



## EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

17 June 2011

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum would like to actively encourage the engagement of independent and democratic social partners (trade unions, employers' organisations) in the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries in the structures of the Civil Society Forum - in line with the initial Civil Society Forum Concept Paper that states: "The EESC and its equivalents in partner countries should play a key role, especially regarding business, employment, labour and social issues."

During a meeting in Brussels with representatives of EaP CSF Steering Committee on 5 May 2011, the EESC itself put forward a proposal that the EESC should have 12 reserved delegates in the Civil Society Forum, and that the EESC should be able to appoint three reserved EESC representatives to the Steering Committee. The EESC proposal did not address the representation of the social partners from the Eastern Partnership countries, and the Steering Committee considers this issue to be indispensable to the inclusion of social partners in the Civil Society Forum.

Therefore, the Steering Committee has decided to recommend to the delegates to the Civil Society Forum for consideration (at national platform meetings and thematic working group meetings, then by email voting among those who attended the 2010 CSF event) the following proposal to come into effect at the Poznan Civil Society Forum meeting on 28-30 November 2011:

*- A Social Dialogue Platform will be established comprising both Eastern Partnership participants and EU participants to the annual Civil Society Forum meeting. The platform's members will participate fully in the Forum through the national platforms and thematic working groups but will also have their own working format and agenda with respect to social rights and social dialogue.*

*- The Steering Committee will, in consultation with the EESC, draw up and publish a definition of independent and democratic social partners and criteria for their selection as delegates to the Civil Society Forum. The inclusion at the annual Civil Society Forum meeting of independent social partners from both Eastern Partnership countries and from the EU will be actively encouraged through the national platforms and through solicitation of recommendations from the EESC in recognition of the key role of the EESC, especially regarding business, employment, labour and social issues.*

*- The EESC will be invited to select the social partners from the applications that meet the criteria.*

*- A minimum of 20 independent and democratic social partners will be selected as delegates to the annual Civil Society Forum meeting, of which at least 12 should be from the Eastern Partnership countries (a minimum of two from each country - in the event that there are fewer than two eligible applicants from one of the countries, the Steering Committee will consult with the corresponding national platform to identify additional independent and democratic social partners).*

*- The EU social partners that comply with the definition of independent social partners will be invited to indicate if they are members of the EESC or of any other international association, and are entitled to apply as either an individual organisation or as EESC.*

*- The independent and democratic social partners selected as delegates will be full delegates eligible on the same basis as all other Civil Society Forum delegates for election as working group co-ordinators, national platform co-ordinators, or EU co-ordinators.*

*- Those independent social partners selected as delegates to the annual Civil Society Forum meeting will meet at the annual meeting as members of the Social Dialogue Platform to elect two members of the Steering Committee - one from the EU and one from the Eastern Partnership countries. These two positions will increase the size of the Steering Committee from 17 to 19.*

*- The Social Dialogue Platform will engage actively with the EESC on all matters of common interest, and the two Steering Committee members from the social partners will become the key interlocutors between the Civil Society Forum and the EESC.*

The Steering Committee recognises the importance of engaging with independent and democratic social partners in the EU and in the Eastern Partnership countries, and is committed to working with the EESC to make an extensive outreach to strengthen the inclusion of independent and democratic social partners in the national platforms, working groups, and the whole civil society forum - so that representatives of the social partners can play a full part in the Civil Society Forum.

The Steering Committee welcomes joint projects/initiatives that might be proposed by the EESC or the Civil Society Forum Social Dialogue Platform, and believes that such co-operation based on mutual respect should serve as the basis for future co-operation.