

**Submission of the EU Ukraine Business Council
answering the request on providing comments to the first meeting of the Eastern
Partnership Civil Society Forum
16–17 November 2009, Brussels**

The EUUBC represents the interest of businesses and non government organizations, including industrial ones, which would like to use it as a tool to convey their coordinated and united messages on policy areas, pilot projects, inter-regional cooperation between recipient countries.

The EUUBC is ready to donate its time, skills and expertise assisting to communications between authorities and civil society in Brussels, Kyiv and at the regions' level.

The Eastern Partnership programme activities should be seen from pragmatic point of view, i.e. the control for authorities' activities from the civil society; direct involvement of the civil society as a beneficiary under the EaP pilot and other projects.

For Economic integration and energy cooperation the existing links between industrial, business organizations and civil society organizations, cultural and historical links between 6 countries should be used. For example, cooperation between Chambers of Commerce, agricultural chambers, scientific and educational institutions (for innovations, research and development), twinning between cities and relations between regions.

In financing initiative the priority should be given to fulfill well designed pilot projects and technical assistance projects in recipient countries than to arranging big meetings of general nature. The meetings for civil society and stakeholders, conducted in the recipient countries, should be of big value in case they will show practical added value of the Eastern Partnership.

Recommendations on Forum. The continuous work should be conducted between the regular meetings by means of:

- exchange of written information, views and submissions according to simple structured form;
- discussions before and after meetings between officials and authorities at the thematic Platforms to share with civil society the decisions taken;
- justified criticism should be motivated to shape better and more precisely concrete actions taken under the programme;
- appointing a small number of representatives the CS organizations (up to 12) who, in case of necessity, can meet in Brussels, capitals or cities of recipient countries (or by means of teleconferences through, for example, Skype) on an ad hoc basis to discuss specific proposals and prepare briefings for other participants. Such organizations should donate their time, efforts, resources, if necessary, to conduct this work;
- allowing representatives of Member organizations of the participants of the CS Forum to participate at the meetings, be invited for platform meetings or specific discussions.

Recommendations on the Eastern Partnership Structures. Platform meetings should be open to representatives of Civil Society Forum upon grounded explanations from civil society organizations. The draft agendas should be circulated in due time to Civil Society members who express willingness to participate. Civil Society organizations should provide its written briefs with questions or proposals they would like to put forward. Participation of the organizations should be necessary only if personal presence is justified and only for discussion of their specific questions. The question of participation costs refund should be discussed on a case by case basis, but normally every organization should bear its own costs for this.

Recommendations on Policy area on Economic integration and convergences with the EU policies. At the present moment Ukraine is the only country among 6 EaP recipient countries which has started and advanced FTA negotiations with the EU which will foresee deep regulatory and economic convergence. The EU has also started in Ukraine a number of initiatives on cooperation in technical standards sphere, SMEs, agriculture and SPS as well as in sphere of energy and environment. At the implementation stage there should be an individual approach to choose best way of cooperation between countries under the EaP programme, for example, cooperation on technical standards could be of bigger importance for relations between Ukraine and Belarus; SPS and use of alternative energy sources is of big importance for all recipients, same is valid for SMEs. It should be foreseen from the beginning that if a pilot project is to be fulfilled in Ukraine the representatives of other countries should be involved and follow up activities in these countries should be provided by the organization which will be appointed as a leader. Detailed explanations should be provided on possibilities for organizations from EaP countries to access NIF.

Recommendations on Policy area on Energy. With the possible exception of Azerbaijan, all EaP recipient countries are in need of projects for reducing dependence on gas and diversifying energy supply. Alternative sources of energy, like solar panels, biomass, methanol gas produced from waste utilization, mini hydro electro stations, energy efficient building, heating devices etc. are of great importance. Sometimes a small budget is enough to start project which can cause a 'chain' reaction to bring notable added value to people and economies, for example for Crimea, Sevastopol, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia as well as for Belarus to start to develop smart energy approach in municipal sphere. We shall recommend to concentrate on smaller scale but necessary projects in cities and municipalities levels which can go alongside with bigger projects in energy sphere and support which are conducted by the EU for Ukraine and other EaP countries.

Recommendations on Flagship Initiatives and Pilot Projects. We suggest to address most important issues from both countries wide and local levels, namely for developing following pilot projects:

- **business support project** to start explaining to business society what convergence to the EU legislations means and how it works in practice; this can be started from explanations for Ukraine on operating under the conditions of future deep and comprehensive FTA, how it will help to develop new opportunities for SMEs in particular. The Chamber of Commerce could be natural recipient and coorganizer for conducting such activity using its wide networks and relations with Eurochambres;
- **developing wholesale agrarian markets** to stimulate economy and secure social stability in rural areas; such markets should be at cross-border between the EU and EaP countries, between the EaP countries or without any specific linkage to geographical location but merely to existing traditional, historical, business links;
- **alternative energy and environmental projects** in particular to be developed in Crimea and/or Sevastopol to be exported to other EaP countries, for example, on heating, solar power, wind power, extracting power from waste processing technologies etc.;
- **stimulating cooperation between cities and municipalities.**