

**Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting
Vilnius, 7-8 July**

In attendance: Steering Committee members Siarhei Antusevich, Ina Coseru, Marija Golubeva, Ziya Guliyev, Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Hennadyi Maksak, Ion Manole, Boris Navasardian, Dovile Sukyte, Uladzislau Vialichka, Yurii Vdovenko; Secretariat - Communications Manager Darya Mustafayeva, Advocacy Manager Vera Rihackova, Director Natalia Yerashevich.

Absent: Steering Committee members Kakhaber Gogolashvili, Aleksandra Kalatozishvili.

1. Audit findings and annual accounts adoption; Remaining budget for 2017 and co-funding; update on the new project application to the EC

Director of the Secretariat Natalia Yerashevich presented the annual accounts for 2016, the structure of the budget for 2015-2017 and co-funding requirements. The new project application to the EC with the aim to submit it by September 2017 was discussed.

Decision: The annual accounts were approved with 10 votes (three SC members were absent, including Hennadyi Maksak absent due to illness).

2. Membership of Marija Golubeva in the SC due to stepping down from PASOS board

Decision: Marija Golubeva stays as a SC Member in her personal capacity until the Annual Assembly. She will attend the Annual Assembly in Tallinn as an observer. The SC needs to appoint an observer from the EU side for the EU-Ukraine Civil Society Platform

3. A joint letter of EaP CSF and EU-Russia CSF calling for less bureaucratic (bottom up) approach for support of CSOs in the EaP region - with a special focus on the EED (initiative of Steffanie Schiffer)

Decision: It was decided not to participate in this initiative. Vote: 5 against, 6 abstain

4. Upcoming events and actions; advocacy around the EaP Summit

It was discussed that in light of the upcoming strategy 2018-2020 and internal reform, the SC should have more advocacy activities closer to the beginning of the year.

Upcoming events:

- 12-13 September - EaP Media Conference, Kyiv
- 21-22 September - EaP Think Tank Forum, Chisinau (within a re-granting project)
- 26-28 September - International Security Experts Conference "Eastern Partners in European Security and Defence - Putting EU Global Strategy in Practice", Vilnius
- September - EaP Index presentation, Brussels
- September - UNP event on the 2020 policy brief, Kyiv
- September 25-29 - Advocacy visit for Crimean activists

It was discussed that the advocacy visit of 2-4 EaP CSF representatives to Brussels prior to the EaP Summit in November shall be accompanied by a public event.

Options:

EaP CSF event in cooperation with an EU MS permanent Representation to the EU

Joint event with Think Visegrad - think-tanks from V4 countries, on the day of the summit

Cooperation with other Brussels-based organisation - OSEPI

It was decided more information will be gathered on these options and the Secretariat will inform the SC.

5. Annual Assembly

Update from the Secretariat on the cooperation with the Estonian colleagues from ECEAP was provided.

The draft agenda of the joint Annual Assembly and Civil Society Conference in Tallinn was discussed extensively. The SC came up with the topics of the sessions and suggestions for speakers and moderators. It was agreed that AA Task Force should be included in the communication with the ECEAP.

Decisions:

1. The SC agreed upon the following procedure for the Pavel Sheremet Journalism award nominations:
 - Secretariat to prepare a nomination template (containing the purpose of the award, name of nominee, his/her major achievement in 2017, background information on the nominee, etc.).
 - The template will be distributed to NPs' members by the NPs coordinators, there should be a two-weeks deadline for response.
 - NPs will prepare a shortlist of one name per NP.
 - The Secretariat will send the template to all EU members with a two-week deadline for response.
 - The Secretariat with the EU Coordinators will shortlist one nominee from the EU side.
 - The Steering Committee shall take the decision on the awardee by mid-August.
2. The call for nominations, as well as call for ideas for side events and networking fair should be included in the newsletter in August/September.
3. The procedure for the Civil Society Declaration development and adoption was discussed. It was suggested the Secretariat will draft the Declaration by July 24, share it with the experts from the Think Tank Forum and then circulate among all members with a deadline for the first round of comments. The National Platforms will run a consultative process and deliver comprehensive input to the Secretariat. The Declaration will be discussed at the TTF in Chisinau (September 21-22), finalized and sent to all participants of the Tallinn AA/CSC for comments at least three weeks before the event. The text shall not be discussed at the Tallinn AA/CSC. The Estonian side will be asked to provide feedback on the draft text of the



Declaration. The procedure for development and adoption of the Declaration shall be finalized.

6. Regranting

A) The EaP CSF Secretariat presented proposed changes in different elements of the regranting scheme.

1. TYPE OF SUB-GRANTS

1.1. Co-funding mandatory for the new cycle

There will be mandatory 10% co-funding (in-kind possible) according to EC standards introduced for the re-granting projects.

Approved by 10 votes out of 11

1.2. Ongoing open scheme for invisible projects and activities in AZ

The Secretariat is suggesting to allocate 10% of the re-granting funding for the so-called invisible grants and support to activities of independent AZ organizations. A board of three current or former SC members forming the selection committee could be selecting beneficiaries of this funding on ongoing bases until the funding is drawn in given year (with the AZ SC representative/s excluded from the procedure for security reasons).

Approved by 10 votes out of 11

1.3. Unused re-granting funds

The unused re-grating funds from WG allocations are automatically transferred to the next year and will be used for the same respective WG (no need to notify the EC). The SC will oversight the re-allocation of these funds.

Approved by 7 votes out of 11

1.4. Allocations

10% for ongoing open scheme for AZ, 10% for ad hoc and internal issues (for example: project on bilateral platforms), 80% on thematic objectives as per WGs relevant in given year (input to platforms and panels, via national stakeholders in the EaP countries, via national stakeholders in EU member states or via the Brussels stakeholders). Specific allocations as per WGs to be discussed based on the outcome of the strategy and internal reform debate.

Approved by 5 votes, 4 against, 1 abstain, 1 not present

1.5. Thematic objectives of the calls

The thematic objectives of the call will be defined based on relevant parts of JSWD – 2020 key priorities and deliverables. WG Coordinators would be responsible for identifying the relevant targets and deliverables for given year (based on consultations with the WGs or based on their expertise and knowledge of the WG).

Approved by 6 votes, 3 against, 1 abstain, 1 not present

2. SELECTION PROCEDURE

2.1. Quality threshold

The project proposals would have to meet a minimum quality threshold; only the proposals meeting the quality threshold can be selected for funding. The quality threshold can be established as a minimum required score.

Approved by 8 votes, 2 against, 1 not present

2.2. Selection procedure modification (implemented in line with modifications of the strategy and internal processes but needs to be budgeted for)

2.3 Selection of external experts

The pool of external experts for evaluation of the project proposals will be created via an open call for expression of interest that will be launched in early September 2017. (The ToRs for experts will be developed jointly by the SC and the Secretariat)

2.4 Composition of the Selection Committee/s

In order to decrease the workload for the evaluators and increase the expertise of the evaluators in the policy areas covered by the Forum's WGs, a Selection Committee will be set up for every WG (5 Selection Committees). It will comprise of two external experts and the WG Coordinator, member of the Steering Committee who excludes her/himself fully from the application process. The participation of the second WG Coordinator who is not a member of the SC can be considered. Merging of the Selection Committees for WG2 and WG5 can be considered. The evaluation meetings will take place online. Due to lower number of proposals to be evaluated, the remuneration can be slightly decreased for the external experts. The Secretariat will be involved in all Selection Committees.

2.5 CoI and role of the WG Councils

This year (2017) has shown again that most of the WG Council members applied for re-granting in various capacities. The role of WG Councils in the selection process should be discussed further, but the Secretariat thinks they should be excluded. Therefore, the Secretariat suggests removing them from the selection procedure. The Secretariat also suggests it should be mandatory for the SC members to refrain from applying in any capacity (lead organization, partner organization, expert) while serving at the SC, as the SC is the ultimate decision-making body when a problem with a project occurs.

Approved by 8 votes, 2 against, 1 not present

3. SUB-GRANT CONTRACT

3.1. Codification of sanctions for non-compliance in the contract and clearly stated in the call for proposals (to be implemented by the Secretariat)

Several types and levels of sanctions should be introduced:

- Monetary – reimbursement of the unjustified costs
- Membership-related - non-participation in the Annual Assembly; ineligibility for the next re-granting cycle, participation in the EaP events and meetings

Criteria for imposition:

- unmet deadlines
- insufficient quality
- unmet visibility requirements
- failure to deliver on financial and narrative reporting
- Failure to deliver the project outputs

Point was accepted, no voting took place

4. EVALUATION OF RE-GRANTING

4.1. Budget allocation for external evaluation of the re-granting program

Budget for external evaluator in 2018 assessing the 2015-2017 cycle, i.e. three years
4.2. Budget allocation for training of the Secretariat staff on project evaluation

Approved by 10 votes, 1 not present

B) The letter from Ihar Lednik on the SC decision regarding the project Information society instead of war (SEC003/2016/WG2/02) received on July 6 was discussed.

It was decided all sanction put in place by the decision of the SC meeting in Helsinki remain in force. The Secretariat shall draft response to Mr Ihar Lednik and inform relevant stakeholders from the EU institutions (DG NEAR, DG Connect, EEAS, Cabinet of Csr Hahn) that Ihar Lednik is not representing the EaP CSF in any capacity.

In relation to this issue, it was raised that the EaP CSF should establish an institution of Ombudsman who would deal with the complaints of any nature coming from the members.

7. Procedure for selecting experts for platforms and panels

Director of the Secretariat Natalia Yerashevich presented the existing the procedure for selecting experts to represent the EaP CSF at the EaP platforms and panels.

Decision: It was agreed that there is a need for a database of experts (1-2 experts per panel) with the expertise relevant to the EaP platforms and panels. The first step would be to include a section on the relevant expertise in the registration form for the Annual Assembly in Tallinn. WG Councils and SWG Coordinators should develop a list with specific expertise of the members of the WGs.

8. Possibility for SC members' remuneration

Director of the Secretariat Natalia Yerashevich presented the requirements under the Belgian law that precludes the SC members from receiving remuneration for exercising their regular duties. However, they can receive compensation for the activities beyond the regular SC members' responsibilities. The selection procedure of a SC member/s for extra duties has to take place and there has to be reasoning why given duty has to be implemented by a SC member.

Decision: The Secretariat is supposed to compile a list of SC members' responsibilities and present it to the SC.

9. EaP Ministerial briefing and Informal Partnership Dialogue in Moldova

Steering Committee member Ina Coseru presented the requirements for the address at the EaP Informal Partnership Dialogue in Chisinau.

Decision: The SC members were supposed to contact the energy efficiency experts in their NPs in order to provide input to the EaP CSF address at the meeting.

10. Initiative of Deutsch-Russischer Austausch on Donbas

Decision: It was decided that more information on the initiative is required.

11. Travel arrangements

Steering Committee member Dovile Sukyte raised the issue of the miscommunication on the travel arrangements with the travel agency Key Travel.

Decision: The Secretariat will remind the travel agency about the necessary improvements in communication.

12. Next SC meeting

Two options for next SC meeting were discussed:

1. Chisinau, Moldova on the side of the EaP Think Tank Forum
2. On the side of Kyiv media Conference and an event the UA NP is going to organise on the 2020 deliverables in September

13. A day and a half brainstorming on **the new strategy of the EaP CSF and possible scenarios of reform** took place in the margins of the SC meeting. Based on the discussion two experts will develop the drafts for the SC comments. The new strategy and an internal reform scenario will be circulated among the attendees of the EaP CSF annual assembly in October in Tallinn and will be offered for adoption there.

Adopted on 26 July 2017