13, 2013- Members of the National Platform met with Ambassador of the European Union, Mr. Roland Cobia to discuss the latest developments in the field of human rights in Azerbaijan.
- On April 22, 2013 – Members of the National Platform met with EU Ambassador, Mr. Roland Kobia to discuss the pre-election situation in the Azerbaijan as well as 2012 ENP Progress report on Azerbaijan.
- On 03 May, 2013 – Members of the National Platform met with Mr. Štefan Füle, Commissioner responsible for enlargement and European Neighbourhood policy at the Baku Office of the European Union.
- On May 10, 2013 – “Democratic Reformers Youth” Public Union, the member organization of the National Platform, organized international conference with participation of think tanks network of youth represented in the Eastern Partnership in Baku funded by Youth Foundation under the President of the Azerbaijan Republic.
- On June 04, 2013 – Members of the National Platform participated at the next grant calls information session on rural development of the European Commission.
- On August 28, 2013 – members of the National Platform were invited to informal farewell meeting with Ambassador Mr. Roland Kobia and the parties discussed Azerbaijan-EU relations.
- On September 03, 2013 – members of the National Platform were invited to participate at the discussion dedicated to EU engagement with civil society and local authorities in 2014-2020 document.
- On October 01, 2013 – members of the National Platform were invited to meet with Mr. Gunnar Wiegand, Director of Russia, Eastern Neighbourhood, Central Asia and OSCE, European External Action Service.

#### **Workshop and training:**

- On May 19, 2013 – National Platform organized in the frame of EU-funded Effective System of Public Finance Control Project, first seminar on the topic of Public Finance Management and Public Participation in Baku.
- On June 04, 2013 – Members of the National Platform participated at the next grant calls information session on rural development of the European Commission.
- On July 2013 – National Platform organized in the frame of EU-funded Effective System of Public Finance Control Project, second seminar on the topic of Public Finance Management and Public Participation in Ganja.
- On June 24, 2013 – CESD, member organization of the National Platform has organized

Strategic Visioning and Planning in CSOs for civil society organizations in Baku, Azerbaijan. The workshop was supported through a Grant Agreement signed between the External Actions of European Union and Regional Environmental Center (REC), Moldova. CESD is local partner of REC in the project.

- On August 18, 2013 – National Platform organized in the frame of EU-funded Effective System of Public Finance Control Project, third seminar on the topic of Public Finance Management and Public Participation in Shaki.
- On August 22, 2013 – CESD, member organization of the National Platform held its next workshop series which titled as “Managing staff and volunteers in CSOs in Azerbaijan” in Baku, Azerbaijan. The workshop was supported through a Grant Agreement signed between the External Actions of European Union and Regional Environmental Center (REC), Moldova. CESD is local partner of REC in the project.

### **Researches:**

Research Paper on Azerbaijan’s Accession to the WTO has been published within the “Strengthening capacities of the National Platforms (NP) of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF)” and distributed.

What are the essence and main functions of the World Trade Organization (WTO)? What modifications will Azerbaijan’s accession to the WTO claimed to be with no alternative bring to our country? Why do WTO negotiations, Azerbaijan has been involved for 13 years, still fail? What are advantages and disadvantages of WTO membership? These questions are not fundamental for us and the point is that here WTO Accession does not have alternative. This policy paper has been prepared to seek answers to the above questions, as well as an immense pile of questions that remain unanswered. The interjections, which were mentioned during a leading European TV discussion on the WTO, might be the best and the simplest ideas and explanations about this organization: “The WTO is a table. People sit round the table and negotiate.” Indeed unlike any other institution, the WTO does not set out specific provisions: they are sorted out through discussions and negotiations. So, this document deals with what questions and how they are discussed “around that table”.

Full paper is available at:

[http://eap-csf.az/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CESD\\_WTO\\_Accession\\_Paper.pdf](http://eap-csf.az/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CESD_WTO_Accession_Paper.pdf)

### **Publication:**

Brochures on Eastern Partnership and Azerbaijan EU cooperation have been published within the “Strengthening capacities of the National Platforms (NP) of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF)” and distributed among different stakeholders.

Brochures and leaflets have been published and distributed among more than 1000 stakeholders including EU institutions, universities, libraries, think tanks, government agencies, international institutions and etc. Both files have been posted at the National Platform web-site as well: [www.eap-csf.az](http://www.eap-csf.az)

### **Outcomes:**

ANP acquired following outcomes in the last one year:

- ANP has expressed its position over violations of fundamental freedoms by issuing statements and appeals. During this period, 3 statements and 2 appeals are being adopted on behalf of the Platform.

The English versions of these documents are posted as a link below:

- ANP became the key partner of the European Union Delegation in Azerbaijan. The Platform attended to consultations for several numerous times under initiative of the EU Delegation. Besides, the experts of the Platform took part in various thematic meetings as well.

-ANP won the grant on “Public Finance Management Policy” which is implemented with financial support of the European Union. The member organizations of the Platform carried out different projects funded by the European Union.

- The institutional website of ANP was launched: [www.eap-csf.az](http://www.eap-csf.az)

### **Challenges:**

ANP has faced following challenges:

- The access of the Platform to necessary resources in order to realize planned activities ( thematic workshops and organization of forums, conduction of monitoring, preparation of reports and other related actions) is still limited;

- The access of the Platform to essential technical resources (office, personnel staff, trainings for members and other related actions) for its institutional development is still limited;

- The necessary information resources (related to the activities of government, about the documents adopted by the government, and other similar actions) on thematic directions is still unreachable and insufficient for the Platform;

- The Platform has weak cooperation relationships with Azerbaijan Delegation in Euronest Parliamentary Assembly as well as relevant state agencies over thematic directions;

- The Platform is facing difficulty to gain access to media outlets, particularly TVs in order to express its alternative positions;

### **Concerns:**

#### **ANP has following concerns:**

- The “Caviar Diplomacy” policy of Azerbaijan government towards European institutions, especially Parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe is being pursued;

- The energy security policy of Azerbaijan government occupies top place in cooperation with the European Union as opposed to democratic changes and respect to human rights in the country;

- The continuous initiatives of the government on further tightening the legislation in the field of restricting the scope of civil society activities;

- The involvement of some NGOs ( those who mainly receive grants from the Council on State Support) representing civil society under support of the Council on State Support to NGOs under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the initiatives that defend the position of government;

- The increase in the amount of funds flowing to GONGOs (the name given to quasi-governmental NGOs) via state openly and secretly;
- The continuous pressures and influences to the active members of ANP, essentially to the National Coordinator of the Platform aimed taking ANP to the control of government is increasing;

### **Expectations**

- Increase in the range of discussions regarding the current situation in Azerbaijan by the European Union, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, including adoption of decisions and statements that support democratic camp;
- Close cooperation ties and joint consultations between the European Union Delegation in Azerbaijan (after accreditation of a new ambassador) and ANP;
- Organization of regular meetings with the representatives of the European Union institutions and members of ANP upon their arrival to Baku;
- Establishment of trilateral (ANP, GoA and EU delegation in Azerbaijan) working groups and permanent cooperation platform, and mediation the dialogue amongst member of ANP and the representatives of Euronest parliamentary as well as state agencies on thematic directions;
- Increase the technical and financial support of the European Union in the direction of development of democracy and organization of free and fair elections in Azerbaijan;
- Provision of political support to the activity of observation mission and monitoring group amid upcoming presidential elections in Azerbaijan in line with CSF.

**30 September 2013**