

ARMENIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM ANNUAL REPORT

Annual activities report of the Armenian National Platform
October 2013-October 2014

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE PLATFORM

The Armenian National Platform (ANP) of EaP Civil Society Forum was initiated in December 2009 and formally launched on June 7, 2010 as the first national platform from among the EaP countries. Since its establishment, the ANP has become a valuable tool to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the Eastern Partnership. In the year 2013-2014 ANP has evolved and further established itself as a vibrant institution which brings together nearly all the largest and most active NGOs in Armenia. As of October, 2014 there are 197 member CSOs in the Platform. 19 new members have joined ANP in the current year. The institutional evolution of the Platform was one of the priorities of the year. In June, 2013 the Secretariat of the ANP started to function, whose main goal is to enhance the institutional capacities of the Platform and to ensure the legal and technical functioning of the ANP.

BROAD PRIORITIES FOR 2013-2014

1. Strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat of the Armenian National Platform

To ensure the regular and more extensive operation of the Platform via building the institutional capacity of its Working groups, subgroups and Secretariat which will contribute to the effective implementation of the Eastern Partnership priorities in Armenia. This year, the Platform supported strategy development and coalition building, the dissemination of important information related to the Eastern Partnership, as well as tried to contribute to the development of the new format and content of EU-Armenia relations. In April, 2014 the ANP Secretariat received an operating grant from the EU delegation in Armenia, which promoted more consistent operation of the Platform and Secretariat itself. The activities in the reporting year included institutionalization of the ANP Secretariat (office, staff, facilities, equipment); organizational data collection and storage, Technical assistance to the Working Groups and Subgroups of the Platform; Involvement of new organizations with a special focus on those from the regions of the country.

2. Consolidation of CSOs around the EaP agenda

In the reporting year ANP continued its efforts towards consolidation of CSOs around issues in line with EaP priorities. With that in mind, the platform has come up with its official positions regarding some critical issues such as RA's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union, adverse influence of Russian mainstream media in Armenia, etc. ANP also brought together member CSOs in monitoring human rights violations in Armenia and release of statements condemning those incidents. At the same time ANP provided a mediation platform for the involvement of CSOs in development of concepts and roadmaps for future EU-Armenia relations as well as in the development of CSO field in Armenia.

3. Establishment of functioning relations with agents of non-institutional civil society, i.e. civic activists

In the reporting year, the ANP strengthened cooperation with civic activists, informal activists' groups in order engage them in the work of the Platform. These groups have energy, devotion, the ability to be close to the day-to-day needs of people, which in conjunction with the experience and strategic vision of the ANP could give good results, both in raising public awareness and keeping the government accountable before society. This cooperation will lead to more active engagement of the Platform in civic actions in the protection of citizens' rights.



4. Mobilization of pro-European political and CS forces of Armenia

In the absence of an influential pro-European political force, civic activists, some representatives of the academic field together with a few oppositional political figures are the main resource for the formulation of a clearly pro-European political camp. Bearing this in mind, the ANP started consultations trying to establish working relations with those Armenian political circles whose priorities and positions vis-à-vis the situation in Armenia are close to those of the Platform. These efforts played a certain role in the formation of the "European Choice" launched in May 2014 as a platform for representatives of political entities, CSOs and the broader public, for the promotion of a European vector in Armenian politics and the agenda of reforms in the context of EU-Armenia cooperation.

ACTIVITIES

The following activities were carried out in accordance with the above mentioned priorities:

1. Meetings/assemblies/press conferences of EaP CSF Armenian NP

(the meetings of the WGs are reported separately in the WGs annual reports)

- ANP delegates meeting in Aghveran. November 12, 2013. Main issue discussed: strategic approaches of the ANP after the September 3, 2014- strategy paper adopted. Elections for the WG coordinators.
- International conference on "European Integration 2013: EU-Armenia Relations Perspective after the EaP Vilnius Summit" held in Metropol Hotel. December 12, 2013. The main aim of the conference is the formation of a platform for exchange on the perspectives and challenges related to further civil society involvement in the revised EU agenda in Armenia.
- Conference of the Armenian National Platform of the EaP CSF held in Yerevan with 33 participants (member organizations and other interested parties) on December 4, 2013.
- Press Conference of the SCF ANP executive board led by union's board chairperson Boris Navasardian in regard with ANP statement condemning the failure of the policy EU integration carried out by RA government. December 21, 2013 (36 participants.)
- EaP CSF ANP Working Group #1 open session held in Yerevan, with 22 participants (member organizations and other interested parties) on February 1, 2014.
- Conference of the Armenian National Platform of the EaP CSF held in Yerevan with 40 participants (member organizations and other interested parties) on February 8, 2014.
- EaP SCF ANP Delegates Assembly in on February 26, 2014.
- EaP SCF ANP Working Group #1 open session in Yerevan with 31 participants on March 15, 2014.
- Consecutive meeting of the Armenian National Platform of the EaP CSF held in Yerevan with 36 participants (member organizations, media other interested parties) on April 16, 2014.

Working visit of the representatives of Belarusian society forum. April 17-18: During the two-day working visit representatives of the civil society forums of Belarus and Armenia held consultations on the following topics:

- current state of affairs in the civil societies of Belarus and Armenia
- developments around the Eastern Partnership, particularly in connection with the actions of Russia and the situation in Ukraine
- achievements of the Eastern Partnership in the establishment of the Civil Society Forum
- the need for active participation of the national platforms in discussions for the formulation of new strategies of further development of EU-EaP relations
- Founding meeting of the "European Choice" initiative in Yerevan with 36 participants. May 22, 2014
- Open meeting of the Convention of Armenian delegates to CSF Assembly in Yerevan to elect the participants of the 6th General assembly of EaP Civil Society Forum on November 20-21, in Georgia. 32 participants. June 20, 2014.
- Consecutive meeting of the EaP CSF Armenian National Platform held in Yerevan with 41 participants. July 14, 2014



- ANP Working Group 5 organized a workshop in Yerevan titled “Social policies in RA and the EU-RA sector cooperation”. September 29, 2014
- Consecutive Meeting of CSF Armenian National Platform in Yerevan with 38 participants. September 23, 2014
- Meeting of the ANP WG5 in Golden Tulip Hotel. Main issues discussed: social protection system and policies in RA- discussion with officials; Local Planning, Social Services in Communities- discussion with UN officials
- Consecutive meeting of CSF Armenian National Platform in Hrazdan Hotel, Yerevan with 41 participants. October 30, 2014

2. Issuing of the weekly newsletter of the Armenian National Platform (for the whole reporting period)

The special weekly electronic newsletter (in Armenian and in English) was launched in 2010 by Yerevan Press Club and reports on the developments in the EaP and the CSF. The newsletter is posted on the webpage of the Armenia National Platform and distributed among more than 800 subscribers. Now the on-line publication is managed by the ANP Secretariat.

3. Release of official statements, position papers

ANP Statement acknowledging the Easter Partnership Vilnius summit. December 21, 2013
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2013/12/24/issue-155>

ANP statement condemning the prosecution of the political prisoner Shant Harutyunyan and his supporters. February 14, 2014
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2014/02/18/%D5%A9%D5%B8%D5%B2%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B4-160>

EaP ANP statement on the broadcasting of Russian TV channels disseminating misinformation and national grievances, in Armenia. April 7, 2014
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/issue-167>

ANP Statement condemning the attempt of the Armenian National Security Services (NSS) to recruit ANP member Hrayr Manukyan. July 18, 2014
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2014/07/22>

ANP Statement on the incidents along the borderline territories of Armenian, Azerbaijan, and Mountainous Karabakh in July –August 2014. September 24, 2014
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2014/09/24/issue-188>

Statement of Armenian National Platform of EU EaP CSF on the Critical Situation in Northern Iraq.
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2014/08>

ANP Statement regarding the Trial of Shahan Harutyunyan. September 25, 2014.
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/issue-189>

ANP Position on the Decision of the RA Authorities to Join the Customs /Eurasian Economic Union. September 30, 2014
<http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/issue-189>

ANP Statement on the Strategic objectives of EaP CSF ANP after September 3, 2013 <http://eaparmenianews.wordpress.com/2013/11/12/%D5%A9%D5%B8%D5%B2%D5%A1%D6%80%D5%AF%D5%B8%D6%82%D5%B4-149>

4. Involvement of the Platform in the development of strategic documents for EU-Armenia

ANP submitted its Input into the priorities of the roadmap for the future EU-RA cooperation in May, 2014 wherein the CS members presented the risks and challenges for the CS and outlined some implications which should be taken into account when designing the future strategy for EU-Armenia cooperation

5. ANP member organizations continue to play an active part in the dialogue on the reform agenda in the sector of justice and defense.

Particularly, the cooperation with the Ministry of Defense is aimed at ensuring stronger civic control over the armed forces. In this framework some of the ANP member organizations work in close cooperation with non-formal civil activists, being united in "The Army in Reality" initiative.



CHALLENGES

With the accession of the country into the Customs Union, the government is expected to import the model of increased control over civil society. Legislative initiatives being circulated now and discussed with the civil society contain a threat of being “corrupted” after they will come out of the current transparent and consultative process and appear in the Parliament (the space of political decisions). Limiting the consolidation, mobilization and efficiency of civil society may affect the basic freedoms that have been achieved by Armenia, including the freedom of association and freedom of assembly (the latter particularly allowed non-formal civic activists who stand out as a vibrant part of the civil society). Naturally, these prospects pose some serious threats and challenges for the future of the Armenian National Platform.

Another repercussion of the disrupted policy of EU integration is that the ANP as well as civil society in general currently disposes less means and mechanisms to have any visible influence on the government. Understandably, the agenda of EU engagement in Armenia is now less ambitious which may make participation of the civil society institutions and their influence on those initiatives less binding. The consequence of this will unavoidably be a decrease of advocacy resources for civil society - a case in point being the abolition of the civil society –government dialogue format which included experts from ANP member organizations and 22 state officials representing various sectors.

FUTURE PLANS

The Armenian National Platform is planning to enhance its institutional capacities in the coming year as well. Particularly, establishing more functional ties between the member organizations for the effective experience/information sharing as well as implementation of joint initiatives and project will be among the priorities in the coming year. Currently, there are upcoming projects which aim to contribute to the above mentioned objectives, such as the provision of small grants to selected ANP member organizations for targeted research projects, e.g. the survey of ANP members to find out their views and opinions on ANP future activity and political developments in Armenia. Another short-term plan is the organization of regional visits, which would allow the ANP members to meet with CSOs and broader public in the regions of Armenia for awareness raising, advocacy and networking.

