



**Feedback to the proposals for an ENPI Civil Society Facility
From the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership's Civil Society Facility**

31 May 2011

The Steering Committee commends the EU for recognising the importance of civil society in the democratisation and European integration of the countries of the European neighbourhood. In addition the period of consultation for civil society, though brief, is much appreciated. We hope that our six comments below can be taken into account.

1. Working with the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

The EaP CSF has since its launch in November 2009 quickly become a highly effective and legitimate civil society-led initiative, and is the most legitimate body gathering civil society in the EU and eastern Neighbourhood, with the widest reach. It is essential that the EaP CSF plays a full role in the development and implementation of the proposed ENPI CSF. The proposal (mentioned by Ms Alexandra Nerisanu of the EC at the consultation meeting in Brussels on 25 May) that the six National Platform of the EaP CSF be seen as crucial channels of communication in each country, especially in relation to consultations, is welcome.

2. Learn from the IPA CSF

The SC strongly advises the EC to learn the lessons of the IPA CSF. On the whole the IPA CSF has been fairly successful, and includes some excellent feature, such as the Local Advisory Group (LAG) model, which is complimented by an EU-level Programming Committee. Both the eight national LAGs and the PC are made up of a wide range of CSOs.

However the capacity building flagship at the heart of the IPA CSF, the Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) programme, has struggled to maximise its potential. There was not enough consultation with local NGOs in designing the programme; the contractors have not developed partnerships as widely as they could have (both at national and at EU level); and the Local Advisory Groups (LAGs) which give CSOs the chance to guide the programme, in some countries reflect divisions within civil society, rather than overcoming them. The answer in all three cases is that the new ENPI CSF must embody the principles of partnership and openness from the very beginning, or risk a backlash from local NGOs who feel no ownership or respect towards the process.

3. Avoid 'projectisation'

The SC recognises the danger of the 'projectisation' of civil society in the target countries, especially if the calls for proposals are narrow and for short projects. This would increase donor dependency, inhibit CSOs from developing their financial sustainability, and encourage mission drift. A remedy, besides offering core funding, would be to ensure that projects are longer term (3-5 years) and relatively broad in their aims so as to allow applicant organisations flexibility in project design, so as to activities into their organisational missions.

In response to this challenge the EU must support the work of CSOs working to address the Financial Regulation in order to enable EU funding for civil society to be more effective.

4. Russia

The SC is against including Russian civil society as a beneficiary of the ENPI CSF, because:

- I. Russia is not part of the ENP
- II. Russia already has some specific relations with the EU on bilateral basis (EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, Bilateral negotiations on visa liberalization, special programs of the EU covering only Russia as a separate Region etc.)
- III. There simply isn't enough money - the budget of the ENPI Civil Society Facility will be limited, and cover a large number of countries.

The SC does feel that the important work of Russian civil society should be supported and encourages the EU to increase its support in this area. However any such support must not come from budgets intended for the southern and eastern neighbourhoods.

5. Define civil society

The SC strongly believes that while a broad definition of civil society, including trade unions and universities should be used, the private sector should not be included in any definition of civil society, and should not be eligible to apply for funding under the facility.