

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

(Brussels, 16-17 November 2009)

RECOMMENDATIONS

WORKING GROUP 1: DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND STABILITY

Meeting in Brussels on 16 November 2009, the participants in the Civil Society Forum group on democracy, human rights, good governance and stability decided that civil society organisations (CSOs) should be treated as natural institutional partners of the EU institutions, Member States and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) 6 authorities in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating EaP programmes on both bilateral and multilateral levels. The group took the decision to add “human rights” to its working title and suggests that the title of the thematic platform 1 of the Eastern Partnership is also changed to this effect.

CSOs should also be included in assessing the EU's engagement with EaP countries, particularly in relation to so-called ‘frozen conflicts’, and to the implementation of EU policies and instruments (such as the ENPI, thematic programmes of DCI, and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights).

The EaP countries must strive to fulfil the Copenhagen Criteria and the commitments and recommendations of the Council of Europe and the United Nations. CSOs should be included in monitoring the EaP countries progress towards these goals.

The EaP provides an opportunity for the partner countries to integrate with the European Union by developing stable democratic structures, and by enabling stronger participation of civil society, in areas such as human rights, electoral standards, media freedom, combating corruption, training and networking of local authorities. Furthermore, gender issues should be mainstreamed in all EaP processes.

The Forum strongly condemns the holding of political prisoners in some EaP countries, and appeals for their immediate release.

GENERAL – DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

1. The EU should encourage the authorities in the EaP region countries to introduce or strengthen:
 - a) democratic principles at national and local level:
 - reform of political institutions in EaP countries, in terms of the openness of political systems towards civil initiatives and civil society participation in the political process;
 - promote multiparty democratic processes;
 - strengthen self governance within sustainable and independent local government systems, with special attention to the adequate financing of local authorities;
 - monitor the state of democracy in the EaP countries, with CSOs granted an important role in the process.
 - b) high standards of governance, supremacy of law, effective civil control over implementation of the laws as well as prosecutors and police, elimination of torture and inhuman treatment.
 - c) judicial independence and ensuring access to justice,
 - d) effective mechanisms for combating corruption.
 2. The EaP countries should:
 - a) reform education, particularly in the field of rule of law, democracy, human rights and public administration.
 - b) insist on harmonizing relevant national legislation with EU standards, including the adoption of comprehensive antidiscrimination laws.
 - c) adopt laws to ensure freedom of expression and to prevent hate speech in public life, including the mass media on the issues of religion and national minorities, xenophobia and racism, sexual orientation and gender identity, and other groups.
 3. The EaP should improve the capacity of applying the procedures of Regulatory Impact Assessment and Policy Analysis into the routine practice of drafting legislation in EaP countries.
 4. CSOs should be stakeholders in the process of implementing the EaP. In particular, they should have opportunities to propose projects and initiatives under the EaP.
 5. CSOs should be involved in evaluating projects financed by the EU, and future agreements should be shaped with the participation of CSOs, in order to guarantee their transparency.
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HUMAN RIGHTS

1. The EU should demonstrate the centrality of international human rights standards in its foreign policy and agreements with third countries by according human rights a distinctive space. Enforcing these human rights standards should be an integral part of the EaP.
2. The EU should support and strengthen the independence and effectiveness of national human rights mechanisms (such as the office of the Ombudsman).
3. The EU should provide best practice on non-discrimination and hate crime legislation, and on harmonising national legislation with EU standards.
4. Through EaP programmes, the EU should give attention to the full range of human rights, both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights: including access to public and social services, universal respect for trade union and workers' rights enshrined in the ILO conventions and European Social Charter, and the right to private property.
5. The evaluation of human rights in EaP countries should be treated as a basic criterion for overall assessment of their democratic progress. The EU should assist human rights organizations in the EaP countries to develop and implement effective models and innovative methods for permanent monitoring of human rights. Efficient communication channels and institutional platforms should be established to inform the EU institutions, Council of Europe, OSCE, as well as individual EU Member States, of the results of monitoring.
6. The EaP countries should strengthen the implementation of international norms, mechanisms and recommendations at the national level. The EU should support the full implementation of the EU's Guidelines on human rights, in particular the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, as well as the relevant recommendations and decisions of the United Nations, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Court of Human Rights.
7. The EaP should mainstream human rights in all its programmes, including asylum and immigration policy, economic development, cross-border cooperation, trade and energy policy.
8. The EaP should urge the inclusion of CSOs in the development and implementation of government policy aimed at the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly ethnic

minorities and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The EaP should promote intercultural dialogue among EaP countries as well as EU Member States, encouraging tolerance and diversity.

9. Special attention should be given to the rights of minorities, in particular the right to equal participation in the decision-making process and public life in the EaP countries, as well as the establishment of legal and institutional guarantees for this process.
10. The EaP should implement projects based on tolerance, pluralism and diversity related to history and national cultures and religions, LGBT and other marginalised groups.
11. The EaP should support, through co-operative projects, education in the sphere of political culture of pluralism and democracy based on values of tolerance, ecumenical religious, multicultural and multiethnic cooperation, both within a given country and in cross-border relations.

ELECTIONS AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

1. The EU should enhance effective assistance to the EaP countries to ensure free, fair and transparent elections, including support to the education of elections officials and independent election observation conducted by local CSOs.
2. It is the responsibility of governments and parliaments of the EaP countries to:
 - a) ensure a proper environment for elections which safeguards equal access of candidates and parties to public media and equality in exercising citizens' rights;
 - b) improve national election legislation according to the commitments of the Council of Europe and OSCE;
 - c) permit independent monitoring of elections, including by local CSOs.

MEDIA

The role of the EaP is to:

1. support media independence, pluralism and diversity;
2. ensure the rights of journalists and guarantee their security so they can perform their professional duties;
3. uphold the implementation of Council of Europe standards and recommendations for the media, particularly those applicable to regulatory independence, public service broadcasting and transparency of ownership;

4. ensure that digital switchovers do not limit public access to information, and provide for diversity of media ownership and content;
5. create a flagship EU project aimed at strengthening professional and civic media, including new media (internet);
6. To oppose any effort to impose restrictions on access to the internet, or internet censorship.

SECURITY AND PEACE BUILDING

1. Stability and democratic change must be based on tolerance and security for all. A pragmatic approach aimed at conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution must not negate EU values as our principle should be: “Democracy is the best policy for security.” Such a strategy should be based not on the national interests of each state belonging to the region but on mutual goals and interests.
 2. Stability and security elements need to be inclusive, involving both state structures and civil society organisations. We should aim at deeper cooperation between EU Member States and EaP countries as well as with other countries of the region, such as Russia and Turkey, involving also international organisations such as the Council of Europe and OSCE.
 3. The EaP should:
 - a) provide methodological assistance for solving long-standing conflicts between neighbouring countries/nations.
 - b) develop efficient mechanisms for integrating “historic memories” of the EaP societies into European discourse.
 4. The Civil Society Forum should aim at creating a consortium of civil society organizations working on security and peace building issues in the region.
 5. With regard to territorial and ethnic-territorial conflicts, the contribution of the EaP should be based on the development of democratic principles and protection of human and minority rights. The EaP countries should display a European sense of cooperation in the region, in particular towards unresolved conflicts. All countries, as well as societies, should be part of the process of confidence-building measures, as they all are, by nature, part of the European neighbourhood. The bottom-up approach should be applied by engaging civil society and democratic forces in the region. Unresolved
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conflicts should not preclude CSOs from the whole region in participating in EaP initiatives.

6. The EU and EaP countries should encourage the positive involvement of Turkey and Russia, as this could be important for the success of the Eastern Partnership and the future development of the countries concerned. Based on a bottom-up approach with these two important neighbours, the Civil Society Forum is well placed for running second-track diplomacy.
7. Natural resources should be managed in a way that guarantees environmental security and ensures the human right to live in a healthy and safe environment.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

1. The EU should institutionalize the role of CSOs as full partners of the EU and EaP countries in their planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating functions in the process of EaP.
2. The EaP countries should develop a legal framework for the registration of CSOs and functioning of civil society which is consistent with EU standards. The EU should support full adherence to the standards of the Council of Europe concerning activities of CSOs, as stipulated in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe. Special attention should be paid to the status of CSOs - they can be either informal bodies, organizations or have legal personality. An assessment of freedom of association in EaP countries should be presented on an annual basis.
3. The EaP should support those activities of the European Commission and Council of Europe that promote a values-based democratic civil education for a new generation of politicians, public servants, business people, journalists, and CSO leaders.
4. The Forum encourages multi-country projects with a strong focus on core challenges facing the region (for example in regional conflicts, energy policy, democracy, rule of law, human rights, media freedom, migration) within the framework of the four thematic platforms and broader.
5. The Forum recommends the development of a programme of small grants that would operate in a quick and flexible fashion to assist CSOs in EaP countries often needing limited financial support to travel to participate in conferences and meetings, and to prepare materials and publications.

6. The Forum recommends the creation of an effective, internet-based common platform for the Civil Society Forum for communication, proposals and analysis-sharing between analytical centres, experts and journalists of the EaP countries, EU Member States, the US, Russia, Turkey and other third partners. It is recommended to include the use of the Russian language in this platform, in order to involve Russian-speaking partners.

This portal should include these elements:

- a) information on the programme and progress of the bilateral and multilateral negotiations of the EaP;
 - b) information on the Civil Society Forum, its members and activities within the Forum;
 - c) policy analysis and recommendations related to the EaP and the Civil Society Forum
 - d) locally generated content related to multilateral or bilateral activities of the EaP.
7. The ENPI Good Governance facility should be made open to the participation of CSOs on a competitive basis, to enable CSOs to contribute to improving governance by providing training and other services to governmental institutions.
 8. The EaP should:
 - a) support CSOs and individuals who face repression or harassment for their public activities. All institutions of the EU and individual Member States should conduct policy that is guided by human rights and democratic values and principles rather than by short-term political or economic interests.
 - b) develop the capacity of local CSOs to provide advice in the area of good governance.
 9. The EU should widen and simplify procedures for CSOs to apply for EU funds.

VISA FACILITATION AND LIBERALISATION

The EU and its member states should offer all six EaP countries roadmaps towards visa free regimes, waive visa fees as soon as possible, and as a first step provide multiple-entry long term visas.

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Considering the importance of the democratic development of Russia, the Civil Society Forum calls on the EU to develop equivalent commitments to Russian civil society, leading to the establishment of an EU-Russia Civil Society Forum.

Parallel to the peer review carried out on the basis of CoE Conventions, the Civil Society Forum should prepare country-specific NGO progress reports on democratic governance, which will present independent assessment of compliance with international standards and conventions in democratic governance.

Communicating the results: To a large extent, the sustainability of the Forum depends on how the results are promoted and communicated. To increase awareness, the results have to be translated into the languages of EaP countries. To bypass existing bottlenecks of media control, the internet is the most important platform for communication. It is a major task for all, particularly the CSOs from the EaP countries, to communicate the results of the Forum and to make European integration a national priority. Elaborating a tailor-made communication strategy should be part of work of the Civil Society Forum.

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.

WORKING GROUP 3: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY SECURITY

1) Why the EaP CSF must deal with energy and environmental matters and how it should do so

Due to post-soviet legacy, underinvestment, and difficult socio-economic and political developments over the last two decades, energy infrastructure of EaP countries has become outdated. This makes EaP countries and their citizens even more vulnerable to climate change impacts and natural and man-made disasters. Energy security, climate change and environment are therefore important areas of cooperation within the EaP and the CSF can support civil society working on these issues through strengthening networking and information exchange and increasing CSOs access to relevant information. EaP CSF should also help identify and promote regional synergies in energy and environmental policies.

The EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF) working group 3 responsible for environment, climate change and energy security should have a Coordinator from an EaP country and a Deputy Coordinator from an EU Member State CSO or an international network. Both should be elected for a period of one year (rotation principle).

In addition, a specific EaP CSF sub-Group on Environment should be created to influence activities of EaP Platforms 2 and 3. Furthermore, there is a need for a Multilateral Environmental Panel to be established in support of EaP Platforms 2 and 3.

Draft documents being discussed within the EaP structures should be made public in due time before their adoption so that implications from the perspective of energy security, climate change and environmental protection can be assessed by civil society.

ENPI Regional Programme should be used to implement urgent projects related to energy security (e.g. joint storage capacities, two-way interconnections, energy conservation) as well as to climate change and environment

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) welcomes the establishment of the EaP CSF and offers its active involvement as the EESC represents civil society organisations of the EU Member States.

2) EaP CSF in the field of energy security and climate change

Expectations towards EaP national governments

There is a need to rehabilitate and modernize existing energy infrastructure in EaP countries and invest in construction of new energy capacities. Heat supply networks should be rehabilitated with the help of financial mechanism (loans) for investments in new heating stations. With exception of

Azerbaijan, EaP countries are challenged by their dependency on imported natural gas. Projects are needed to reduce this dependency, e.g. by diversifying both sources and transit route. CO2 emissions are to be stabilised on the level of 2008 for the next 15 years.

To reach these goals, Energy Strategies of EaP countries should be revised to give priority to local renewable energy sources and energy efficiency as well as to effective policy tools aiming to manage demand for energy efficiently, rather than increasing supply (e.g. elimination of subsidised energy tariffs while addressing social impact via different measures). At the same time, greater transparency, access to information and public participation should be achieved in the process of strategic planning and deciding on tariffs, in particular concerning environmental impacts.

Energy security policies and legislation of EaP countries should gradually be adjusted to EU and international norms. In particular:

- Electricity and gas market legislation, including regulatory policy, is to be developed in accordance with the schedule of joining the Energy Community Treaty;
- Energy statistical systems need to become compatible with Eurostat methods;
- Targets and legislation for energy efficiency and renewable energy are to be harmonised with EU climate change policies;
- The EU emissions trading system should be joined while enhancing national control mechanisms; the Kyoto Protocol's flexible mechanisms are to be promoted;
- EU standards for energy using equipment should be adopted;
- National climate change adaptation plans are to be drafted.

Expectations concerning the regional policy framework and cooperation programmes

There is a need to shape a complex integrated sustainable energy policy for the EaP region, which takes into account national interests and aims to improve environmental protection, energy efficiency, as well as the capacity to face climate change, and to mitigate dependency on energy imports or on one energy carrier. Policies and measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation should not create new environmental challenges, in particular not have negative impact on biodiversity.

It is to be prevented that any market opening expected within the EaP can lead to “energy efficiency dumping”. Inefficient technologies banned in the EU should not be exported to the EaP countries.

The EaP should also provide a platform for debates on regional cooperation in nuclear safety and development of nuclear power generation.

Admission of EaP countries to the Energy Community Treaty needs to be given preference to Energy Memoranda of Understanding.

The administrative capacity, good governance, transparency, and protection of consumers should be given priority in the energy sector and be supported by the EaP Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes (CIBs). The Intelligent Energy Europe Programme should be extended to the EaP countries. Energy efficiency, best available technology (BAT) transfer and the use of renewable energy resources should be endorsed as one of the EaP Flagship Initiatives.

EU Member States and EaP countries should also work together towards higher security of energy transportation. The European Initiative on Gas Transparency (monitoring of physical gas flows in real time) should be promoted as a pilot project within the EaP, open to third countries. An Early Warning Mechanism for energy disruptions between the EU and EaP countries is to be established. EaP gas transit countries should be involved in the EU Gas Coordination Group and Oil Supply Group as well as the Energy Community Security of Supply Group.

The EU should create opportunities for EaP countries to be involved in international hydrocarbons transit projects, e.g. Southern Energy Corridor.

3) EaP CSF issues on environment, biodiversity, and agriculture

The overarching goal must be to support the integration of environmental aspects into all national policies of EaP countries (e.g. industry, transport, regional development, budget, agriculture, forestry, EU *acquis* compliance). As the application of the Strategic Environmental Assessment is an important tool for reaching this aim, respective national administrative capacities of EaP countries should be strengthened. Environmental protection and sustainable development should be incorporated as priority areas into Association Agreements. Regional cooperation and the implementation of multilateral environment agreements should be promoted. A regional environmental information system should be created that is shared by EaP countries and the EU. The EaP Flagship Initiative on Environmental Governance deserves support.

Waste management, including waste recycling and treatment, in EaP countries needs special attention. Best Available Technologies (BAT) transfer should be promoted more widely as one of the main tools promoting investments and SME in the environmental field. In the context of sustainable climate change adaptation, preference should be given to green infrastructure measures whenever possible. Management of protected areas should be strengthened as healthy ecosystems do only contribute to climate change mitigation (carbon sequestration) but also adaptation (e.g. forest and wetlands buffering the effects of climate change). Considering that organic agriculture also contributes to reducing CO₂ emissions, respective pilot projects by agriculture NGOs from EaP countries are to be supported and the Organic Agriculture Movement in all EaP countries is to be strengthened. As weather conditions have already started to change, overall agricultural production and agricultural and rural development should be adapted to climate change making best use of organic agriculture practices.

4) EaP CSF recommendations concerning Information, education, capacity building, and awareness raising

EaP countries should implement the principles of education for sustainable development in their educational systems by upgrading curricula and the creation of specific high school programmes (including international master programmes). Capacities for facilitating stakeholder involvement and conducting environmental impact assessment in EaP countries are to be strengthened.

Priority should be given to a transfer of knowledge and best practices from the EU to EaP countries with special focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy in order to bring EaP countries closer to EU norms and standards, to reduce adverse environmental impacts and facilitate the transition to sustainable development. The Aarhus Convention should be implemented in all EaP countries.

A broad public awareness raising campaign on energy efficiency and renewable energies is needed, making best use of EU practices. Also higher education programs (universities, institutes, high schools) have to be upgraded with respect to curricula on energy efficiency and renewable energy.

5) Final remarks

Above mentioned recommendations are not an exhaustive list of what can and should be done within Platform 3 of the Eastern Partnership. However, they reflect the consolidated view of experts participating in the Civil Society Forum and are to be regarded as the starting point for further activities in the areas of environment, climate change, and energy security.

WORKING GROUP 4: CONTACTS BETWEEN PEOPLE

GENERAL

1. Promote and disseminate information on EU issues and the opportunities provided by the EU by developing an information society (i.e. access to internet and computer literacy) and by enlarging the network of European Information Points.
2. Reduce barriers and develop effective contacts between people by enabling the full participation of citizens of the EaP countries in the EU programmes on youth, media, culture, research and education.
3. Address specific situations and levels of development of civil society in each EaP country, in particular through using existing leaders' networks (such as Euclid Network and the Civil Society Leadership Network) for strengthening common understanding, sharing of values, and cooperation between NGOs from EaP countries and EU Member States.

VISA FACILITATION AND LIBERALISATION

4. The EU and its member states should offer all six EaP countries roadmaps towards visa free regimes and waive visa fees as soon as possible. As a first step simplify/streamline visa procedures and provide multiple-entry long term visas.

EDUCATION

5. Encourage the governments in the six EaP countries to support adult education and long life learning and expand the Grundtvig and Comenius programmes. Support the EaP countries to work towards the reforms in line with the Bologna Process.
6. Call for more school exchange programmes and distance learning, and provide access to educational programmes for marginalised people and people with few opportunities. Ensure the involvement of CSOs in EU educational programmes.
7. Increase significantly funding for volunteer and internship opportunities for young people, thus ensuring the access of young people to employment, both as a part of formal educational programmes, as well as outside formal education (calling upon all European institutions, national public authorities, private sector and NGOs).
8. Increase the recognition of non-formal education in the EaP countries and provide links with EU organizations delivering non-formal education. Support EaP countries in developing a quality assurance framework for the non-formal education.

YOUTH

9. Enhance the active participation of young people in decision making processes at all levels and develop mechanisms for involving them in the achievement of the EaP's goals.

10. Develop special programmes for peace and intercultural education in post conflict areas.
11. Assist EaP governments in adopting and approximating national legislation and strategies in line with EU standards with the regard to young people and youth structures (such as Law on Youth, Law on NGOs, Law on volunteering, etc.)

RESEARCH

12. Support joint research projects by developing an institutionalised network of researchers and by creating a free database of studies and research.

CULTURE

13. Foster cultural exchanges and cooperation between EU and EaP countries.
14. Encourage ratification/fostering implementation of the 2005 UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* in the six EaP countries.

MEDIA

15. Explore and promote the new media tools and create an informal, internet-based media network among the EaP and EU countries.
16. Develop mechanisms to systematically inform civil society about ongoing projects and programmes of all four platforms, and support information projects through TV, radio and press.

WORKING PAPER

GENERAL

- Ensure **full participation** in all the EU programmes on youth, media, culture and education
- Working group 4 has the potential to **support and facilitate the other three working groups**, because as the people to people working group it can stimulate interactions and communication between civil society within the EaP countries, and between the EaP countries and the rest of Europe.
- **Develop regional cooperation** inside the EaP countries and with the EU countries and contribute to regional understanding
- **Bridge differences** inside and between the EaP and EU countries; take into consideration the people that are not covered by a central government
- **Corruption:** EU should facilitate **fight of corruption in the education field**
- Initiate "**Europe days**" / "**EU week**" in the EaP countries with EU related activities.

- Start drafting an **Action plan of the Working Group** and a list of organizations willing to cooperate, youth, trade union organisations etc.
- **Reduce barriers and develop effective contacts:** barriers: **distance** – isolated regions; **money- create travel grants programmes; ease language barrier**
- **Support Civil Society** in the countries where it is marginalised and not officially recognised
- Enlarge the **existing networks of leaders in the Civil Society** (such as the Civil Society Leadership Network, which focuses just on the EaP countries, and Euclid Network, which focuses on the whole of Europe including the EaP countries).
- Facilitate and develop an **information society** (generalised access to internet) in the region, including by enlarging the network of **information points**

VISA FACILITATION AND LIBERALISATION

- **Develop mobility:** facilitation and eventually long term liberalisation of the **visa regime**.
- **Harmonisation and simplification of the visa procedures** in the EU countries (eg. electronic application)
- Easing of the **financial burden linked to visas; more transparency**
- **Visa facilitation focused on particular categories of people (eg. students and participants at the EU programmes)**
- **Medium and long term multiple entry visa**

EDUCATION

- Need of tools for **continuous educations** and for grown up people. **Informal education and long life learning**. Expand EU Grundwig programme to the EaP countries.
- Stimulate **distance learning**
- Need to facilitate **access to information in province** for the young people to study abroad.
- **Volunteers from EU MS** countries to go in the EaP countries to ensure training programmes from the youth and present studies opportunities – the **European Voluntary Service**
- More **internship opportunities** for the EaP countries in the EU countries
- **School exchange programmes** (students, pupils and teachers)
- **Involvement of CSOs** in the EU educational programmes

YOUTH

- Share EU's experience with the EaP countries in **involving youth in decision making process** at all levels (ex. youth local councils, youth self governance)
- Assist EaP governments in adopting and approximation of national legislation and strategies in line with EU standards with the regard to young people and youth structures (such as Law on Youth, Law on NGOs, Law on volunteering, etc.)

RESEARCH

- Necessity to develop **joint research**
- Research in the **humanitarian field**

- **Institutionalised network of researchers** from EU and EaP countries and **database of studies and research, with free access.**

CULTURE

- A dialogue covering modern culture but also issues connected to **identity and historical memory.** Encourage ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention regarding historical heritage
- Promote exchanges and cooperation between **artists in the EU and EaP countries**
- Encourage ratification /fostering implementation of the 2005 UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.*

MEDIA

- **Develop the new tools of the media** and create an **informal media network** in the EaP and EU countries