



## **Participants of the Working Group 2 discussed the economic integration of Ukraine**

On June 12, 2013 at the International Conference "Ukraine-Belarus: new opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation" in Chernihiv was held the meeting of Working Group 2 "Economic integration and convergence with EU policies" of Ukrainian National Platform of the EaP CSF.

Some leading experts of civic organizations joined to the group's meeting. Among them were the representatives of the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, Ukrainian Association of Small and Medium Enterprises "Fortetsya", Ukrainian Foundation for Entrepreneurship Supporting, Polissa Foundation for International and Regional Studies, Bukovyna Agency for Regional Development, Center of European Cooperation and others.

At the beginning of the meeting, the participants were informed on the activities of the WG 2 in the first half of 2013. Particular attention was focused on the revision of the position paper of the WG 2 on SMEs in Eastern Partnership, which was presented at the meeting of the Platform on May 14, 2013.

The participants believe that the Ukrainian authorities knowingly take negative decision on European integration of Ukraine. However, most participants expressed hope that Ukraine will sign an Association Agreement with the European Union already this year. Thus, besides several aspects of the current WP 2 were considered possible working formats in case of a positive or negative result of signing the Agreement.

While discussing the potential of the presented organizations participants stopped at one of the priorities of economic integration and convergence with EU policies, in particular on supporting small and medium businesses. Another issue of the discussion was effective mechanisms for the distribution of funds from the European Union.

The deputy of the Ukrainian Parliament of fifth convocation Lyubov Stasiv said: "Small and medium businesses in Ukraine are in its infancy." Also, the expert described the realities of implementation of the national policy in the context of functioning of Ukrainian Fund for Entrepreneurship, which is approved by the government and implements policies and programs to support diverse business by state funds.

The participants agreed that informational and educational campaigns, such as seminars for small and medium businesses are ineffective work tool. "The real investments are needed for real businesses," - said Markiyanyan Zhelyak, head of the Center for European Cooperation.

The issue of approximation to the EU standards was discussed in the context of the national legislation reform based on analytical studies and lobbying proposals developed at the level of legislation.

Also at the event were presented project concepts of WG 2 for the second half of 2013 and was raised



the question of the expediency of forming a positional WG 2 document before the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013.

Moreover, the participants were able to contribute to the discussion at the international conference, which was devoted to the development of cross-border cooperation in the Ukrainian-Belarusian border areas and the experience of the Visegrad Group's countries.