



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
**Civil Society Forum**

## **EaP CSF Policy brief**

**Joint Staff Working Document EaP – Focusing on  
key priorities and deliverables – Assessment and  
recommendations by the civil society**

*(May 2017)*

This policy brief reflects the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum - its National Platforms' and Working Groups' opinions and expert input on the proposed key priorities and deliverables for the EaP until 2020. Feedback on several deliverables is not provided.

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**National Endowment  
for Democracy**  
*Supporting freedom around the world*

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### List of Acronyms

AEO	Authorised Economic Operator
APO	Anticorruption Prosecution Office
ARO	Asset Recovery Office
BSOs	Business support organisations
CERT	Computer emergency response team
CoM East	Covenant of Mayors East
CSOs	Civil society organizations
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EaP CSF	Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
EEGI	European Economic Group of Interest
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
eIDAS	Electronic Identity, Authentication, eSignature
FDI	Foreign direct investments
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
JSWD	Joint staff Working Document

LAs	Local authorities
M4EG	Mayors for Economic Growth initiative
NDCs	Nationally determined contributions
NIF	Neighborhood Investment Facility
OHL	Overhead (Power) Line
PECI	Projects of Energy Community Interest
PMI	Projects of Mutual Interest
PPD	Public-Private Dialogue
R&I	Research & Innovation
REC	Regional Environmental Center
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics education
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade Measures
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEE	Women entrepreneurship and employability
WiB	Women in Business programme

## 1. Introduction

The Joint staff Working Document (JSWD) “Eastern Partnership - Focusing on key priorities and deliverables”<sup>1</sup>, issued by the European Commission and the EU High Representative in December 2016, is the EU’s second comprehensive attempt to set up clear and time-focused benchmarks for the Eastern Partnership. In comparison with the previous Joint Communication “Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit”<sup>2</sup>, the current document is less conceptualized, but focuses on specifics and takes a straightforward approach at pointing gaps and providing tailor-made solutions. It sets 20 main deliverables in the four key priority areas defined by the EaP Summit in Riga: economic development and market opportunities; strengthening institutions and good governance; connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change; mobility and people-to-people contacts. Each of the deliverables contains milestones to be achieved by the next 2017 EaP Summit, targets by 2020, main actors responsible for their achievement and implementation means. It is hard to overestimate the importance of an open policy communication in times of growing criticism around the EU and its European Neighbourhood Policy in particular. Introducing a transparent set of goals provides a good opportunity for public debate, involvement of a wider range of stakeholders, preserving policy’s inclusiveness, creating a means for public monitoring and assessment. This could also create a deeper ownership and understanding of the European integration both in the EaP countries’ societies and in the EU.

This policy brief reflects the opinion of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, and its National Platforms’ and Working Groups’ on the proposed key priorities and deliverables, focusing on the following aspects:

- 1) Feasibility: is the implementation of a given target set by 2020 realistic?
- 2) Ambitiousness: Is the target set by 2020 ambitious enough?
- 3) Appropriateness: Should more appropriate targets and benchmarks be suggested?

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<sup>1</sup> JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT “Eastern Partnership - Focusing on key priorities and deliverables”, HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY, European Commission, Brussels, 15.12.2016 SWD(2016) 467 final

<sup>2</sup> JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS “Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit”, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY, Brussels, 15.5.2012, JOIN(2012) 13 final

4) Risks: Are there obstacles that could turn the target set for 2020 unrealistic?

5) Differentiation: what impact could the achievement of a given target have in a particular EaP country?

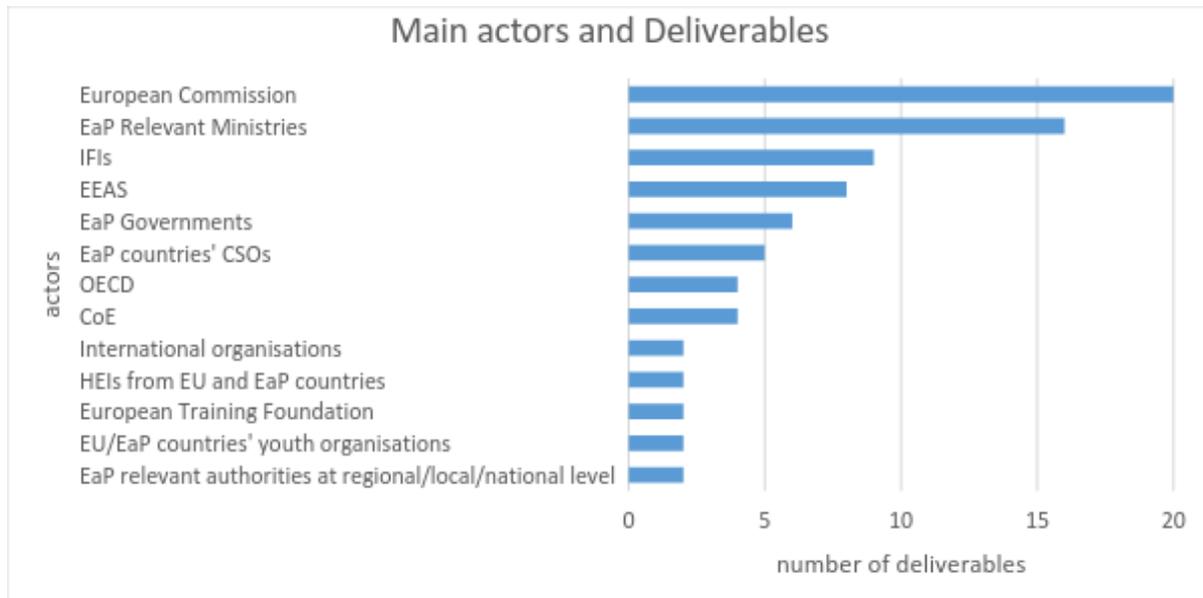
## 2. General remarks

The Joint Staff Working Document (JSWD) is a step forward in terms of providing an elaborate set of concrete deliverables to be achieved by the EaP Summit and 2020, which follows the logic of the EaP CSF recommendations of developing roadmaps of reforms in all key sectors of the EaP. The proposed 87 milestones and targets, combined with 94 means of implementation and more than 70 different responsible actors indicate that the EaP is moving in the right direction and is taking another step forward. There is a clear emphasis on the multilateral aspect, keeping the six countries together, promoting the emergence of the EaP as a region and building an interlinkage between the EaP countries.

Recognizing regionalization as a positive aspect, it should be stressed however that more can be done in this direction. The “inter-EaP” format could be strengthened by including common communications frameworks, elements of EaP “free trade area”, networking in different sectors and common security.

The JSWD provides useful measurable benchmarks, however sometimes the milestones are quite technical and not ambitious enough. The document in most cases limits the implementation to already existing mechanisms rather than proposing new ones.

The analysis of main actors’ involvement into implementation process shows the European Commission and EaP Ministries as the main actors in most of the deliverables with much smaller share of responsibility allocated to other actors. **The role of EU Member States remains quite limited. The role of the civil society is highlighted but its involvement could be considerably expanded** (see Chart 1). This responsibility shift to the EU Institutions and to a more technical level might weaken the policy and limit it to fulfilment of the technical requirements and formal *acquis* implementation with a lack of political direction behind it.



*Chart 1. Main actors and number of deliverables related to specific actors*

### 3. Cross-cutting deliverables

Three important deliverables: civil society, gender equality and non-discrimination, and communication are marked as cross-cutting (horizontal). Prioritization of these selected issues makes them obligatory to be taken into account when implementing all other targets. **It is recommended however to include horizontal priorities into the sectoral parts to avoid their marginalization and have the concrete targets for them related to other deliverables as well. The CSOs should be included as one of the actors in most of the sections, but especially in the sections concerning the rule of law, anti-corruption and judicial reforms.**

#### **Deliverable 1. A more structured engagement with a wider range of civil society organizations**

In specific terms, a more structured engagement with the civil society means introduction of three different but complementary support schemes: large-scale funding schemes for CSOs capacity building (one per EaP country); Civil Society Fellowships and support for youth leaders; improving multi-stakeholders dialogue through providing support to the EaP CSF and its National Platforms.

**The lack of enabling environment for civil society remains a factor not allowing the structured engagement of civil society to take place. Thus, inclusion of targets and measures by the EU institutions and EU member states on improving the environment for operation of the civil society should be considered. This improvement can come from the ongoing political dialogues as well as technical support programmes of the EU and EU Member States.**

**With regard to having 6 large-scale funding schemes to develop capacities of CSOs, it is important that the previous funding commitments to CSOs are continued, even if the new funding schemes are introduced.** In Armenia (scheme is in place)<sup>3</sup> and Belarus (new call for applications has been announced)<sup>4</sup>, existing instruments are combined with the increase of the grants' amounts (up to 1-2 million EUR per grant) while the number of grants recipients is reduced. In general, this approach can be more effective as the financial support will be allocated towards the selected policy goals without traditionally dispersing it among multiple objectives and actors. However it is crucial to select highly-qualified and, at the same time, change- and result-oriented implementers, and to avoid putting qualifications, capacity and technical characteristics before real change organizations can produce on the ground. Partly this risk of formalization is also relevant to **the Policy Fellowships and young leaders schemes**, which will be implemented in the framework of "Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility Regional Actions: Creating Synergies and Integration" project (led by the GDSI (Ireland)). Its predecessor - *Civil Society Facility project 'Civil Society. Dialogue for Progress'* (led by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. (KAS, Germany) was brilliant in its intentions but had substantial limitations in its implementation on the EaP countries' level. There is **a need to establish closer cooperation and regular communication between the new Civil Society Facility projects, the EaP CSF, and other players on the ground to ensure that the civil society, as a beneficiary of the project, is regularly consulted and can influence the projects at key stages.** In comparison with the previous, more technical targets, the target **to establish "well-functioning and regular multi-stakeholder policy dialogue" by 2020** is ambitious especially for non-democratic countries of the region, and aims at substantial changes on part of the EaP governments in terms of civil society involvement. Currently, the absence of institutionalized multi-stakeholder dialogue

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<sup>3</sup> Civil Society Facility (Armenia) - Capacity Building of CSOs, <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1461917436320&do=publi.detPUB&searchtype=QS&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&nbPubliList=15&page=2&aoref=151410>

<sup>4</sup> Supporting Capacity Building and Partnership of Civil Society and Local Authorities in Belarus, [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/25128/call-proposals-supporting-capacity-building-and-partnership-civil-society-and-local\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/25128/call-proposals-supporting-capacity-building-and-partnership-civil-society-and-local_en)

and real inclusion of the civil society into the political decision-making process remains among the key obstacles for the development of democracy in most of the EaP countries.

**The main obstacle in the implementation of this target is the lack of political will of the EaP countries' authorities, who are not mentioned in the list of main actors related to the target. We suggest adding the EaP governments as actors to ensure they are aware of their role and responsibilities. Moreover, a better coordination and informing all the players by the EU Delegations and the EC is crucial for this process, as well as in order to intensify and to allow for the meaningful participation of the civil society. Based on the joint consultations, the concrete results of the multi-stakeholder dialogue should be set for all the players involved.**

Strengthening the role of EaP CSF and its National Platforms in policy dialogue reflects the growing legitimacy of the Forum and its recognition as one of the policymaking actors. However this should be in line with **giving the Forum the space for expanding its responsibilities and performing its functions, as well as its increased transparency.**

The role of the EaP CSF National Platforms should be strengthened through establishing institutionalized communication between the EU and the National Platforms on strategic issues. The National Platforms are well placed to carry out advocacy, provide expertise and monitoring and such content-oriented activities should receive targeted support. The EU-Belarus Coordination Group is one of the examples of such institutionalised mechanisms, in which the participation of the Belarusian National Platform should be broadened to enable the civil society to set the agenda and to provide its expertise on par with the government.

The EaP CSOs are seen as actors only for 16% of the milestones/targets, though their capacity has grown considerably. **The CSOs from the EaP countries should be included as actors responsible for implementation of certain milestones alongside with governmental actors.**

We also recommend **strengthening CSOs with regional outreach that could serve as support hubs for smaller civil society organisations. The EU support to the European Endowment for Democracy should be increased, especially towards its grant programmes for regional organisations and networks.**

## **Deliverable 2. Gender equality and non-discrimination**

**Mainstreaming gender equality in public policies, improving gender statistics and data availability, development of women's entrepreneurship and job creation within the set**

timeline may be unachievable. The main obstacles here are substantial gaps in statistics availability, the refusal of the authorities to accept gender as a real problem, masculinisation of many economic sectors and the lack of support infrastructure for women's entrepreneurship and employability. The quantitative indicators (number of benefitting SMEs, jobs creation, WiB loans portfolio) are counterbalanced by the qualitative guidelines and measures envisaged in the Gender Action Plan<sup>5</sup>. The Gender analysis should help to adapt the Gender Action Plan's framework to the EaP countries' specifics.

The target to **adopt anti-discrimination legislation in all the EaP countries** is unachievable by 2020. It is hard to imagine the adoption and, especially, effective implementation of anti-discrimination laws in the countries with authoritarian regimes to which the human rights violations and the absence of independent judiciary is inherent. The ratification of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention is extremely important and can create legally binding conditions for the harmonization of legislation and public policies implementation. The domination of the top-down approach (the emphasis on legislation change and establishment of relevant state authorities) is a weak point. Public participation and civil society involvement are clearly missing.

The target to **foster women's entrepreneurship and employability (WEE) and women SMEs employment set by 2020** is considered to be too ambitious and unrealistic especially taking into consideration the fact that not all the EaP countries have programmes designed for women's entrepreneurship development. It is also not realistic to achieve milestones on increasing the employment by the EaP Summit (except for Moldova) as well as on increasing the Women SMEs turnover by 2020 for all the EaP countries. We suggest **differentiating the results by countries and introducing separate projects fostering WEE development and specific programmes focusing on the access to finance and increasing financial and business development literacy for women in all the EaP countries**.

### **Deliverable 3. Better, clearer and tailor-made strategic communications**

Targets related to improving the EU's image, credibility and support among the EaP countries' population are feasible but a few crucial elements are not covered. Firstly, there is a lack of information in the EaP countries not only about the EU but also about other EaP countries. **Any measures to improve information exchange between the EaP countries ("EaP for EaP approach") would contribute to the effectiveness of the EaP policy and**

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<sup>5</sup> JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/staff-working-document-gender-2016-2020-20150922\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/staff-working-document-gender-2016-2020-20150922_en.pdf)

would enhance the formation of a “common identity” as the basis for regional integration processes.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, it is **necessary to address disinformation by developing targeted high-quality information products and programmes for each of the EaP countries.** This could work more effectively than the existing EU “Russian language news exchange”.

Thirdly, apart from Russian language news and the existing pluralistic media landscape **it is essential to support the establishment of high quality programmes in national languages.**<sup>7</sup>

The communication should be focused on the deliverables with visible and measurable outcomes: assistance for SMEs, new jobs on the local level, youth and women employability, roaming tariffs, low-cost flights, opportunities for education etc. In general, the EU communication strategy should be reviewed to **focus on the target audiences most susceptible to disinformation, including young people.** The language of communication campaigns should become less technical and more tailored towards the target audience.

### Missing deliverables on human rights and democracy

The Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy of 18 November 2015 has a chapter on ‘good governance, democracy, rule of law, and human rights’, which says “... the EU should uphold and promote universal values through the ENP. ... The EU is committed to promoting good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights”.<sup>8</sup> These explicit statements do not seem to be fully translated into concrete action plans in the current Joint Staff Working Document.

**We recommend adding specific deliverables on human rights and democracy, including specific targets towards improvements in legislation and its effective implementation in CSOs enabling environment, electoral rights, civil and political rights, and freedom of media. A regular and inclusive dialogue on human rights and**

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<sup>6</sup> See also: PROPAGANDA: DEEPENING THE GAP IN MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. Monitoring of the Media of EaP Countries and Russia (2016), [http://ypc.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2016\\_Monitoring\\_Propaganda\\_Report\\_ENG.pdf](http://ypc.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2016_Monitoring_Propaganda_Report_ENG.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> PROPAGANDA: DEEPENING THE GAP IN MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. Monitoring of the Media of EaP Countries and Russia (2016), [http://ypc.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2016\\_Monitoring\\_Propaganda\\_Report\\_ENG.pdf](http://ypc.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2016_Monitoring_Propaganda_Report_ENG.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118\\_joint-communication\\_review-of-the-enp\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf)

**democracy in all the EaP countries and creation of countries Road Maps in these areas is also recommended.**

It is as important to stress the need for the EaP countries' inclusion into international and national organizations with important human rights and democracy development commitments such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE. The EaP countries should also be part of mechanisms that oversee the implementation of OSCE election monitoring missions recommendations, verdicts of the of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as implementation of the recommendations by advisory, monitoring and inspection bodies , such as the Venice Commission, the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, and the UN Human Rights Committee.

#### **4. Priority I: Economic development & market opportunities**

**Deliverable 6. New job opportunities at the local and regional level (plans for local economic development, PAR, stakeholders participation, agricultural development strategies).**

The targets are achievable but rather programme-based and technical. Limiting the targets to maximum three EaP countries is an underutilisation of existing possibilities. Civil society participation in planning the local economic development should be ensured through the use of the principles and instruments proposed by the Council of Europe's Code of Good practice for civil participation in decision-making processes.

In order to promote economic growth at the local and regional levels the use of the EU instruments for Territorial cooperation could be applied to the EaP region. It is one of the essential pillars of the EU Cohesion and Development Policies. Territories are more homogeneous than countries, therefore territorial cross-border cooperation can create new development clusters and boost development in economically and socially depressed areas.

**The Eastern Partnership process could be strengthened by implementing programmes of territorial cooperation, which engage multi-stakeholder components of communities into strategic vision for sustainable development and democratic empowerment.** Territorial cross border cooperation has proven to be a useful instrument in all the EU regional policies. Within the EaP (with intra cross-border programmes) but also across the EaP and EU borders and territories, the instruments should be further

strengthened considering the value of the community approach, bringing together public, private and civil society perspectives. The territorial cooperation programs (cross border or matching broader territories) and the instrument of EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) or EEGI (European Economic Group of Interest) could be promoted further.

Three EaP countries have Agricultural Development Strategies in place (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova) while in others it is currently under consideration (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ukraine). Our respondents from the countries that already developed such strategies consider the achievement of the target of 15 000 members of farmer groups and 1 000 farmer groups established by 2020 unrealistic due to the farmers being not ready to establish associations advocating for their rights and common goals in the absence of state financial support.

## Deliverable 7. Harmonisation of digital markets

The establishment of an independent regulatory authority for electronic communications and progress in unifying roaming tariffs in the EaP are considered to be a realistic target only by a half of our respondents. The targets are considered very ambitious, since the interests regarding the unification of roaming tariffs of a number of companies have to be taken into account. **It would be possible to discuss the roaming tariffs in regional specialized fora only with the EU intervention and support**, and then the solutions for unifications might materialize. The level of the private sector development in this area and the openness of the market in each of the countries are the key challenges in this sense.

The second milestone/target<sup>9</sup> is considered realistic by most respondents from Moldova<sup>10</sup>, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and unrealistic by the rest, especially transposing eIDAS and conducting needs assessment on cyber issues is questioned. If the authorities comply with their commitments, the private sector will support the initiatives. With respect to **National CERTs**, the EaP countries were recommended to recognize public key certificates through voluntary accreditation in the EU countries by providers of certified services in the EaP countries, and subsequently conclude international agreement on recognition of CERTs.

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<sup>9</sup> Milestone 7.2 Commitment by partners to adopt eIDAS, the General Data Protection Regulation and other relevant EU acquis. Partner's needs assessment and development of a platform for experience exchange within EU on cyber issues. Target 7.2.1 Pilot interoperable cross border eSignature and regional framework for cross border eServices for businesses in place. Target 7.2.2 Network of national CERTs in all partners in place, linked to EU CERTs.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.egov.md/ro/communication/news/republica-moldova-se-aliniaza-la-standardele-ue-pentru-piata-digitala-unica>

It is considered realistic to progress on adoption of legal frameworks for **eCommerce, eCustoms and eLogistics** as set for 2017 EaP Summit milestone, however, the targets for 2020 are very ambitious. The institutional framework should be harmonized with the one of the EU first. It is advisable to begin with the agreements on eUnion and to implement Road Maps on other e-components. In 2015, all EaP ministries stressed the need to improve relevant legislation but in order to build trust in ICTs and eServices the enforcement of the changes that were introduced is crucial, namely the protection of online privacy and personal data.

The milestones and targets set for the **ecosystems for ICT research & innovation** linked to the EU ecosystems are considered realistic and achievable by 2020. The thematic and knowledge fora should be organised where the innovation ecosystems can be discussed with different EaP countries. The EaP countries should also join the European Start-up Network.

### **Deliverable 8. DCFTAs implementation**

The milestone and target set for the DCFTA partners **accession to the Pan-European Mediterranean Convention** on Preferential Rules of Origin are realistic, however, to date, only Moldova is part of the Convention. The Republic of Moldova applied for membership in July 2013 and became the 23rd Contracting Party on 1 September 2015.

Increase of **FDIs** is always a challenge; the major obstacles for achieving the target might be political instability, lack of transparency and undemocratic decision-making that make investors refrain from entering such economic systems.

Most of the approximation plans for **food safety** are set for 10 years, so the milestone is considered realistic, but the 2020 target does not seem to be realistic. The major obstacles are the level of preparedness of inspection, certification and regulatory structures for determining the equivalence of relevant SPS and TBT measures. DCFTA countries are engaged in a complex process of reforms on the improvement of the Quality Infrastructure, which is supported by the EU technical assistance.

The adoption and start of the implementation of **procurement roadmaps** is a realistic milestone, as well as the target set in this area by 2020 for most of the DCFTA countries.

All DCFTA Countries have the **Sanitary and Phytosanitary Strategies** or Action Plans in place. All countries require assistance to follow the main steps for accession to the Convention on common transit procedure and the simplification of formalities in trade in goods, including setting up project groups, conducting gap analysis, preparing a road map,

providing training for customs officers and information to business, and exploring financial support instruments.

The target to set up the **Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme** in DCFTA countries is ambitious and complex. Most DCFTA countries have AEO systems in place, however, not all of them are aligned with the EU requirements. **Further support should be provided in order to prepare the legal preconditions for the possible mutual recognition with the EU**

## 5. Priority II: Strengthening institutions and good governance

### Deliverable 9. Rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms

The political class and influence is the main obstacle to the implementation of the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms. **The top-down approach focusing on legislative frameworks and institutions setting will work only if the EaP authorities genuinely commit to the implementation.** Otherwise, the cooperation with corrupt authorities could discredit the EaP policy. The targets could be reached only if a complementary “bottom-up” approach is introduced. **The “bottom-up” targets might include local actions, small in size, but systemic and sustainable,** such as developing working anti-corruption mechanisms in selected regions or municipalities, or within economically and socially important areas (schools, healthcare establishments, etc.). **The civil society can play an important role** in this process and should be added to the list of main actors.

Effective progress towards a **system of declarations of assets and conflicts of interest** is realistic for Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, however the target is not ambitious enough as appropriate legislation and electronic systems are at least partly in place in all three countries. **It is crucial that the agencies responsible for the implementation are independent from the political influence.** Another major issue in some EaP countries is that the duty to prove the illegal source of assets rests with the law-enforcement bodies and they would not act against politically exposed persons.

Specialised high-level anti-corruption institutions that would be fully operational and independent and, as well as effective Offices for the recovery and management of assets (AROs) are ambitious targets, however it is not feasible to achieve those in practical terms. The political control over the AROs in some EaP countries will impede the procedures.

**Implementation of GRECO recommendations is valuable but it must not replace the need to set specific recommendations for each EaP country.** For example, in case of Armenia the priority should be given to adopting legislation on the conflict of interests. In Moldova, there is a need to ensure credible, merit-based and transparent appointment of a politically unaffiliated staff of the National Integrity Authority, etc.

### **Deliverable 11. Implementation of public administration reform in line with the Principles of Public Administration**

The targets are feasible but less ambitious than they could be with a priori reduction of a number of the EaP countries involved. Public administration reforms are being implemented in Ukraine and Georgia and could have a **positive spillover effect** across the EaP region.

**Citizens' engagement** is mentioned but more can be done in this area, especially in the capacity building and widening citizens' participation practices. The reform of public administration is essentially not a legislative process but it affects cultural and systemic elements in the community.<sup>11</sup> **The two components of the governance (CSOs & citizens and public institutions) should be developed in parallel - in a constant exchange, dialogue and cooperation.**<sup>12</sup>

The target to improve communication and dialogue with civil society, aimed at reinforcing transparency and accountability in economic governance, seems to be both ambitious and realistic.

## **6. Priority III: Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change**

### **Deliverable 14. Security of Energy supply**

Progress has been made towards the development of **EU4Energy national work plans** for the newly established program. 2020 target is to define projects involving Eastern Partners outside Energy Community framework i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. The Secretariat is presently drafting the First Year Work Program (January – December 2017) for each beneficiary country. On 10 March 2017, EU4Energy regional office was opened in Tbilisi.

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<sup>11</sup> See Antonella Valmorbida. Cooperation with Civil Society to promote Public Administration Reform in the Neighborhood, ALDA, 2016, [http://www.ald-europe.eu/newSite/news\\_dett.php?id=1725](http://www.ald-europe.eu/newSite/news_dett.php?id=1725)

<sup>12</sup> See Antonella Valmorbida. Cooperation with Civil Society to promote Public Administration Reform in the Neighborhood, ALDA, 2016, [http://www.ald-europe.eu/newSite/news\\_dett.php?id=1725](http://www.ald-europe.eu/newSite/news_dett.php?id=1725)

**Indicated target looks realistic but not well defined and specific enough.** There is no information available about the number of projects and their scale, additional targets should be set.

**The projects of strategic importance:** Projects of Energy Community Interest (PECI) and Projects of Mutual Interest list (PMI) were approved but only one project is related to the Eastern Partnership countries - Ukraine-Poland oil pipeline - can be seen in Approved List of PEGI. Preliminary list of PMI projects contains two from EaP countries: Interconnection between Romania and Moldova and new 400 kV OHL, Interconnection between Ukraine and Slovakia (Rehabilitation). One of the main project criteria is that project's foreseeable benefits should be higher than its costs. Construction of Back to back station on 400 kV OHL is an innovative project that will provide a significant improvement for the power network interconnections reliability. **These projects and 2020 targets are realistic and will have an important impact on the region and its development.**

**Moldova-Romania:** The progress has been achieved in agreeing on financial matters for gas interconnection. The project status as of December 2016 does not provide any evidence that the issues at stake were resolved. **The target is rather unrealistic.**

The solid progress has been made on the expansion of the **South Caucasus Gas Pipeline (SCG)** (Milestone for 2017) and 2020 target: **Southern Gas Corridor** is operational and gas is delivered to Turkey and further to the EU. The achievement of the target is though realistic. The High priority Project for EU South East countries aims to improve their energy security and reduce dependence on one supplier. **Some concerns might arise from the uncertainty of future EU-Turkey relations due to the developments in the second half of 2016.**

**Electricity interconnections Georgia-Armenia.** Achieving the target by 2020 is an important priority for both Armenia and Georgia. Its implementation will allow for the operation of electricity networks of both countries in a parallel regime and even to be connected in a parallel regime with networks of neighbouring countries like Iran and Russia. The Energy Community supports gas and oil transportation and electricity interconnections between countries including the construction of modern and innovative back-to-back stations, which will promote regional cooperation between countries in the field of electricity supply. The diversification of gas and oil suppliers will improve energy security of the countries involved.

**Deliverable 15. Improve energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**

**CoM East II** was launched in 2016 (Yerevan, October 2016). 2020 target is set: at least 100 Local Authorities (LAs) should reduce urban CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20%. At least 50 LAs are committed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by more than 20%. **This target is realistic** but there are concerns since participating parties have different experience in related areas and its implementation depends on such experience. The **introduction of monitoring by CSOs could be an additional benchmark.**

In terms of the progress towards the commitment by at least 20 Local Authorities (LAs) CoM-East 2030 objectives, the targets are realistic with some reservations.

Progress has been made towards the development of nationally determined contributions (NDC) to the Paris Agreement. **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)** were submitted to the 2015 Climate Change Conference by all six EaP countries in September 2015. Four countries ratified the Paris agreement and their agreements came into force (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Ukraine) by the time of preparing this analysis. INDCs pledged during the 2015 Climate Change Conference serve as the initial Nationally Determined Contributions.

**Sectoral Policy guidelines** for the implementation of the Paris Agreement are drafted; targets are realistic.

Progress towards the start of upgrading national **GHG monitoring, reporting and verification practices** is in line with the Paris Agreement. It is a good milestone since today the information on this issue is alarming.

Progress has been made towards the launch of climate action investment facilities. **Participating countries and IFIs settled the differences.**

The target on “at least **one major climate action investment facility per country** in place” is realistic if funding is available. **It would be desirable to develop new innovative approaches for establishing such Centers with substantive CSOs involvement.**

**Level of renewable energy sources introduction is not satisfactory in EaP countries.** There is a sharp reduction of prices on PV solar and moderate reduction on wind power stations, which should bring about more investments into renewables. Depending on the conditions of specific countries, a **larger support to medium size hydro power stations is desirable** (Armenia, possibly Georgia). **Small hydro projects should comply with environmental requirements** to avoid the mistakes as those in certain areas in Armenia.

## **Deliverable 16. Environment and adaptation to climate change**

**National and regional work plans to improve water management** have been prepared. **River Basin Management Plans** have been adopted. **Targets are ambitious and could be implemented only partially by 2020.**

**Water quality surveys**, including the Joint Black Sea survey are carried out. Targets are realistic but the outcome is limited. Similar programs are in operation for many years. They require a lot of resources. **It is desirable to have websites with the detailed information to support research in this area and to avoid duplication and provide efficiency.** Black Sea degradation issue remains a high priority.

**Resource Efficiency and Cleaner Production Club** are created. Targets are numerical and realistic. **In addition to participants training it would be also beneficial to provide tools/instruments for measuring saved energy and resources as well as pollution measuring instruments.** Similar clubs were created in Armenia under similar programs.

**Environmental Impact Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments legislation** is in place and implemented. **Targets are very ambitious** and their complete achievement is not realistic; newly adopted laws will not be implemented in 2017. **Green economy** principles are implemented by EaP Partner Countries. **Targets** (1 000 SMEs familiar with green economy benefits) **are a little high and the word “familiar” is not defined and can be interpreted in different ways.** The New EaP GREEN programme is prepared, and targets are realistic.

**Action Plan** is drafted along with the provisions of the **EaP Ministerial Declaration on Cooperation on Environment and Climate Change.** The members of the EaP CSF WG3 prepared comments and recommendations to this draft plan. **There is a suggestion to discuss the EaP Regional plan for implementation of declaration first and then, to harmonize six EaP national plans with the Regional plan. It was also proposed that Environmental governance review in six EaP countries should be conducted** and plan to achieve good environmental governance prepared and implemented.

**Adaptation measures** are identified as part of sector-specific actions. **Targets are not clearly indicated, milestones are ambitious and realistic enough.** The launch of the preparation of national and sectoral adaptation plans. However, to date there are no plans in place. As these activities are done through Clima East project, which was completed in April 2017, **the 2020 target on national and sectoral adaptation plans development and approval might be in question if the start of the second phase of Clima East Project (set to begin in 2018) will be delayed.**

**The programmes like Clima East can serve as examples of best practices;** through the Clima East project, an effective information portal has been developed, particularly its current update containing useful and important information on environmental programs. The second phase of the Clima East programme is crucial for national and sectoral adaptation plans to be developed and adopted in time.

**The Covenant of Mayors East (CoM East)** demonstrates integrated approach to climate change, environment and energy issues. **This “bottom-up” initiative needs to be strengthened by training workshops so that projects quality improves and the targets (20% reduction of CO2 by 2020 and 30% reduction of CO2 by 2030) become more realistic to achieve.**

**Several environmental programs** under *JSWD* do not have **well-defined indicators** to measure the progress (and it is indeed difficult to evaluate and quantify impact on health and quality of life of the citizens). **CSOs’ capacities to monitor the programmes vary; strengthening CSOs capacities is important in order to support successful implementation of the programmes.**

## 7. Priority IV: Mobility and people-to-people contacts

**Deliverable 18. Youth leadership and entrepreneurship; mobility; participation of EaP countries to Erasmus+, Creative Europe, COSME, Horizon 2020, Marie Skłodowska-Curie, EaPConnect; skills development actions**

**The targets** – reduction of mismatch between skills and labour market demands, improvement of quality and relevance of education systems, better employability of graduates, introduction of EHEA and Bologna principles, modernization of VET, reduction of youth unemployment - **are not ambitious enough and too ambitious at the same time, as the EaP countries usually do not understand the volume of reforms and resources needed for this purpose.**

It is not realistic for the targets to be achieved by 2020. The development of dual education system should become the main target. **Special large-scale projects transforming vocational education and training (VET) should be introduced, otherwise this sector will perish in several years.** Especially science, technology, engineering and mathematics

(STEM) education should be supported at all levels. A special coordination center should be established in every EaP country in order to push this agenda vis-a-vis the relevant stakeholders and to organize trainings and consultations.

The EaP countries differ in terms of the level of harmonization of the legislation and academic practice with the EHEA principles. Some countries are more advanced meanwhile Belarus is only at the beginning of the process. In all EaP countries, the implementation of the **EHEA principles** meets resistance from the conservative part of society, from parts of the academic environment, and from political opponents of modernization. **The absence of coherent and comprehensive assessment of the (non)implementation of the EHEA principles weakens the will and motivation of the authorities and academic communities to reform.**

**The instruments such as Erasmus+ are very important for students' exchange and mobility but do not provide means for (non-quantitative) assessment of the implementation of 2020 targets.** The harmonization of education systems and of the labour markets requires more attention to the legal and economic conditions, in which such mobility is taking place.

The target "Universities modernised along EHEA and Bologna principles" does not specify the benchmarks and thus will be hard to verify. **We suggest the following formulation: "Progress in adoption and effective implementation of legislation and policies in line with the EHEA and Bologna principles"**. This means the obligation to implement fully the EHEA principles such as fundamental academic values. Specific Action plans (or Roadmaps) and regular reporting on its implementation (or non-implementation) could be introduced. The EaP CSF can play an active role in monitoring, reporting, and assessment of existing policies and practices in line with the EHEA and Bologna principles and Action Plans/Roadmaps requirements.

## **Deliverable 20. Integration of the EaP and EU research and innovation systems**

The target for R&I stakeholders integration in relevant EU networks as well as full access to all Horizon 2020 funding schemes looks realistic and ambitious. For all EaP countries it would be a significant step towards an active and demand-oriented research, new opportunities for higher education institutions and towards starting a fruitful cooperation with industries and business. The progress towards peer-reviews of R&I systems and reforms of national public R&I systems is also realistic and ambitious enough. In particular,

for Ukraine it is extremely important to push forward practical research that would allow the higher education institutions to raise funding in the form of centres of know-how, innovations and start-up incubators for business and industries. **In addition, we suggest measuring the number of active research centres before and by 2020 in comparative perspective, as well as the performance of students and researchers by number of patents, start-ups, innovations etc. achieved as benchmarks.**

It is problematic to achieve substantial increase in participation of the EaP countries in Horizon 2020 as there is too little information about Horizon 2020 in middle and small-sized higher education institutions and research centres. **The target is to establish six new EU-EaP Innovation Clusters (one per country) also looks too ambitious and unrealistic. We suggest strengthening existing teams through facilitation of their active cooperation, as well as supporting their consolidation, for instance, based on a city area for large cities or on industry-based approach.**