

## ANNEX 2

of the Commission Implementing Decision on ENI East Regional Action Programme 2014  
part II

### Action Document for the Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2014 –Support to the activities of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and to regional civil society capacity development projects

#### 1. IDENTIFICATION

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|--|---|--------|--|
| Title/Number                                       | <b>Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2014 – Support to the activities of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and to regional civil society capacity development projects</b> |        |  |
|  | CRIS number: ENI/2014/ 037-477  |        |  |
| Total cost   | Total estimated cost: <b>EUR 5 380 000</b><br>Total amount of EU budget contribution: <b>5 000 000</b><br>Estimated co-financing by grant beneficiary: <b>EUR 380 000</b>                       |        |  |
| Aid method / Management mode and type of financing | Project Approach<br>Direct management – grants (direct award and call for proposals)  |        |  |
| DAC-code   | 15150   | Sector | Democratic participation and civil society |

#### 2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

##### 2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives

With the creation in 2009 of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum the EU (hereinafter referred to as the EaP CSF or the Forum) sought a broader and more intensive engagement with all civil society stakeholders already involved in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The Forum brings together civil society organisations (CSOs) from the six EaP countries and from EU Member States to exchange views and formulate policy recommendations on national and EU policies.

In its over four years of existence the Forum's biggest achievement is the creation of a broad network of CSOs (organised in National Platforms and Working Groups) and the fostering of extensive socialisation among its members. The Forum has also gradually become more active in supporting EU policies towards the EaP countries and in monitoring national reforms and the implementation of EU programmes.

The European Union has supported the Forum's activities from its inception, but in a fragmented way. In 2013 the Secretariat of the EaP Civil Society Forum Steering Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Secretariat) was created to coordinate the various activities of the Forum. The Secretariat has benefitted from two EU operating grants (in 2013 and 2014) which allowed it to increase capacities and improve the overall work of the Forum's structures. With the further development of the Secretariat, there is an important opportunity

**to financially support the Forum in a more coherent, systematic and stable way, allowing it to focus more on its core activities**, in particular acting as an effective and reliable counterpart for national governments and EU institutions in policy-making.

Additionally, in line with the objectives of the Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility to strengthen and promote civil society's role in reforms and democratic changes taking place in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries, this action will also support regional projects for the capacity development of civil society organisations in the partner countries.

The specific objectives of EU support are:

- To improve the functioning of the structures of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (Working Group, National Platforms) in order for the Forum to become more representative and allow it to become an effective and reliable counterpart for national governments;
- To encourage further cooperation between organisations from the Forum by supporting the joint activities of the Working Groups and National Platforms;
- To increase the capacities of the Secretariat to act as support structure for the Forum;
- To support the creation of regional partnerships between civil society organisations in order to allow for exchanges of experience and increase the capacities of less experienced organisations.

## **2.2. Context**

Recent events in the Neighbourhood region have demonstrated that civil society organisations can be powerful actors of change and have a crucial role to play in transformation processes and in holding governments to account, although, of course, they can also be destabilising in certain contexts.

The Joint Communication on “**A new response to a changing Neighbourhood**”<sup>1</sup> of May 2011 outlined a new approach towards EU’s neighbours to the East and South, based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to respecting universal values, international human rights standards, democracy and the rule of law. Acknowledging civil society’s role to contribute to policy-making and hold governments to account, the Communication committed to supporting a greater role for civil society actors through a partnership with societies, helping civil society actors develop their advocacy capacity, the ability to monitor reform and their role in implementing, monitoring and evaluating EU programmes. The Communication also envisaged more intensive engagement with all stakeholders already involved in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, **including the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**.

One year after the review of the Neighbourhood policy, the Joint Communication “**Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 summit**” of May 2012<sup>2</sup> reaffirmed the need to strengthen EU support for civil society in Eastern Partnership countries and underlined that civil society is expected to facilitate the transformation of partner countries by advocating reforms and by fostering Eastern Partnership’s values. The Joint Communication underlined, inter alia, the important role that the **Civil Society Forum and its National Platforms are**

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2011)303, 25.05.2011

<sup>2</sup> JOIN(2012)13, 15.05.2012

**expected to play in achieving the Partnership’s goals and monitoring implementation of the Roadmap itself.**

Since 2009 the Forum brings together civil society organisations from the six EaP countries and from interested EU Member States to exchange views and formulate policy recommendations on national and EU policies. The Forum consists of the following bodies:

- Five thematic working groups (WG) managed by two co-ordinators each:
  - WG 1. Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability
  - WG 2. Economic integration and convergence with EU policies
  - WG 3. Environment, climate change and energy security
  - WG 4. Contacts between people
  - WG 5. Social Dialogue.
- Six National Platforms active in all six of the EaP partner countries and managed by country facilitators.
- A Steering Committee, the representative body of the Forum, comprising ten WG Co-ordinators, six Country Facilitators, and three EU Co-ordinators.
- A Secretariat, based in Brussels, which supports since 2013 the various activities of the Forum and its members. The Secretariat serves as the Forum’s hub of coordination, information sharing and institutional memory.

The European Union has financially supported the Forum’s activities from its inception. The Secretariat has benefitted from two successive EU-funded operating grants (in 2013 and 2014) which allowed it to increase its capacities and improve the overall work of the Forum’s structures. With the further development of the Secretariat, there is an opportunity **to support financially the Forum in a more coherent, systematic and stable way, allowing it to focus more effectively on its core activities.**

According to an independent assessment of the Forum’s activities finalised in January 2014<sup>3</sup>, the Forum’s biggest achievement to date is the fostering of extensive socialisation among its members and the development of a comprehensive institutional architecture. The Forum has built an extensive network of CSOs organised in the National Platforms and the Working Groups (and their sub-groups) at both the Forum and national levels.

The Forum has also become more active in supporting EU policies concerning the EaP countries, as well as in monitoring national reforms and the implementation of EU programmes, to name a few instances:

- The Forum has alerted policy-makers and the broader public to numerous violations of human rights in 2013 in the Eastern Partnership countries; it observed and produced reports on the 2013 elections in Azerbaijan and Georgia; it appealed to the European Parliament to send the election monitoring mission to Azerbaijan and ensure that the findings of different monitoring missions coincide.
- In cooperation with Georgia’s State Ministry for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, the Georgian National Platform significantly contributed to conceptualising the “Communication and Information Strategy on EU Integration for 2014–2017”.

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<sup>3</sup> Hrant Kostanyan, “*The Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership: four years on. Progress, Challenges and Prospects*”, commissioned by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, January 2014, [http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/HK-EaP-Civil-Society-Forum-\(2\)\(2\).pdf](http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/HK-EaP-Civil-Society-Forum-(2)(2).pdf).

- In 2013 the Forum’s National Platforms and the Steering Committee sought to respond to the unexpected negative developments in the partner countries before and after the Vilnius summit by providing expert opinion, advocating and conducting information campaigns, issuing statements and recommendations to policy-makers in their countries and abroad.
- Working Group 3 of the Forum dealing with environmental and energy issues produced an assessment of the Environmental Component of the EU-Ukraine Bilateral Cooperation, as well as an assessment of environmental policy reforms in the six EaP countries.
- Since January 2014 and prior to meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council where the EaP was on the agenda, the Steering Committee has been addressing letters to both the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and to the Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, in which it outlines its views and recommendations on the issues to be discussed by the 28 EU Foreign Ministers.

Throughout the years the Forum has developed into an active and gradually more visible actor in the Eastern Partnership landscape, both at national and regional level. However, as can be expected from a network involving organisations from a large number of countries and working in sometimes very difficult environments, the Forum is still facing many challenges.

A major challenge is the high turn-over of participants which is the consequence of the one-year ‘mandate’ of those selected. Another challenge for the Forum is maintaining its unity<sup>4</sup> in a context in which partner countries are advancing at very different speeds towards their Eastern Partnership goals. Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have signed the Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTAs). Armenia announced its intention to join a Russia-led Customs Union and consequently negotiations on the AA/DCFTA were abandoned. Progress by Azerbaijan towards fulfilling its EaP related commitment is very slow and cooperation with Belarus is limited to multilateral activities as advancement in bilateral relations is dependent on political progress. With such fragmentation, the civil society groups of the various Eastern Partnership countries might have less common challenges to address together<sup>5</sup>.

However, although the willingness and pace of partner countries towards EaP goals varies greatly, the multilateral dimension of the EaP has shown that on specific technical issues cooperation is not only possible, but desired by partner countries. Similarly, civil society organisations in the region always seem to find areas of common interest, be it migration or environment or human rights issues.

### 2.3. Lessons learnt

At the beginning of 2014 the Commission requested a **special report on “ROM and support to civil society in the Neighbourhood East”** which aimed at providing a critical analysis of the performance of EU-funded civil society projects, with a view to draw lessons and to improve project design and project management. The team analysed the ROM (result-oriented monitoring) reports of 76 projects and developed several recommendations, out of which the most relevant are:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

- In order to help address the most common design faults it would be worth considering having projects of longer durations, possibly five years.
- All project stakeholders should hold more formal and informal events to increase the level of synergy between different projects.
- There is a need to improve the dissemination of results and experiences which can also be done during the presentation of new projects or via the many databases and websites that have been set up previously.

Most importantly, **an assessment of the Forum's activities from 2009 until now** has been commissioned by the Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and finalised in January 2014. The report<sup>6</sup> identified the following main problems:

- There is a need to create better linkages between the different structures of the Forum.
- The Forum has thus far remained an underutilised instrument for triggering policy changes.
- There is no clear functioning mechanism for adopting resolutions during plenary meetings.
- A limited number of organisations are active in the Forum between Working Group meetings which has an impact on the quality of issued recommendations. The availability of small funding for the Working Groups through an EU-funded regional project has allowed reinvigorating to some extent the activities of the Working Groups which need an extra impetus for joint actions due to quite limited communication and to rotation of members.
- Working Group coordinators are not fully aware of their role.
- National Platforms are not always inclusive and may face strong internal disagreements (there are significant differences between partner countries in this respect). The selection criteria and membership rules for National Platforms are not clear and transparent in some of the partner countries. In Armenia and Belarus, the National Platforms experienced serious internal disagreements.
- Some National Platforms are not sufficiently recognised by their own governments and have issues with visibility.
- The Forum at large needs to be better connected to the wider public.
- Additionally some Forum participants are becoming frustrated by the limited number of concrete results following the Forum's first four years of existence.
- Civil society organisations need more capacity development in order better to grasp technical issues and therefore to be able to conduct more effective monitoring.
- The quality of the studies produced by members of the CSF varies. There is a need to work towards a shared methodology and framework for analytical work.
- For the Secretariat to realise its potential, it also needs to have a medium-term institutional strategy and budget. The main operational problem identified stems from the fact that the Secretariat is funded only for a period of one year with fund-raising requiring time and resources that the Secretariat currently lacks.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

As previously mentioned, the EU has supported the Forum from its inception by: financing the logistics for the organisation of plenary, Working Group and Steering Committee meetings, the development and maintenance of the Forum website, supporting the capacity development and strengthening of National Platforms and finally covering the operation costs of the Secretariat in two consecutive years. Previous modes of financing have shown that supporting the Forum indirectly through external companies and experts is not as effective and cost efficient as channelling support through the Secretariat. It has also proved that in a complex stakeholder landscape it is crucial to have a coordination body to manage the different needs and expectations of various actors and Forum structures. Additionally, the financial instability of the Secretariat also decreases its chances of retaining dedicated and professional staff.

As shown by the experience of the ongoing project supporting National Platforms (selected through a regional call for proposals and managed by a former Steering Committee member), the Secretariat is the only body which has the legitimacy and ability of managing and reallocating resources on behalf of the Forum without creating major disagreements between its members.

Additionally, from the implementation of the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility in 2011-2012, it has become apparent that the absorption capacity of civil society organisations from the partner countries far surpasses the availability of funds for regional projects. For example, a high number of proposals were received for a regional call launched in 2011 to support civil society networks and regional projects<sup>7</sup>.

#### **2.4. Complementary actions**

As part of its support to civil society through the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, the European Commission financed several regional and bilateral projects assisting the various structures of the Forum with their activities. In 2012 a regional project started which aims to strengthen the capacities of the Eastern Partnership CSF National Platforms, together with a technical assistance project for more general civil society capacity development in the region.

**The regional project supporting National Platforms (and Working Groups)** was selected before the creation of the EaP CSF Secretariat and currently includes **support to the Secretariat of the Ukrainian National Platform**, as well as **logistical support to the Moldovan National Platform**.

The technical assistance project **“Strengthening Non-State Actors’ Capacities to Promote Reform and Increase Public Accountability”**, has started in 2013. It includes several components: civil society mappings, capacity development, the organisations of multi-stakeholder dialogues, ad-hoc support to civil society organisations and improved visibility.

In 2012, the EU signed a contribution agreement aiming at **strengthening environmental governance by supporting the capacity of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)** in the European neighbourhood countries. The project is implemented by UNDP.

The EaP CSF Secretariat received **operating grants from the Commission in 2013 and 2014**. The Swedish cooperation agency (SIDA) has provided co-financing for the 2013 EU-funded operating grant of the EaP CSF Secretariat and is also currently financing the European Integration Index.

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<sup>7</sup> Call for Proposals EuropeAid/131140/C/ACT/Multi.

Additionally, at bilateral level, the National Platform in Georgia is benefitting from financial support from bilateral resources. It is also likely that the National Platform in Armenia will soon receive EU support for its activities through a direct grant.

In some countries, the civil society organisations involved in the National Platforms are also supported by donors such as other EU member states, their agencies or the Open Society Foundations. From the beginning of these projects, stakeholders were aware of the need to create synergies between these various activities. One way in which to ensure complementarity was to set-up common project Steering Committees (i.e. the team leader of the technical assistance project participates in the Steering Committee of the regional project for National Platforms project and vice versa). Additional complementarities were sought at activity level, for example between the technical assistance project and a capacity development project implemented in Belarus. The Secretariat is always present during Project Steering Committee meetings, acting as a liaison to the Forum. This kind of approach will continue in the future. The proposed activities will be coordinated with the thematic programme “Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities” (CSO-LA) in order to ensure complementarity with the specific priority under the CSO-LA dedicated to reinforcing regional and global CSO networks and associations of local authorities.

From 2014 onwards support to civil society at bilateral level will be mainstreamed throughout all sectors of intervention, with the ultimate goal of ensuring effective and inclusive policies at the national level. In addition, a specific country envelope of 5-10% of the total bilateral allocation is planned to support and strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations beyond the priority sectors.

## **2.5. Donor coordination**

Various support mechanisms and initiatives for civil society actors are already implemented by Member States and other donors in Neighbourhood countries. EU Delegations will keep other donors informed of progress under the Civil Society Facility in the context of country-level donor coordination groups. Among others the mapping exercise carried out by the technical assistance will offer a better picture of the civil society landscape and of the different on-going initiatives related to support to civil society.

## **3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

### **3.1. Objectives**

The overall objective, in line with the Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, is to strengthen and promote civil society's role in reforms and democratic changes taking place in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries.

The specific objectives of this action are:

- To improve the functioning of the various structures of EaP Civil Society Forum (Working Group, National Platforms) to increase its representativeness and allow it to become an effective and reliable counterpart for national governments;
- To encourage further cooperation between organisations from the Forum by supporting the joint activities of the Working Groups and National Platforms;
- To increase the capacities of the Secretariat to act as support structure for the Forum.

- To support the creation of regional partnerships between civil society organisations in order to allow for exchanges of experience and increase the capacities of less experienced organisations.

## 3.2. Expected results and main activities

### 3.2.1. Results

#### 3.2.1.1. Results linked to the improvement of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

According to its **draft strategy for 2014-2017**, the Forum will work to develop its influence on policy by taking part in key debates on EaP-related topics, generating expertise and presenting it at critical moments. The Forum as a whole will strive to become **more policy-oriented** and **produce quality analysis** on relevant topics. Moreover the Forum will aim to function more as an **agenda-setter** rather than merely a provider of expertise and policy advice.

The Forum will continue to promote reforms in each of the EaP countries and draw attention to negative developments including human rights violations in the region that may affect the development of the EaP in general and the relations between the EU and EaP countries. The **National Platforms** of the Forum will continue to voice the consolidated position of the European-oriented civil society with regard to the key developments in each of the EaP countries and propose its view on the situation, as well as policy expertise. Advocating, awareness raising and promoting European values and standards and providing monitoring and expertise will continue to be the priority for activities of the National Platforms.

Following the signature of Association Agreements, the CSF will expand and build up on its previous monitoring activities and will provide **added value in monitoring the fulfilment of Association Agreements**.

In order to mitigate the loss of expertise and accumulated knowledge stemming from the rotation of participants in the key positions of the Forum, **proper knowledge transfer** will be organised, as well as operational procedures and best practices of the Working Groups developed. Furthermore, the responsibilities of those elected (members of the Steering Committee) will be formalised.

The Forum will act and strive to be **perceived as one entity** with clear goals throughout the year rather than as an annual Forum event. This can be addressed by improving the internal communication between the Steering Committee, Working Groups, and National Platforms on their priorities and action plans, as well as ensuring an effective external communication that would promote the achievements of the Forum as a whole as well as the achievements of its particular structures. Based on the priorities listed above, the **Secretariat** will facilitate the implementation of the Forum's strategy.

In line with the main elements of the Forum's medium-term Strategy, as well as the challenges identified in section 2, **expected results** include:

1. Communication and coordination among the Forum's bodies and between the Forum and external stake-holders are enhanced, allowing the Forum to have a stronger voice in its discussion with governments.

2. The Forum is able to produce high quality studies, reports, assessments on policy issues relevant for the EaP countries (this will be assessed based on a monitoring and evaluation framework which will be jointly developed by the Forum and the European Commission).
3. Civil society organisations from the Forum have more capacity to grasp technical issues and therefore are able to conduct more effective monitoring.
4. Based on its analytical and monitoring work, the Forum is able to issue complex and useful policy recommendations (including on technical issues) both for the national governments and the EU, increasing its capacity to trigger policy changes.
5. Cooperation between organisations from the Forum intensifies and becomes constant, instead of being limited to interactions during plenary meetings.
6. Joint new projects are designed and developed by the Working Groups and/or National Platforms.
7. Public perception of the Forum and its members is improved and trust increases as a result of increased visibility of Forum's activities, its positions, publications, and monitoring efforts (surveys to be carried out).
8. The Secretariat improves its functioning as support structure for the Forum and becomes a 'one stop shop' for the expertise on the Forum, its activities, and the civil society analysis in the EaP countries.

3.2.1.2. Expected results linked to supporting the overall capacity development of civil society organisations in the partner countries:

1. Civil society organisations' capacities to promote reform and increase public accountability are increased.
2. Civil society organisations' role as watchdog players is strengthened.
3. Civil society organisations have increased capacity to contribute to analyses and to meaningfully participate in the definition of performance criteria and related monitoring systems.
4. Civil society networks that may facilitate co-ordination and lobbying are strengthened.

**3.2.2. Indicative activities:**

3.2.2.1. Indicative activities linked to the Forum

In order to address the problems identified in the assessment of the Forum and attain the results mentioned above, the following activities are envisaged:

- Organising **Forum meetings (working groups, Steering Committee, plenary meetings)**;

- Organising **sub-working group advocacy events**<sup>8</sup> in Brussels or the EaP countries – these will be targeted events that will inform policy-makers about the results of the research/monitoring projects conducted in the framework of Working Group activities/projects.
- **Organising capacity development activities for Working Groups and National Platforms**, such as:
  - Trainings/information session for the representatives of Working Groups/National Platforms working in a certain thematic area such as environment, youth, education, governance, etc.
  - Trainings on public policy analysis and monitoring, including budgetary analysis and monitoring.
- **Supporting joint projects and activities of the WGs through re-granting** (e.g. analysing the situation in certain thematic areas per country and regionally and developing recommendations, monitoring the implementation of Association Agreements and producing sectorial overviews with a regional comparative perspective):
  - Projects will have a strong regional component involving several EaP countries (at least two) and possibly EU CSOs thus taking advantage of the cross-country opportunities for cooperation that WGs provide to their participants.
  - Particular efforts should be made in this context to connect the activities of the WG to the interest and needs of the wider public.
  - The Secretariat jointly with the Steering Committee will develop a project selection procedure, which will have to be endorsed by the European Commission and by the Forum members during the plenary meeting in Georgia in November 2014. The procedure will involve the Steering Committee members and Working Group coordinators.
  - The activities to be funded through re-granting will generally remain of a short duration (less than 12 months) and with very clearly defined objectives linked to the work of the Working Groups.
  - Short-term expertise may be provided through the Secretariat in order to improve the quality of proposals coming from the Forum's structures and provide independent assessments when internal disagreements arise.
- **Supporting the (regional) activities of National Platforms to ensure better linkages between them:**
  - Linking the National Platforms of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova (and potentially Ukraine) now that the Association Agreements are signed to allow them to share experiences and best practices on their involvement in monitoring and implementation of the Association Agreements.
  - Particular efforts should be made in this context to connect the activities of the NP to the interest and needs of the wider public.
  - Another type of activity could be the joint production of research with a focus on the priority themes of the NPs.

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<sup>8</sup> This may be adapted depending on the future number of sub-working groups, but will not go above 5 advocacy presentations per WG.

- Core support to NPs will not be provided, as this is of a more bilateral nature. However, in those countries where the National Platforms lack resources, minor logistical support can be provided through the Secretariat at the specific request of NPs.
  - Additionally activities which are meant to improve the visibility and inclusiveness of the platforms may also be supported, if it can be proven that no overlap exists with other project/activities.
  - In countries where the NP is not a legally registered entity, each NP should take a decision on how funding for these activities should be allocated (i.e. which organisation from the platform will legally represent it and would manage the EU funds). The Secretariat may support NP in defining selection and accountability procedures, if required.
- **Public awareness campaigns to promote the Forum’s activities and the EaP** that would include TV and radio programmes, publications, meetings in rural areas, sharing success stories from countries that recently joined the EU.
  - **Financing the activities of the Secretariat as support structure for the Forum:**
    - Serving as the Forum’s hub of coordination, including by contributing to drafting clear procedures and, where relevant, methodologies and results matrixes. This should include designing a better mechanism for the introduction and processing of resolutions during Forum meetings;
    - Acting as intermediary, sharing the most relevant know-how and innovative practices within the Forum and beyond;
    - Contributing to more effective knowledge and skills transfer in the Forum (serving as the Forum’s “institutional memory”).
    - Contributing to research and assessment activities;
    - Promoting opportunities for CSOs, including for capacity development;
    - Potentially designing and delivering training activities and facilitating mentoring, coaching, study tours and exchange visits, peer-learning seminars, etc. between Forum members.
    - Organising follow-up activities with those organisations which benefitted from capacity development to guide them during the implementation of their work;
    - Ensuring synergies with other EU-funded projects for civil society;
    - Supporting CSOs to develop sustainable partnerships that are likely to grow;
    - Under the supervision of the Steering Committee and the European Commission, designing and implementing the re-grating required to support activities of the Working Groups and NPs;
    - Ensuring that the Forum (re)connects the CSOs in partner countries with society at large, inter alia, by involving grassroots activists more often in Forum’s activities.

#### 3.2.2.2. Indicative activities linked to overall capacity development for civil society organisations:

- Bilateral or trilateral twinning projects between civil society organisations;

- Traineeships (or job shadowing) for civil society organisations' staff from partner country;
- Mentoring or coaching;
- Study tours;
- Web-based learning;
- Peer-learning seminars;
- Trainings;
- Ad-hoc support, e.g. helpdesks for CSOs, support to CSOs umbrellas, etc.
- Facilitation services for brokering partnerships and coalitions.

### **3.3. Risks and assumptions**

#### **3.3.1. External risks:**

- Diversity of the EaP countries in terms of their willingness to integrate with the EU and the EaP region. While the Georgian and Moldovan governments seem to welcome CSOs in the decision-shaping processes when it comes to European integration issues, other EaP governments are not sympathetic to the idea of involving their CSOs in deliberations over governance and external affairs.
- Diversity in terms of political will to implement genuine reforms;
- Shrinking space for civil society operation in some of the EaP countries, in particular Azerbaijan and Belarus;
- The Civil Society Forum's positions are taken into account only partly by some of the EaP partner governments and disregarded by others.
- The credibility of civil society in general in EaP countries is not very high.

#### **3.3.2. Mitigation measures for external risks:**

- Although the willingness and pace of partner countries towards EaP goals varies greatly, the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership has shown that on specific technical issues cooperation is not only possible, but desired by partner countries. Similarly, civil society organisations in the region always seem to find areas of common interest, be it migration or environment or human rights issues.
- The Forum can contribute to fostering an enabling environment by monitoring developments in partner countries and lobbying and advocating both nationally and internationally to redress certain situations.
- Civil society's credibility in partner countries can be partly improved by disseminating the results of CSO actions and CSO led projects (although this can also add further tension).

#### **3.3.3. Internal risks:**

- Diverse goals and interests of Forum participants (fundraising; partnering; get closer to governments; monitor government action and serve as a watchdog; to facilitate reforms; to network; to participate in the annual Forum event);

- High turnover of Forum participants that prevents the organisational development and capacity building of the Forum as an organisation;
- Complex structure with sometimes unclear roles and responsibilities;
- Still weak capacity of civil society organisations in the Forum on policy issues;
- Difficulty for the Forum in fund-raising beyond EU and SIDA opportunities;
- Lack of visibility and distinct profile in the partner countries.

#### **3.3.4. Mitigation measures for internal risks:**

- The diverse goals and interests of Forum participants are not necessarily a negative aspect as long as a proper stakeholder management is put in place allowing diverse needs and interests to be addressed, without diluting the activities of the Forum.
- The Secretariat and Steering Committee are currently discussing whether an extension of the participants' mandate from one year to two years should be proposed during the next plenary meeting.
- The adoption of the 2014-2017 Strategy will be a pre-requisite for financial support. With more stable funding and a clearer strategy (which the Forum already developed), the Secretariat will be able to better facilitate a more operational division of tasks between different Forum actors.
- A plethora of activities currently aims at increasing the capacities of civil society organisations in the Eastern Neighbourhood region: the technical assistance project, several CSO-led regional projects, bilateral projects in all partner countries, etc. The Secretariat has an important role in facilitating complementarity between these projects, for example by participating in project Steering Committees and updating Forum members on project status.
- Various activities aiming to bring the Forum closer to its constituencies and increasing its visibility in the EaP region will be supported through this action, as well as through other regional and bilateral activities.
- While acknowledging the difficulty of making the Forum as a civil society network fully sustainable and independent of EU funding, the Forum should nevertheless seek to diversify its funding in the coming years.

#### **3.4. Cross-cutting issues**

The action is actor-oriented and not limited to one sector. The diversity of civil society actors involved in the Forum ensures a representation of multiple sectors of activities.

As the objective is to strengthen and promote civil society's role in reforms and democratic changes taking place in the EaP countries, this participatory approach to decision-making is at the heart of the good governance principles, and a core element of democracy. In general, the Civil Society Facility (of which the current action is part) should enhance the accountability of governments and the reforms implemented vis-à-vis a structured and solid civil society. It also seeks to enhance the representativeness, transparency and internal democracy of civil society actors themselves.

### **3.5. Stakeholders**

According to the Communication on “The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations”<sup>9</sup>, the concept of “CSOs” embraces a wide range of actors with different roles and mandates. Definitions vary over time and across institutions and countries. The EU considers CSOs to include all non-state, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations.

The main stakeholders of this action are the members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and its structures. The EaP CSF Steering Committee will be involved in better defining activities during contract preparation and they will be monitoring the results according to a pre-defined and pre-agreed monitoring and evaluation matrix. The Secretariat of the EaP CSF will be implementing the action, in collaboration with the various Working Group and National Platforms.

The final beneficiaries are the wider populations of partner countries which will be better informed about policies and, depending on the country, will have a greater say in their definition and implementation.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

### **4.1. Financing agreement**

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner countries, referred to in Article 184(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

### **4.2. Indicative operational implementation period**

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in sections 3.2 and 4.3 will be carried out, is **60 months** from the adoption of this Action Document, subject to modifications to be agreed by the responsible authorising officer in the relevant agreements (indicative contracts duration: 48 months). The European Parliament and the relevant Committee shall be informed of the extension of the operational implementation period within one month of that extension being granted.

### **4.3. Implementation components and modules**

#### **4.3.1. Grants: call for proposal Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility - Regional actions (direct management)**

- (a) Objectives of the grants, fields of intervention, priorities of the year and expected results

The global objective of this Call for Proposals is to support active and inclusive civil society organisations which contribute to the social and economic development of partner countries. The specific objective is to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations from the European Neighbourhood partner countries allowing them to improve their engagement in

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<sup>9</sup> COM(2012)492, 12.09.2012

policy-making processes and policy dialogue, their role as watchdog and monitoring players, and their representativeness and links with their constituencies.

(b) Eligibility conditions

Applicants will be legal persons established in a Member State of the European Union or a country from the Eastern Neighbourhood; non-profit-making civil society organisations, such as non-governmental non-profit organisations and independent foundations, community-based organisations and private-sector non-profit agencies, institutions and organisations and networks thereof at local, national, regional and international level.

(c) Essential selection and award criteria

The essential selection criteria are financial and operational capacity of the applicant.

The essential award criteria are relevance of the proposed action to the objectives of the call; design, effectiveness, feasibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the action.

(d) Maximum rate of co-financing

The maximum possible rate of co-financing for grants under this call is 90% of the eligible costs of the action.

The maximum possible rate of co-financing may be up to 100% in accordance with Article 192 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 if full funding is essential for the action to be carried out. The essentiality of full funding will be justified by the responsible authorising officer in the award decision, in respect of the principles of equal treatment and sound financial management.

(e) Indicative trimester to launch the call

The Call for Proposals was already launched in April 2014<sup>10</sup>.

The present funding will be used to finance proposals on the reserve lists of the three lots of the call, subject to the validity period of the reserve lists and to the quality of the proposals put on the reserve lists. Repartition of these funds will be agreed following a consultation of Delegations and Headquarters, based upon the elements listed above (validity of reserve lists and quality of reserve proposals).

Should not enough worthwhile proposals be left in these reserve lists, a new call for proposals would be envisaged, in line with the characteristics spelled out in the sub-sections (a) to (d).

#### **4.3.2. Grant: direct award (direct management)**

(a) Objectives of the grant, fields of intervention, priorities of the year and expected results

Objectives and results detailed under sections 3.1 and 3.2.

(b) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the authorising officer by delegation, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to the Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

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<sup>10</sup> Call for proposals EuropeAid/135811/DH/ACT/Multi.

*(Le Secretariat du Comité de Pilotage du Forum de la Société Civile du Partenariat Oriental AISBL).*

Under the responsibility of the authorising officer by delegation, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because the action has specific characteristics requiring a specific type of beneficiary for its technical competence, specialisation or administrative power. The Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Committee is the only administrative body (non-profit organisation under Belgian Law) that coordinates the activities of the Forum and its National Platforms, as described in sections 2 and 3 of the present Action Document.

(c) Eligibility conditions

Not applicable.

(d) Essential selection and award criteria

The essential selection criteria are financial and operational capacity of the applicant.

The essential award criteria are relevance of the proposed action to the objectives of the call; design, effectiveness, feasibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the action.

(e) Maximum rate of co-financing

The maximum possible rate of co-financing for this grant is 95% of the eligible costs of the action.

The maximum possible rate of co-financing may be up to 100% in accordance with Article 192 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 if full funding is essential for the action to be carried out. The essentiality of full funding will be justified by the responsible authorising officer in the award decision, in respect of the principles of equal treatment and sound financial management.

(f) Indicative trimester to contact the potential direct grant beneficiary

Third trimester of 2014.

#### **4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants**

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act shall apply.

The responsible authorising officer may extend the geographical eligibility in accordance with Article 9(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) No. 232/2014 on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries concerned, or other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

#### 4.5. Indicative budget

| Module   | Amount    | Third party contribution (indicative) |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 4.3.1. Grants: call for proposal Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility - Regional actions (direct management) | 2 000 000 | 225 000                               |
| 4.3.2. – Direct grant (direct management) with the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Secretariat       | 3 000 000 | 155 000                               |
| Total  | 5 000 000 | 380 000                               |

#### 4.6. Performance monitoring

A monitoring and evaluation framework (with clear indicators of achievement) will be developed jointly by the EaP CSF and European Commission and will seek to provide plausible evidence of the effectiveness of the action in achieving change, based on sufficiently rigorous methods. The final framework should be endorsed by the European Commission. The members of the EaP CSF Steering Committee will monitor the implementation of this action throughout its duration.

Additional monitoring of the activities will be ensured through a monitoring element embedded in the contract in order to measure performance and achievement of the assigned objectives, and through the results-oriented monitoring (ROM) used for projects.

#### 4.7. Evaluation and audit

Mid-term and final evaluations of the results achieved will be entrusted to independent consultants, as well as external audits (which will be carried out if necessary). These evaluations and audits will be funded from other sources than the project budget.

The final evaluation will be commissioned at the end of the implementation period (2019) to provide the necessary inputs for further support.

#### 4.8. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU. This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated before the start of implementation and supported within the budget indicated in section 4.5 above. The measures shall be implemented by the grant beneficiaries and by sub-grantees.

The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations. Visibility and communication in the partner countries will be carried out with the support of EU Delegations.

In particular, the EaP CSF Secretariat will seek to ensure increased communication with Forum participants and external partners through a regular electronic newsletter, publications on the CSF website (<http://www.eap-csf.eu/>) and social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn account). It will also use such platforms as the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre

(<http://www.enpi-info.eu/>), the newly created websites of the EaP CSF National Platforms, and the website of the technical assistance project implemented by Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Audio-visual material will be produced for the Forum's YouTube channel (e.g. short videos with participation of Forum experts dedicated to actual developments in the EaP and Forum's activities).