

## Minutes of the Steering Committee (SC) Meeting

3-4 June 2016, Brussels

**In attendance:** Steering Committee members—Siarhei Antusevich, Nastassia Bekish (online), Krzysztof Bobinski, Avaz Hasanov, Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Hovsep Khurshudyan, Ion Manole, Iryna Sushko, Dovile Sukyte, Lasha Tughushi, Yurii Vdovenko, Ulad Vialichka

**Secretariat:** Lidia Gromadzka, Darya Mustafayeva, Vera Rihackova, Natalia Yerashevich

1. The Steering Committee formalised the decisions taken at the previous Steering Committee meetings.  
Based on the decisions taken at the SC meeting on 28-29 January on the election of Mr Vyacheslav Roi as Working Group 5 Coordinator, the Steering Committee has revoked the mandate as a the Steering Committee member (Administrateur) from Mr Vyacheslav Roi on 21 January. Based on the results of the new elections of Working group 5 Coordinator, the Steering Committee approved Mr Siarhei Antusevich as a new Steering Committee member (Administrateur) as of 18 March 2016.
2. After the presentation of the annual accounts of 2015 of the EaP CSF Secretariat by the representative of the DGST company Dr. Michel De Wolf, the annual accounts of the Secretariat, as a Belgian entity, were approved with a recommendation to avoid having debt at the end of the year. The Committee decided to fund-raise to cover the expenses that cannot be covered by the European Commission.
3. It was decided unanimously to extend the contract with DGST as an audit company of the Secretariat. It was recommended to address the issue of delayed submission of the audit report with the company and to include into the contract the provision on penalties in case of such future delays.
4. It was decided to appeal to National Platforms to elect their WG Coordinators as members of WG Councils before the Annual Assembly. In the past council members often have not been delegates of the Forum – thus they do not participate in WG meetings and there is communication gap as they are not included into the communication within the WG. For most of the NPs this will not be a problem, except for the Georgian NP that elects WG Coordinators in the spring. The Georgian NP will consider this matter in the nearest future.  
It was also decided to recommend the NPs to select WG Coordinators from among the delegates who will be attending the Annual Assembly in November 2016, where the first meeting of the WG Council might be happening.
5. It was decided that the election lists for Annual Assembly should be consulted by the WG Council to help WG Coordinators with the information on the applicants from EaP countries starting next year.
6. Regranting  
--the conflict of Interest formulation should be finalized – Vera Rihackova will work with Ulad Vialichka and Hovsep Khurshudyan.  
-- a survey among the members on re-granting will be conducted in the summer – Vera Rihackova and Ulad Vialichka;

-- a presentation on applicants' distribution per country for 2016 re-granting (Iryna Sushko's request) will be shared (presentation from Berlin);

--debate about the Czech MFA co-funding – Ulad Vialichka raised concerns over the selection process and lack of coordination over which projects the Czech side has chosen from the submitted proposals. Suggestions to work for better convergence of the selection process and priorities. Czech MFA funding is, however, uncertain next year as it depends on the approval of the budget of the ministry. Lack of predictability can lead to a similar result in 2016. Further negotiations with Czech counterparts will take place. It is important to jointly decide on mutual priorities and decision-making mechanism in advance.

7. Planning of the Annual Assembly. The Secretariat has provided the update on the contracting of the hotel for the event. It was agreed that the task force will look at the suggestions for the AA that the applicants included into their applications. Then it will discuss the agenda on skype and propose updated draft of the AA program within 2 weeks after SC meeting. The title for the event was finalised "*Building a Common Secure and Democratic Future*". The ideas of having a small opening panel with HR Mogherini and a civil society representative and the idea of having a larger high-level panel were debated. National Platforms were asked to identify suitable candidates for awards to civil society activists. The resolutions committee will be looking at resolutions; the deadline for submitting resolutions will be the morning of the second day of the Assembly.
8. NP regional event. The event in Tbilisi focusing on security should have a sectoral approach and include a panel dedicated to the regranting project Security Alert. The event should include soft security and hard security, as well as the international mechanism and actors ensuring the security. Economic security, energy security, migration and border security were recommended to be incorporated into the agenda. Five members from each EaP country (civil society, experts) (15 from Georgia) will be funded plus 5 external speakers.
9. Selection of attendees for the annual assembly. The Steering Committee finalised the country and Working Group lists; outstanding matters will be solved online.

The issue of proportionality of country quotas in each Working group lists was discussed, as currently the number of each EaP country quota per WG is the same, in spite of the differing number of applications from each country to each WG. No decision was taken on the matter.

The Steering Committee decided not to invite Mr Roi to the Annual Assembly due to the incident during the previous Annual Assembly (AA). The SC voted on that matter with 7 votes for not selecting Mr Roi to attend the AA; 2 votes for inviting him as an observer, 1 vote for selecting him as a participant; and 1 abstention.

#### 10. Communications and Campaigns

It was decided that the issue of visa liberalisation for Georgia and Ukraine requires special attention. #Visafree social media campaign was launched through the Facebook and Twitter pages of the EaP CSF and members. The campaign will continue at least until 10 June (when the JHA Council will meet in Luxembourg) and should also include articles on NPs' and members' websites in solidarity with Georgia and Ukraine. An article on the campaign was posted in Forum News on the EaP CSF website and a corresponding slide was added to the website slider.

On 4 June at the initiative of the Steering Committee members and with the assistance of the Secretariat, a demonstration in support of the visa liberalisation for Georgia and Ukraine was organised in front of European institutions.

Georgian and Ukrainian media covered the protest and main messages from the Steering Committee statement on the issue.

11. It was decided that the statement of the Steering Committee on Armenian Genocide will retain its 'set aside' status which means that it will remain unpublished until such time as the Steering Committee deems appropriate that it be published. Krzysztof Bobinski, Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Hovsep Khurshudyan and Avaz Hasanov were charged to write an explanatory letter to be published on the website. Before sending out the letter it will be shared with the whole SC.
12. Task Force on Nagorno-Karabakh. The Steering Committee further discussed the proposal of creating a task force devoted to fact-finding on the latest fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh. The task force will consist of 3 human rights organisations' representatives that are CSF members but also from other international NGOs (HRW, FIDH) and will be coordinated by the Steering Committee members. It would conduct desk research (examination of documents), field research (fact finding mission, interviews with locals, victims and experts; collecting documents) if necessary (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh), meeting all the relevant stakeholders (politicians, army, media). Two experts will be from the CSF (one from EU members, second - from EaP members). Elena Tonkacheva was suggested as an expert with experience in organising HR monitoring missions in Belarus and Crimea. An expert from People in Need was suggested as another candidate; a third expert will represent a well-known EU-based international organization working in this field. On the basis of the research, the task force would develop and issue a report on the situation with human rights violations during the recent conflict with the recommendations for the OSCE Minsk Group and other international organisations on prevention measures. Report will be run by the Azeri and Armenian National Coordinators, then by the whole SC, however it will not be the SC report but the report of the experts contracted by the EaP CSF.
13. The Steering Committee took a vote of confidence in Ulad Vialichka as a Co-Chair of the Steering Committee. Mr Vialichka had sent in his resignation letter following situation in the SC after the adoption of the Armenian Genocide statement. Eight members voted for, one against and one abstained. It was thus decided that Mr Vialichka will continue as a Co-Chair of the SC.
14. The next SC Meeting. It was provisionally decided that the next meeting will be held on the first week of October in Chisinau in conjunction with the Human rights event of the NPs.

### **Updates from the National Platforms and Working Groups**

Armenia – the country's electoral code was adopted without taking into consideration the dissenting voices; the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe did not take into account civil society recommendations. CSF can react to that. The NP held discussions focused on civilian protection mechanisms in the border areas as well as protection of child institutions in bordering communities. The NP is in the process of updating its regulations. ANP has organized a conference aimed at developing recommendations to contribute to the framework agreement that is in process of

negotiations between Armenia and the EU. During the conference WGs developed recommendations on sectoral issues to be included into the new framework and its vision on how civil society should be included into the agreement.

Azerbaijan – CSOs interest in the annual assembly and the voting for the delegates received high attention. The NP is thinking to change the rule on membership. Currently 7 NP members are members of the advisory body on human rights.

Belarus – The NP adopted the strategic plan for 3 years with 16 thematic priorities. The NP works with EU Delegation on the Roadmap for engagement with civil society. At the meeting of the Bologna follow-up group several members presented the civil society monitoring report. Belarus- EU Human Rights dialogue is quite decorative; civil society looks for entry points to start talking with the government on less sensitive issues.

Georgia - Created four branches of the platform in the regions. Will be producing 15 policy papers; organises big conference with the Government. In Tbilisi in the coming week there will be a meeting with the EESC on the new platform. Election campaigns starts soon. Preparing the security conference of the National Platforms.

Moldova –The NP had a brainstorming on how to work with the EU Delegation and help them negotiate with authorities. The NP organised the conference on youth, including the topic of youth migration. The NP was involved in the Europe Day activities. Discussing how to divide responsibilities between the 3 civil society platforms in country.

Ukraine – New project on Civil Synergy that will fund the EU-Ukraine civil society platform and the EaP CSF Ukrainian NP to strengthen the reforms through public participation. The NP revised the list of members; created criteria for participation. The changes to the statute will be adopted in November. Produced a number of statements.

WG1 – update on an internal debate on optimising WG1, task force to move ahead with the proposals debated

WG2 – WG Council took place, AZ coordinator did not take part, GE coordinator replaced at WG Council, Security conference in July – request to include the economic dimension of security, meetings with representatives of DG NEAR, EEAS, Commission; plans to create an umbrella “EU for business”. Concerns about WG2 applications for regranting; not many applications from some countries. Concrete topics but lack of people. WG2 Council members asked for more clarity on selection of regranting projects. Mostly to avoid situation when NP representative is not able to contribute to evaluation because of his/her organization being one of applicants. Two projects – Increasing capacity of civil servants, and EBRD – Support to UA SMEs were just launched.

WG3 – no major update

WG4 – focus on youth conference in Bratislava, selection of participants, dates 27-28 October, EU participants, experts, trainers and facilitators – some members of the SC will be invited in this capacity.

WG5 – Council meeting took place, update on the discussions.

Adopted: 15 June 2016