

**The results of the invitation to submit expressions of interest
to participate in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
and next steps leading to its first gathering
on 16-17 November 2009 in Brussels**

On 29 June 2009 the European Commission invited interested parties, i.e. grass roots organisations, trade unions, employers' organisations, professional associations, NGOs, think-tanks, non-profit foundations, national and international CSOs/networks and other relevant Civil Society (CS) actors, to submit their expressions of interest to participate in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Civil Society Forum (CSF)¹.

The establishment of the Forum was proposed in the Commission's Communication on the Eastern Partnership of 3 December 2008². The Eastern Partnership Summit on 7 May 2009 endorsed the Commission's proposal and in joint declaration invited "the European Commission to develop and propose modalities for the establishment of a Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership". On 29 June the Commission presented its Concept Paper on this and in parallel invited all interested parties to manifest their interest to participate in the CSF with a deadline 31 August 2009.

Due to the great interest and a large number of expressions received in the last days of August the on 31.08.2009 **the Commission extended the deadline to 3 September 2009**. A large number of expressions of interest were sent to a mailbox: RELEX-D1-EAP-CIVIL-SOCIETY@ec.europa.eu in the first days of September.

The present paper presents and briefly analyzes the results of the call. It also informs about the next steps leading to the first meeting of the EaP CSF.

**Altogether 439 expressions of interests were received before the extended deadline.
This demonstrates considerable interest of Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership**

The expressions were received from:

Armenia -	50
Azerbaijan -	69
Belarus -	76
Georgia -	30
Republic of Moldova -	30
Ukraine -	62

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/civil_society/docs/invite_en.pdf

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52008DC0823:EN:NOT>

EU Member State, international organisations, networks
or from a third country - 122

To ensure the transparency of the process leading to the establishment of the Forum the Commission proposed in its Concept Paper to “set up a Steering Committee for the launch of the EaP CSF and involve in its works the EU Presidency, the EESC and recognised independent experts. This steering committee would be responsible for the swift selection process of the CSF participants and facilitate the work during the launching conference of the CSF”.

The Steering Committee was established on 11 September 2009. It is composed of European Commission officials, representatives of the EU Presidency, the EESC and independent experts: Alexander Duleba, Heather Grabbe and Eugeniusz Smolar³.

**On 23 September 2009 in Brussels the Steering Committee
will make a selection of around 200 participants in the Forum
on the basis of criteria presented in the Concept Paper.**

- **Geographic origin/nationality** – a majority of CSF participants should come from the CSOs from EaP partner countries (and their number per each partner country should be balanced). However an important number of participants should also come from EU MS and international organisations/networks to allow for exchange of experience in the EU affairs/policies (as one of the main goals of the EaP is to bring Eastern partner countries closer to the EU). CSOs from third countries may also be invited;
- **Diversity and proportionality** – participants should represent all variety of civil society actors (grass roots organizations, trade unions, employers' organisations, professional associations, NGOs, think-tanks, non-profit foundations, national and international CSOs/networks and other relevant Civil Society actors). They should be able to contribute to all thematic aspects of the EaP i.e.: 1) Democracy, good governance and stability; 2) Economic integration and convergence with EU policies; 3) Environment, climate change & energy security; 4) Contacts between people;
- **Experience in the EU/ENP/EaP matters** (taking into account past and current activities and results achieved).

While applying the criteria listed above in the selection process the Steering Committee will also take into account the specificity of each of the partner countries.

³ As independent experts they will not represent in the steering committee organisations they belong to nor will they take part in the discussions on the eventual participation of those organizations in the EaP CSF.

Based on the advice of the Steering Committee the Commission will invite selected organisations to participate in the EaP CSF. The Committee will also discuss the draft programme of the EaP CSF that will be proposed during its first meeting. This programme will be made public at a later stage. The Steering Committee may also propose to select the “facilitators” to help EaP CSF in its works.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum will gather in Brussels on 16-17 November under the auspices of the European Commission, the EU Presidency and the European Economic and Social Committee.

During the Forum, as suggested in the Concept Paper, **thematic working groups** could be established reflecting the priorities of the multilateral track of the EaP, i.e.: 1. Democracy, good governance and stability; 2. Economic integration and convergence with EU policies; 3. Environment, climate change & energy security; 4. Contacts between people.

The final decision on the structure of the Forum will depend on participants themselves. If the Forum decide to adopt any recommendations to the multilateral framework of the EaP (thematic Platforms, EaP Foreign Ministers) they will be transmitted accordingly.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Due to the budgetary constraints, the Commission will be able to fund the travel and hotel stay during the Forum only for the CSOs from EaP countries. **It will not be possible for the EC to cover any expenses of the CSOs from EU Member State, international organisations, networks or from a third country.**

Comments can be sent to: RELEX-D1-EAP-CIVIL-SOCIETY@ec.europa.eu