

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

(Brussels, 16-17 November 2009)

RECOMMENDATIONS

WORKING GROUP 2: ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND CONVERGENCE WITH THE EU POLICIES

- 1) CSOs should be recognized by the EU and Eastern Partnership (EaP) partner countries' officials as genuine stakeholders in the EaP. EaP Partner governments should commit themselves to create the necessary institutional and procedural arrangements for efficient operation of social and civil dialogue in their countries.
- 2) Understanding of the objectives of the EaP by the public is essential for the future of the process. Without the support of the civil society the public in the partner countries will not understand and accept the necessary economic and social reforms that may have temporary negative effects on their life.
- 3) The Rule of Law and independence of judiciary are basic conditions for good functioning of the economy, investment and achievement of economic growth.
- 4) CSF supports the core objectives approved by the thematic platform for economic integration and convergence with the EU legislation and its work programme for 2009-2011. CSOs are asking for their involvement in the work of the thematic platform and of the panel on Trade and trade related regulatory cooperation linked to the DCFTAs.
- 5) CSF draws the attention of the EU and EaP partner countries on the necessity to include the following economic and social issues into the agenda of the EaP:
 - a. Better regulation, reduction of administrative burden, fight against corruption and shadow economy;
 - b. Promotion of human rights, democratic standards, social dialogue, Rule of Law as well as core labour standards, including freedom of association and right to collective bargaining, giving their importance in the field of economic integration;
 - c. Improvement of customs and trade facilitation through the approximation of trade and customs legislation to the EU standards;

- d. Efficient monitoring by civil society of the implementation of the approximated legislation and its enforcement;
- e. Introduction of efficient auditing systems and fiscal control policies;
- f. Conclusion of agreements to avoid the double taxation of profits and capitals between the EaP partner countries and the EU Member States and provision of the environment conducive to the foreign direct investment;
- g. Increase the performance of social security and social protection systems and the role of civil society organisations in the fight against poverty within the framework of the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2010;
- h. Introduction of the principles of sustainable development and responses to Climate Change related challenges into existing national sustainable development frameworks;
- i. Support for "green business" through environmental friendly investments, research and development;
- j. Facilitation of labour mobility and flexicurity;
- k. Facilitation of visa regime at short term (and its liberalisation at mid-term), especially for business purposes, setting up of transparent conditions for reaching visa free regime;
- l. Support to the efforts of those partner countries that are not yet members of WTO to become members, assist the design of their market access strategy and facilitate it for those that are already WTO members;
- m. Cooperation in the field of science, technology and innovation by participation of the partner countries in the FP 7 and joint scientific projects, promotion of the capacity for the introduction of new technologies, in particular using the approach of Best Available Technologies (BAT) transfer, defined in the Strategy Paper of ENPI Eastern Program 2007-2013 as one of the main tools for Investments and SME development. Involve EaP Partner Countries into Clustering process proclaimed by the EU last year as core element of the Innovation Policy;
- n. Support to the twinning between cities and regions in the EaP partner countries. Use of the Twinning and TAIEX programs for Eastern Partnership related goals and tasks, including eligibility of projects with Civil Society participation;
- o. Bringing education and training system of the partner countries closer to EU standards and the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, promotion of IT tools in education including the on-line universities, distant learning and life-long learning. Work towards recognition of qualifications with the support of the European Training Foundation;
- p. Comprehensive institution and capacity building programme including also support for the CSOs in order to enable them to play effective role in the EaP;

- q. Assistance to the partner countries to create rules for fair competition and fight against abuse of monopolistic positions.
- 6) The regular consultation with the interested CSOs (chambers of commerce, business and trade associations, employers unions, trade unions and NGOs) should become part of the negotiations between the EU and the partner countries on the Association Agreements and DCFTA.
 - 7) The impact assessments of the DCFTA on the partner countries should be provided for each sector of the economy. Impact assessment studies in those fields where regulatory approximation is envisaged by DCFTA goals should be carried out with participation of the Civil Society Organisations and the results disseminated and communicated to the public. The CSF is calling for the speeding up of the negotiations.
 - 8) The EaP should become an opportunity for the development of relations also between the partner countries in the field of mutual trade and economic cooperation. The private business sector and the business associations should be involved in this process.
 - 9) Cooperation between Chambers of Commerce, Agricultural chambers, scientific and educational institutions of the EU and EaP should be supported. EaP Business Forum held in the EU and/or the partner countries should be established in order to strengthen business interaction and to promote new partnerships.
 - 10) There should be support of business and entrepreneurship, in particular SMEs through consultancy, corporate training and transfer of professional skills and knowledge and the SME Facility flagship initiative should be used for this support. The mentioned support should cover, inter alia, the SME development centers, SME associations and other SME supportive networks.
 - 11) A support for consumer protection organisations is also needed in order to enable them to play effectively their role in ensuring product safety and enforcement of technical and sanitary standards legislation.
 - 12) A new flagship initiative aimed at upgrading the support of business contacts, internationalization and the market access including the transfer of know-how from the chambers of commerce and industry and the business associations from the EU member states to their partners in the EaP partner countries should be worked out. The financing should be channelled through the European business organisations like Eurochambers and Business Europe, etc.

13) The EaP should help partner countries to better face the effects of the crisis through the exchange of experience and information and evaluating the possibility of macroeconomic support programmes. The database of the anti-crisis measures should be established and the CSOs should monitor their implementation and recovery plans using also the Good Governance Index and Aggregate Governance Index.

14) The social dialogue is the substantial basis of the European social model and the means to secure the necessary stability for the realisation of the economic reforms, transition to the market economy, the general development of the society and the improvement of the living standard. The genuine social dialogue needs the strong and representative employers and trade unions organizations. The support for the social partners and for the social dialogue should become part of the legal approximation between the EU – EaP partner countries. Creation of a regional platform of social partners could also be encouraged.

15) This Working Group agreed to:

First: To prepare the proposal for the creation of the permanent EaP Business Forum that would enhance the contacts between business associations and companies from the EU and the EaP countries. The registration of the interested experts from CSO should be opened till the 31st December and the EU-Ukraine Business Council would prepare the working document for on-line discussion.

Second: To analyze the social dialogue development in the partner countries and to propose the measures how to make it more efficient and comprehensive using the experience of the social partners in the EU. The registration of the interested experts from CSO should be opened till the 31st December and the Eurasia Partnership Foundation (Georgia) would prepare the working document for on-line discussion.