

## Proposals for the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

### What can EuFoA bring to the Civil Society Forum?

European Friends of Armenia and the Eastern Partnership share the same main goals, in particular the desire to bring Armenia closer to the EU and to strengthen people to people contacts between both sides.

We understand the structure of the Eastern Partnership and its focus on four particular platforms. Our area of expertise is mostly concentrated on the **fourth platform**: people to people contacts. This is due to our pan-European network of relevant contacts and presence in both Brussels and Yerevan. However, EuFoA does not limit its activities to the purely political sphere; both our network and our activities also focus on business and cultural communities.

It is for this reason that the proposals we submit are focused on the area of people to people contacts.

### Proposals

#### 1. Institutionalisation of the Civil Society Forum

EuFoA proposes that the Civil Society Forum apply for special consultative status in order to be represented in Eastern Partnership high-level meetings and ministerial summits. This will improve the reach-out capabilities of the EU and allow it to engage better with the societies it is dealing with.

#### 2. Establishment of an information network

EuFoA would propose to establish an information network across the partner countries and the EU. This would involve connecting a group of NGOs from partner countries and EU member states, with a centre in Brussels. Through this network countries will be able to share their specific experiences and projects in the context of the Eastern Partnership. The network will also be used to raise awareness of the EU in the partner countries, and awareness of the partner countries in the EU.

The network can also be used to raise awareness among European and neighbouring countries' public through increased mass media attention. Journalists and media representatives can liaise with the information network, and in turn communicate the results to the wider public and civil society.

#### 3. Increased regional cooperation (greater role for civil societies in Turkey-Armenia rapprochement)

Naturally, as an NGO with a focus on Armenia, we also have a country-specific proposal. Given that the Eastern Partnership also focuses on increased regional cooperation and integration, the current developments between Turkey and Armenia are of key significance. EuFoA suggests that the EU should, among other initiatives, implement confidence building measures in Armenia and Turkey, promote cross-border projects and strengthen people to people contacts. Civil societies on both sides have to be actively involved here, as they are the primary stakeholders of the process.

Civil societies in Armenia and Turkey, and also the wider region, can become involved by making use of existing EU instruments for regional cooperation, namely the **Black Sea Cross Border Cooperation** programme. The aims of this programme are to support cross border partnerships and to develop cultural and education networks, which naturally overlap with the aims of the Eastern Partnership. EuFoA would thus propose the implementation of certain programmes under the framework of the Black Sea Cross Border Cooperation which follow the goals of Turkey-Armenia rapprochement and also the Eastern Partnership.