

Final Document

International Conference

«For Your Freedom and Ours! For Our Common Future!»

October 25-27 2009, Lviv, Ukraine

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War was one of the most important events of the epoch. Twenty years ago, people took fate into their own hands and started to reshape their societies and the world. People striving for freedom changed the world. Changes that were started in the Gorbachev era and the Brandenburg speech of Ronald Reagan, were the prologue to a series of events that led to the collapse of the “iron curtain” and end of the cold war.

Solidarity came to power in Poland. The Velvet Revolution took place in Czechoslovakia. The Berlin Wall came down. Countries of the socialist bloc started to throw off the mantle of repressive government and control of the Soviet Union. Great changes started to occur characterized by unrest in big cities and the growth of people’s democratic and national consciousness all over the region. “Saudis”, People’s Fronts in the Baltic States, Narodnyi Rukh of Ukraine were founded and they started their activities. The very last gathering of the Supreme Soviet of People’s Deputies of the USSR was also permeated with an atmosphere of openness and a democratic spirit unknown before. And, finally, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to founding of the new independent states. Along with fifteen independent states that emerged, Ukrainians established their statehood after many generations of being the largest stateless nation in the world.

The international conference “For Your Freedom and Ours! For Our Common Future!” that took place on October 25 – 27, 2009 in Lviv, Ukraine, was dedicated to the events that changed the face of Europe 20 years ago. The slogan “For Your Freedom and Ours” was the rallying cry for the

changes in the region 20 years ago. Its derivation can be found in the history of the Polish struggles for freedom and independence in the past two centuries, but in modern times it was used in 1968, by participants of the demonstration that was held in Moscow in protest against the crushing of the Prague Spring by Soviet tanks in Czechoslovakia. To this well known dissident slogan we added the second part “For Our Common Future” in order to stress the fact that cooperation between states and nations will secure our common future, and the stability of our part of the world.

Twenty years ago, in Wroclaw, a festival and conference of independent culture was organized by Polish Czechoslovak Solidarity—momentum and enthusiasm generated at this gathering was later credited with being the spark that led to the Velvet Revolution. The example and assistance of Polish reformers inspired Czechs and Slovaks to initiate their own changes. Change also came to Ukraine. It is symbolic and significant that this conference was held in Lviv. Lviv was the leader of democratic changes in Ukraine at the end of the 1980s. It has kept traditionally close relations with the main democratic centers in the Central and East European states and remains a good example for democratic forces of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and the Central Asia.

The aim of the conference was to review the huge changes of previous years and to discuss proposals that will ensure a stable and predictable future. The transborder work that was started in Europe 25 years ago and was aimed at spreading democracy to the East is now targeted at the integration of new democratic states into Europe and into the transatlantic community. This concept was the objective of the conference. The conference participants developed recommendations on providing assistance to the six countries of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan).

More than 250 delegates took part in the conference—public figures, representatives of analytical centers, NGOs, MPs and government persons—with representatives from all six partnership countries as well as the new member states of the EU, Germany, United Kingdom and the USA.

During the plenary sessions and working groups, the conference participants discussed a number of problem areas and developed recommendations on how civil society can participate in the resolution of these problems and issues. Experts on security, legislation, election, economy, social development, mass media, communication, culture, history and religion exchanged their opinions on civil sector reforms in the context of regional changes. The conference participants developed recommendations to present to the Civil Society Forum in Brussels on November 16-17 2009 and to other interested parties.

Workgroup 1: Governance, Rule of Law, Combating Corruption

Moderator: Maryana Demkova, Centre for Political and Legal Reforms, Ukraine

Participants came to the conclusion that in order to increase the impact of reforms aimed at improving state governance in all countries of the Eastern Partnership region it is necessary to introduce and to enhance cooperation with the EU in the following way:

1. To encourage the authorities in Eastern Partnership region countries to introduce high standards of governance, supremacy of law, democratic principles and mechanisms for combating corruption.
2. To support civil society organizations that are effectively working in the field of monitoring power structures and conducting reforms (e.g. analytical centers, youth organizations, business associations).
3. To improve the efficiency of expert support in the Eastern Partnership region through authoritative and timely expertise provided in political documents and legal projects.
4. To develop and introduce efficient mechanisms for reforming education in the Eastern Partnership region (in particular, in the field of law and public administration).
5. To lay out a course toward EU membership in official documents for the members of the Eastern Partnership region countries, clearly outlining the standards and conditions required for EU membership.
6. To widen the use of “Twining” and TAEX mechanisms in Eastern Partnership region countries.
7. To involve independent civic institutions in the implementation of projects being realized in Eastern Partnership region countries and supported by European Commission and the governments of EU countries.

Workgroup 2. Media and communication

Moderator: Vahtang Kipiani, Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Ukraine

1. There should be more active exchange of experience between Central European and Eastern Partnership countries. Representatives of EU countries should provide journalists in the EP countries with information on solving problems that they faced before gaining EU membership.
2. To use the experience of Western colleagues to educate young journalists with the aim of demonstrating that journalists can pursue a fulfilling and important career while maintaining high standards.
3. To spread the use of new media (in particular, Internet) not only for obtaining information but also as an effective communication tool, as a platform for blogging, and for developing common discussion space for people from different countries. In particular, dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Ukraine and Russia, and Ukraine and Belarus would benefit from this kind of exchange.

4. A program of small grants that operates quickly and in a flexible fashion should be developed to assist representatives of Eastern Partnership countries who often need small amounts of financial support to travel to participate in conferences and meetings, and to prepare materials and publications.
 5. To support the development of civic journalism, in other words, to support non-professional people who post information on the Internet, who form discussion groups and spread democratic values among people.
 6. There is a proposal regarding the situation in Belarus. Some circles in the West have declared that there is a process of liberalization taking place in this “last dictatorship in Europe”. But in reality, this process is formal and is being conducted as a showcase for foreigner observers, since ordinary people in Belarus, and especially journalists, do not feel any influence of such liberalization. Journalists from the Eastern partnership countries support their colleagues from Belarus in the opinion that such liberalization is without substance.
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Workgroup 3. Culture and Religion

Moderator: Halyna Usatenko , “EuropeXXI” Foundation, Ukraine

The working group reached the conclusion that the resolution of issues pertaining to culture and religion in individual countries or in specific regions within countries (Ukraine and its Crimea, Georgia) can help to prevent conflicts. The idea that political culture and the culture of democracy, based on values of tolerance, ecumenical culture, cross-border and multicultural cooperation, is gaining acceptance. Civil society organizations should play an important role in this sphere.

The group proposed the following recommendations:

1. To pay attention to and to popularize the issue of religion, religious and cultural life of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe;
2. To adopt laws which could prevent the practice of intolerant speech and attitudes in the mass media on the issues religion and national minorities
3. To develop common projects between the member countries of EU and their neighbors that involve working together, not through a one-way system of instruction;
4. To promote openness of the borders and the free flow of ideas and people (especially scientific works and educational programs);
5. To actively implement projects for journalists on specific issues in the history of national cultures and religious confessional realities.

Workgroup 4. Security Challenges

Moderator: Inna Pidluska, “Europe XXI” Foundation, Ukraine

1. To further discuss and include a security component into the work of the Civil Society Forum within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Civil society can go further and take on programs and activities that are bolder and more creative than formal and official institutions. That is why it is important to include a security component in the Forum. Otherwise, regardless of how efficiently civil society works on ensuring civil rights and freedoms, development of economic welfare and tolerance, all that may be destroyed because of fuel and energy crises, conflicts and real dangers that can appear in this region.
2. Relations in the region, relations between EU and Eastern Partnership countries and relations between countries that are not members of Eastern Partnership and relations with Russia should be pragmatic. But there should be limits to pragmatism. Pragmatism should be limited by values. We should not neglect values in favor of pragmatic arguments. Democratic values should be our priority, and then comes pragmatic thinking.
3. Developing strategies for civil society for the whole region. Such strategy should be based not on national interests of each state belonging to the region but on mutual goals and mutual interests that are developing democracy, establishing supremacy of law and promoting freedom and prosperity.
4. Building strategic partnerships between civil societies in the region. Not only Eastern Partnership countries and not only EU members should be involved in such initiatives but also the USA and Turkey.
5. We should also found a consortium of organizations working on ensuring security in the region that will guarantee permanent analytical support to research processes that take place in the region. It is important for the power structures and institutions of officialdom and government to know that they are being watched and their actions are being evaluated. It is also important to be able to provide independent information to people of these countries so that they can better understand the necessity of preventing conflicts, the value of peace, democracy and human rights.
6. We should cooperate with the aim to develop space for dialogue and discussion not only between civil society organizations, analytical centers but also between certain non-political, social and communication platforms that will enable people from different countries to openly discuss problems. It will not always be a peaceful and pleasant discussion but such discussions are necessary for better understanding each other, for our better understanding of security, and the value of democratic principles and norms in the region.
7. The working group would like to propose a final and extremely important recommendation in this phrase “Democracy is the best policy for security”.

Workshop 5. Elections and election campaigns

Moderator: Iryna Bekeshkina, Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Ukraine

1. Participants agreed that democratic countries of the West have provided important and effective assistance to the post-socialistic and post-Soviet countries in their struggle for free, fair and transparent elections. Financing for monitoring and educational programs as well as financing for independent surveys has made it possible to make elections fair. Such programs and financial support should be continued. The participants mentioned that conducting independent exit polls play an important role in countries where there is the danger of election falsifications. Exit polls provide citizens with a way to monitor the vote count; exit polls also play an important role in identifying and thus preventing falsification.
2. In countries where competitive elections are a relatively new phenomenon, the electorate has not yet acquired experience in making rational and conscious choices. This becomes significant when elections take on a manipulative character by becoming competitions between politicians' images and populist slogans. NGOs and think tanks should help voters to make a conscious choice by analyzing programs and proposals of politicians and conducting independent journalistic investigations. This is where help is needed from experts from democratic countries.
3. Communication between civic organizations from different countries and exchange of experience exchange are very important. Internet communication should be developed with the aim of ensuring better communication between interested parties. Programs should also be developed to increase access to the Internet in countries with low penetration of Internet. In particular, such programs should be targeted at rural youth and pensioners.
4. Supporting research programs that provide comparative data from countries where democratic development is at different stages is an important way to identify problem areas. By developing common indexes on the level of democratic development, discussions of common problems can be more productive.
5. The recommendations and expert analysis of international institutions that focus on post-Soviet states is very valuable and highly appreciated. Such analysis would be more effective, however, if it could include the input of both western and eastern experts in close cooperation. (For example, the recommendation of the Venice Commission to eliminate the possibility for Ukrainian voters to vote "against all" on the Ukrainian ballot paper, will deprive many Ukrainian voters of the possibility to express the strongly held attitude that no candidate represents their interests. In a country where democracy has not yet reached maturity, preserving this option is considered an important way for voters to express their democratic choice).
6. The views and position of the European community are very important for countries where NGOs' harassed and civic activists' activities are repressed. The conference participants stressed that this makes it even more important for the democratic countries of Europe to conduct policy that is guided by democratic values and principles rather than by accommodation to short term political interests.

Workgroup 6. Human Rights

Moderator: Svitlana Franchuk, Freedom House, Ukraine

1. To develop an informal platform for human rights organizations of the six countries of the Eastern Partnership with the aim of introducing and implementing effective models and innovative methods for permanent monitoring of the process of adherence human rights of different types.
2. To develop efficient communication channels for informing European interstate bodies and corresponding structures on the monitoring results.
3. In the post-Soviet states, human rights organizations should more actively cooperate with embassies of EU member countries for informing EU on research results and on their needs to be supported by EU.
4. It is necessary to develop and provide the EU with recommendations on structuring and strengthening the transparency of resource distribution for supporting human rights activities in EU and post-Soviet states.
5. Standards and requirements on ensuring human rights should be integral parts of European development strategy.
6. Concerning Russia and Belarus: the EU and USA should not avoid pressuring governments of these countries regarding adherence to human rights in exchange for energy security. Our Russian colleague said, "Do not bargain with our rights in exchange for your interests".

Work group 7. Think tanks and the transformation of the society

Speakers: Jeff Lovitt, Czech Republic; Grigorij Meseznikov, Slovakia; Jacek Kucharczyk, Poland;

Moderator: Ilko Kucheriv, Ukraine

1. To create advantageous conditions for the work of think tanks in the Eastern partnership countries. The special task of think tanks will be to fill the Eastern Partnership framework with real content and to spread support for these ideas among stakeholders – in the countries of the Eastern partnership and on an international level.
2. To explain the importance of support for think tanks in the countries of the Eastern Partnership by the EU as an important part of the transition process. Think tanks can play a crucial role in accomplishing targeted reforms.
3. To establish a direct funding source for think tanks from the EU budget – to have a fund dedicated to this purpose.
4. To study the current condition and functioning of analytical centers in the region of the Eastern Partnership countries and Ukraine in particular, to develop programs for improvement of their quality.
5. To encourage the development of analytical centers in the countries of the Eastern Partnership by means of creating a united platform for cooperation and common working groups made up of representatives of EU-member countries and Eastern Partnership

countries. To promote think-tank thinking and the best practices widely used in developed European countries.

6. To create a resource center that will conduct educational trainings, consultations and will coordinate common activities of EU-member countries and countries of the Eastern Partnership in this sphere. To use common approaches and professional and ethical standards.
7. To develop a communication strategy using Internet and new media for further exchange of ideas. To create a common platform for communication between analytical centers experts, journalists of the Eastern Partnership countries, EU and Russia. It is recommended to use Russian language as one of the communication languages to involve Russian-speaking people.
8. To organize cooperation between think tanks from six countries of the Eastern Partnership on specific issue platforms. To fill these platforms with local content, to gather experts for each of the platforms and to establish inter-country consultations regarding these platforms. To involve European think tanks into this cooperation. To use existing networks of cooperation between think tanks, primarily NDRI and PASOS, for this work.
9. To make think tanks more visible on the national level, to illuminate their role as a “bridge” between intellectuals and politics. Think tanks should be facilitators of cooperation between academic and political circles.
10. To develop a project on preparation and constant involvement of youth into think tank activities and the processes of developing recommendations.
11. Think tanks should be involved into the formation of a discussion agenda and to highlight important, sometimes not very popular issues (for example, visa problems and illegal migration, or power supply and change of climate).
12. To organize constant cooperation between representatives of analytical centers to fill the Eastern Partnership framework with real content and for the preparation of the next Forum. The first step in this work could be a meeting of Eastern partnership countries and EU-member countries think tanks to develop a mutual platform and planning of the further work. PASOS and NDRI will become base structures for such a meeting and Ukraine can become the venue.

Workgroup 8. Historical Memory, Civic Consciousness, Education, and Identity

Moderator: Oles Pohranychnyi, Lithuanian Consulate, Ukraine

1. To develop efficient mechanisms and integration processes of “historic memory” of the

Eastern Partnership region states into European discourse. A way should be found to integrate experts and professional for Eastern Partnership countries into the German-Polish project on rewriting history books.

2. To provide methodological assistance on solving long standing conflicts between neighboring countries (e.g. Ukrainian and Polish conflicts in the first half of the 20th century) with the aim of developing a methodological approach, stylistics and a professional capacity which may be applied to solving more complicated conflicts such as Ukrainian-Russian, Belarus - Russian or Georgian-Russian conflicts.
3. To establish research centers in Ukraine and Belarus for systematic and deep research into acute problems that are still sources of conflict in our part of the European continent. Such research centers should develop recommendations for solving such conflicts. Professionals from EU countries as well as professionals from countries that are involved in these conflicts and professionals from the Russian Federation should work in such centers.

Workgroup 9: Economy, Social Development and Welfare

Moderator: Marc Schleifer, Center for Independent Private Enterprise, USA

[Recommendations still to come]

Workgroup 10: Russia and Central and Eastern Europe—Searching for Common Euro-Atlantic Vision

Moderator: Andrew Nagorski, EastWest Institute, USA

[Recommendations still to come]