



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
Civil Society Forum



## **Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

The Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership meeting in Chisinau for its fifth annual meeting before the summit of the Eastern Partnership in Vilnius on November 29 reiterates its support for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as an effective and peaceful mechanism of promoting democratic reforms including the establishment of the rule of law and sustainable market mechanisms in the six EaP countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The Forum hopes that the Association Agreement (AA) with Ukraine will be signed at the summit in Vilnius on condition that progress is achieved by Kyiv on issues of selective justice and other relevant reforms. Also the forum looks to the summit to initial similar agreements with Georgia and Moldova. The Forum regrets that the President of Armenia withdrew from such an agreement in favour of the Russian backed Customs Union and hopes that Armenia will return to a Europe oriented policy in the foreseeable future.

The Forum respects the right of democratically elected governments to choose their partners and allies in accordance with their national interests. However it rejects attempts by Russia to persuade EaP members to turn away from the EU through economic and political pressure and as has happened in Ukraine and Moldova and by pure force as in recent moves to encroach on Georgian territory. Such pressure from a country which is a member of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE) is unacceptable. It is good that the European Institutions are preparing ways of alleviating the losses which such pressure may cause.

The progress on AAs by some of the EaP countries should not cause major differences in the treatment of these countries by the EU. It would run counter to the basic principles of the EaP if the European Union was from now on to busy itself with monitoring the implementation of AAs in some countries and to lose sight of the need to continue to support the democratic reform process in others.

The EaP must retain its multilateral character and continue to treat the partner countries on an equal basis. Indeed those countries which have fallen behind in the drive to put AAs into place now need more attention than before. We note that beatings of oppositionists began in Armenia when the President decided to turn to the Customs Union. Belarus shows little sign of wanting to respect European democratic norms and in Azerbaijan the number of political prisoners has grown in the run up to forthcoming presidential elections. However the Civil Society Forum, however stresses the importance of the European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarusian society as well as the necessity to preserve its multi-stakeholders nature.

The Vilnius summit must continue to focus on the best way of supporting the reform process in the EU's eastern neighbourhood and in all the EaP countries. There can be no better way of securing the EU's security than by continuing to work for the establishment of legitimate regimes and prosperous societies on its eastern borders. Those EU member states who do



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not understand this demonstrate a short sightedness which, in the not too distant past, has led to tragic calamities in Europe.

Only those countries which respect human rights including a free press, which seek to combat corruption and which chose their leaders and law makers in a free and fair way are inherently stable. The European Union needs inherently stable, free and prosperous neighbours in its eastern region. This is a message from Chisinau which the EaP summit in Vilnius must not forget.

## **ANNEXES**

### **Working Group recommendations**

#### **Working Group 2 – Economic Integration and Convergence with EU legislation:**

We call on the EU and EaP governments to stimulate a public discussion on the consequences for the EaP countries of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area agreements (DCFTA), as well as in EU member states. This must inform and prepare enterprises and business institutions for upcoming changes.

The lack of an open and wide public discussion on DCFTA in EaP countries, as well as in EU member states is a problem. Especially for enterprises and business environment institutions. Trade and investment between the EU and EaP countries will continue to grow. For some EaP countries a DCFTA would allow for the legal enforcement of reforms in business environment as well as a further increase in trade and investment as part of EU–EaP relations. The output in some sectors would grow under the DCFTA with the EU and in some sectors it would decrease. This public discussion has to build a strong coalitions of those who will benefit from the upcoming changes. They will be natural allies of the EaP and its long term goals.

We call on the EU to support SMEs and institutions supporting the enabling environment for SMEs in the EaP countries. This requires the creation and development of mechanisms of SME support in EaP countries with specific attention to the local conditions and needs. It is important to create effective formulas of EU financial support distribution for SME's. If there is a lack of efficient support mechanisms valuable EU assistance might be lost. This we cannot afford.

The Forum will take every possible action toward strengthening participation of civil society representatives in relevant activities aimed at bringing the EaP and the EU economies closer. This would also include providing the EU with information about problems and fostering positive attitude towards the matter. Civil Society is a vital and indispensable element of the EaP, which long-term goals cannot be achieved without engaging the civil society especially in the economic field.

#### **Working Group 3 – Environment, Climate Change and Energy Security**



In the light of the Rio+20 Outcome Document “The Future We Want”, we draw attention to the fact that until now the Eastern Partnership program has paid little attention to problems and challenges, whose solution will define the future of the humankind. These include:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Global climate change
- Sustainable energy
- Green economy

We stress importance of promoting the principles of good environmental governance in a consistent manner, as well as applying legally binding obligations in this context.

It is also important to guarantee effective mechanisms of the Aarhus convention implementation, as well as public involvement in the processes related to environmental and energy programs, including EU projects implemented in EaP countries.

We demand the introduction of legislation in EaP countries which complies with the Espoo Convention and the revision of the decisions on constructing new nuclear power blocks and extending the exploitation of the existing ones in Ukraine and Belarus, which have been taken in violation of the Convention.

We draw attention to the prevalence of short-term economic interests promoted by financial institutions, including the international ones, which leads to irrevocable losses of natural resources, social tensions and long-term economic losses.

The role of biodiversity and ecosystem services for society and of civil society organizations for nature conservation is crucial. The green economy needs to be acknowledged as a corner stone for development and biodiversity conservation, preserving the natural capital which provides competitive advantages and unique opportunities for regional development and job creation.

It is important that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the largest investor in the EaP region, revises its Energy Operational Policy taking into consideration civil society input and following environmental friendly approaches.

We call upon EU and EaP countries to show the necessary political will within the UNFCCC process and adopt a new ambitious climate change agreement based on equity principles in 2015.

#### **Working Group 4 - Contacts between people**

##### **Youth policy:**

We consider the Eastern Partnership a valuable and an important tool for developing youth policies in the region and a concrete way of promoting them at the European level. In order



to strengthen the voice of young people in the Eastern Partnership region and to increase the role of youth in the European policies process, the Forum calls on the EU:

- ✓ to encourage youth involvement during the consultations related to EaP region as equal partners, which includes joint research, publications, evaluation and elaboration of policy papers, etc.
- ✓ to foster a dialogue between governments and the youth sector in the promotion of co management principles of involving youth sector in decision making processes and monitoring of implementation of youth policies;
- ✓ to create wider opportunities for youth from the EaP in order to participate actively in European Programmes for young people( ex. Erasmus +, etc.).
- ✓ Increasing information dissemination on Erasmus+ and other EU programs in EaP countries and ensuring transparent mechanisms of national multipliers rotation;
- ✓ to support the idea of organising annual Youth Side Events of EaP CSF, as the platform for discussing, sharing and evaluating experiences / expertise related to youth issues in our countries;

And national authorities:

- ✓ to support youth inclusion in the process of planning, adopting and monitoring of youth policies on national and local level;
- ✓ to start the process of recognition of non-formal education and youth work based on the good practices, standards and recommendations developed by European Union and Council of Europe;
- ✓ to take into account positive experience and lessons learned in the countries of EaP and the EU on developing policies and regulation on youth work and volunteering;
- ✓ to develop evidence-based youth policies in EaP countries and to harmonize youth policies in EaP and EU.

### **Cultural policy:**

The Forum calls all relevant governmental and inter-governmental institutions in the field of culture (local, regional and national authorities, European Commission, EU delegations, Council of Europe, UNESCO etc.) to follow-up and consolidate first steps taken by establishing an independent Eastern Partnership Cultural Foundation which supports, promotes and gives access to cross-border cooperation, networking, capacity building and participative cultural policy reform for sustainable cultural development across the region, and proposes to initiate regular monitoring of the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of Cultural diversity in the EaP countries.

### **Educational policy:**

The Forum calls to create a favourable framework for Lifelong Learning (a legal framework, funding etc.) for providers of non-formal education to ensure the personal, social and



professional fulfilment of all citizens, as well as sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, creativity and innovation, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue.