

DRAFT CONCEPT PAPER

Building Stronger Participation of Civil Society in the framework of the Eastern Partnership Initiative

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The Eastern Partnership – a new multilateral framework of cooperation that addresses Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus (depend on the development of its relations with the EU), Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – aims at enhancing the relationship between these countries and the EU. On 3rd of December 2008 in its Communication the European Commission stressed that ‘ongoing reforms [in these countries] require stronger participation of civil society to enhance oversight of public services and strengthen public confidence in them’, therefore ‘particular attention should be paid to the involvement of civil society’ in the EaP initiative.

Strongly supporting the idea of more active role of civil society in democracy-building processes the Agency for Legislative Initiatives suggests the following programmes and initiatives to be implemented in order to contribute to the goals and, namely, civil society component of the EaP Initiative.

I. Building a Confident and Comprehensive Dialog among the New Generation of Political, Civil Society and Business Leaders

Baseline:

- Lack of contacts and confidence among the new generation political, civil society and business leaders in the region.

Goal:

- To establish the Annual Programme aiming at fostering cooperation and confidence building among the political, business, media, NGO, and academic leaders (up to 40 years old) from all over the region and contributing to their general knowledge about the democracy and integration processes that are taking place in the Europe.
- **The ambitious of the Programme is to enhance the cooperation among the political leaders, public authorities, on the one hand, and non-state actors, on the other hand, at the policy-making level in order to support the efficient implementation of the EaP goals.**

Activities:

- Organising the Annual programme that consist of 3 seminars:
 - First training session: Brussels (3-4 days) with the involvement of local experts that will develop a complex vision of European integration and cooperation from the Swedish prospective;
 - Second training session: Strasbourg (3-4 days) in cooperation with the Council of Europe in order to cover the issues of democracy, its values, and the tools of its building;
 - Third training session: Ukraine (1 week) in December 2009 or January 2010 will focus on the challenges that all states have to face ‘on the way to Europe’ and also revise the first results of the Eastern Partnership Initiative implementation in the region.
- Programme focus:

- developing a deep knowledge about European democratic processes, standards and values; the EU, its policies, and Eastern Partnership Initiative;
- increasing the ability of participants promote domestically democratic standards;
- contributing to the dialogue and confidence building between different countries and, in particular, in frozen conflicts zones in the Southern Caucasus and Transnistria.

Partners and Participants:

- The Programme will be build on the base of the Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe that work in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. It is assumed that participants will be selected among the alumni and other prominent leaders. The experience of the Schools will ensure the highest standards of the Programme. Each country will delegate six representatives for Annual programme.

II. Strengthening the Civil Society Cooperation by Developing the Eastern European Network of Civil Society

Baseline:

- Lack of tools to foster the civil society cooperation in the region and its capacity building.

Goals:

- To strengthen civil society in Ukraine, Moldova and the Southern Caucasus and its involvement in the solution of political, social, cultural and other problems in their countries, and in the region by establishing the Eastern European Network of Civil Society;
- **The ambitious of the Programme is to supplement the activities of the Civil Society Forum that is going to be initiated by the European Commission as the ongoing platform for civil society cooperation the Eastern European countries.**

Activities:

- To create a thematic web-platform for NGOs with useful information that will encourage their regional cooperation (e.g. the Recourse Bank of the regional NGOs, news and materials about joint projects, experience exchanging tools);
- To conduct 4 regular thematic meetings annually within the Network that will be focused on specific target groups (e.g. human rights NGOs to discuss the challenges for human rights activities in the region, think tanks to debate the democratic reforms issues) (up to 35 participants);
- The topics of the thematic meetings (three-days seminars) will be focused on the EaP priorities and will aim at establishing initial contacts to lay a ground for future cooperation among the participants.

Partners and Participants:

- The Programme will be built on the base of the Civil Society Leadership Network – the Joint Initiative of the CoE and the European Commission that is under implementation in 2008-

2009. Current network is a unique initiative of its kind for the target region and has already included more than 100 NGOs. The new initiative will be established on existing membership base and will get its further development. Participants will be involved in friendly and supportive environment to establish the joint projects.

III. Enhancing the Oversight of Democratic Process and Public Authorities By the Creation of the Eastern European Public Monitor (Expert Council)

Baseline:

- Lack of platform for expert cooperation, in particular, in the field of public monitoring activities.

Goal:

- To establish the Expert Council, Eastern European Public Monitor, as a group of prominent civil society representative that will make a regular evaluation reports ('Mirror of the Region') on such issues as the human rights and democratic development of the region, its progress in the area of European integration.
- **The ambitious of the Programme is to contribute to the public evaluation of the EaP implementation on the national and regional levels.**

Activities:

- The establishing of the group of experts (5-7 person per country) in order to conduct annual public monitoring reports. For the methodological purposes it is expected to have 2 group meetings per year for involved experts.
- The report will focus on various aspects of the EaP implementation in each country and its influence on democratization, social, political, cultural processes in the region. Special attention will be paid on fulfillment of obligations undertaken by the states as a part of their cooperation with the EU.
- The results will be disseminated among the EU institutions, public authorities, NGOs, and media.

Partners and Participants:

- Participants of the programme will be leading local NGOs specialized in this kind of expertise from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (and, presumably, Belarus).