



**Invitation to submit expressions of interest
to participate in the fourth meeting of the Eastern Partnership
Civil Society Forum (29-30 November 2012, Sweden)**

The Eastern Partnership Summit in Prague on 7 May 2009 confirmed the European Commission proposal from December 2008 to establish the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) “to promote contacts among Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and facilitate their dialogue with public authorities” in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. The summit invited the European Commission “to develop and propose modalities for the establishment of a Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership”.

As outlined in the Joint Declaration of the Warsaw Eastern Partnership Summit, Warsaw, 29-30 September 2011, “the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and its National Platforms are essential to promote democratic values on which the Eastern Partnership is based. The Forum’s involvement in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership should be strengthened, including through reinforced capacity and enhanced participation in the Eastern Partnership multilateral track.”

In the run up to the first meeting of the Forum, the European Commission consulted the modalities of the Forum with all interested stakeholders. The consulted parties favoured a comprehensive approach allowing for the participation of a wide range of CSOs: trade unions, employers' organisations, professional associations, NGOs, think-tanks, non-profit foundations, national and international CSOs/networks, and other relevant Civil Society actors from EaP Partner Countries, but also from EU Member States and international organisations/networks.

The first EaP CSF took place in Brussels on 16-17 November 2009 and gathered more than 200 CSOs. During the Forum, participants elected the CSF Steering Committee and tasked it with the responsibility of developing a procedure for selection of the participants for the next Forum. The CSF Steering Committee elaborated the procedure that was applied in the process of selection of the participants to the second meeting of the EaP CSF, which was held in Berlin on 18-19 November 2010, and to the third meeting held in Poznan on 28-30 November 2011. The fourth meeting of the EaP CSF will be held in Sweden on 29-30 November 2012.

The **procedure for selection** can be found below, duly updated in line with the emergence of national platforms, the need for more explicit criteria to be shared with applicants to ensure the transparency of the process, and to reflect the increase from four to five working groups.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum was initiated in May 2009 in Prague, Czech Republic, and brings together civil society actors working at national and international

level to hold the EU and the Partner countries accountable to the commitments made in the joint declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership summit, signed on 7 May 2009 by the EU and six neighbouring countries. The Forum and its organs (national platforms, thematic working groups, and Steering Committee) work to support civil society organisations in their efforts to strengthen the diversity and plurality of public discourse and policymaking, by holding governments and public authorities to account, and by protecting and promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms, participatory democracy, market economy, sustainable development, and good governance.

The Forum works closely with the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), EU member governments, European Parliament and other EU institutions, and engages with Partner countries' governments, to:

- facilitate a roadmap for democratic transition in the Partner countries
- monitor developments in EU relations with the Partner countries
- promote the results and activities of civil society projects, and the participation of civil society actors to contribute to effective public policy outcomes
- foster the engagement of independent civil society expertise in the work of the expert panels/thematic platforms.

The Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum is now inviting all interested parties to submit expressions of interest to participate in the fourth meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The submission of expressions of interest is a necessary step in the selection process to participate in the EaP CSF meeting in Sweden in 2012.

The meeting has been made possible thanks to the support of the European Commission/European External Action Service and the support of Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The application form prepared by the CSF Steering Committee can be found on the CSF website - www.eap-csf.eu

[Submissions of expressions of interest \(see application form attached\) should be completed in English or Russian and sent before midnight CET, 18 June 2012, to the contact e-mail address: \[applications@eap-csf.eu\]\(mailto:applications@eap-csf.eu\)](#)

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

The European Commission/European External Action Service will be able to fund the travel and hotel accommodation during the Forum meeting only for the selected CSOs. It will be possible for the EC/EEAS to cover the travel and accommodation of up to 180 CSOs – a maximum of 130 from the EaP countries and a maximum of 50 from EU member states. Note: Unlike in previous years, this year the EC/EEAS is funding the attendance of the selected EU CSO representatives.

THE PROCEDURE FOR THE SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE EaP CSF:

The Civil Society Forum is open to a wide range of CSOs: trade unions, employers' organisations, professional associations, NGOs, think-tanks, non-profit foundations, national and international CSOs/networks and other relevant Civil Society actors from EaP Partner Countries, but also from EU Member States and international organisations/networks. Up to 15 CSOs from third countries, including two representatives of the steering committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, can also participate in the EaP CSF as observers. It should be noted that the European Commission does not cover costs of the participation of observers in the Forum's activities. In line with the decision of the Forum in 2011, a fifth working group will be established at the 2012 Forum event – the Social Dialogue working group, comprising representatives of employee organisations, employers' organisations, NGOs working on social issues, chambers of commerce, and other business associations.

All CSOs fitting within the above description are eligible to apply for participation.

The selection of the participants to the EaP CSF 2012 will be carried out by the CSF Steering Committee. The selection procedure will be twofold:

I. Preparation of three shortlists:

- (1) By EaP Country Facilitators elected by the CSF in 2011 and supported by CSF national platforms. In the case of CSOs from EU Member States and international organisations/networks as well as CSOs from third countries, the shortlist is prepared by the three EU co-ordinators elected by the CSF in 2011.
- (2) By the thematic working group coordinators elected by the CSF in 2011 (except for new WG5, for which there will be just two shortlists for the 2012 selection procedure).
- (3) By EU delegations in the six EaP countries.

Shortlists are prepared on the basis of the following criteria:

- **Eligibility:** applicants must be independent, non-governmental, non-partisan (not institutionally affiliated to a political party) organisations that respect democratic values. They should also be bona fide, independent organisations in their own right.
- **Diversity of spheres of activity** (it is crucial to ensure the involvement of all the major components of civil society and at the same time to ensure adequate representation for each of the thematic working groups and subgroups).
- **Involvement in ENP/EaP-related matters**
- **Rotation**, whereby eligible, independent CSOs that have not participated in previous Forum annual events are given preference over those that have been represented in previous Forum meetings (in the first instance, over those that have participated in all three Forum meetings to date).

II. The final decision is made by the CSF Steering Committee members from the shortlisted organisations on the basis of the following criteria:

- Eligibility: applicants must be independent, non-governmental, non-partisan (not institutionally affiliated to a political party) organisations that respect democratic values. They should also be bona fide, independent organisations in their own right.
- Diversity of spheres of activity (it is crucial to ensure the involvement of all the major components of civil society and at the same time to ensure adequate representation for each of the thematic working groups and subgroups).
- Balance in numbers in each working group between EU participants and EaP participants.
- Involvement in ENP/EaP-related matters.
- Country (a minimum of 10% participants from each EaP country and a minimum of 25% from the EU).
- Participation in the previous Forum (with a minimum 40% of new participants and up to a maximum 60% of those who participated in the CSF meeting in 2011) insofar as the number of new applications is high enough to make this formula possible. The formula applies primarily to each country list and to the EU participants, but will also be applied as far as possible in the respective working group allocations.

The final list of CSOs invited to participate to the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum prepared by the CSF Steering Committee will be consulted with the European External Action Service/European Commission.