



PERC PAN-EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COUNCIL CRE CONSEIL REGIONAL EUROPEEN
BEPС ВСЕЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЙ СОВЕТ

**5th PERC Executive Committee
Brussels, 7 March 2011**

Agenda Item 5: EaP and the Civil Society Forum – situation and next steps



PERC activities in the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership Policy of the EU

1. Following the decision of the PERC Executive Committee (8 March 2010) a **joint letter with the EESC and IOE to the Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF)** was sent (20 May 2010) with demands to reconsider the constituent principles of the Forum and particularly the selection criteria and procedures. An answer to the letter (27 May 2010) recognized legitimate concerns expressed by the social partners and EESC, and said that they would take them into account in the ongoing round of selection of participants and invited for a meeting. Later on however, the date was specified - 28 July 2010 - which then was technically not possible because of the inconvenient timing.
2. During the first year of CSF operation the so called **National Platforms** involving all interested civil society organizations within the country were to be set up and come up with their own ideas for the 2nd conference of the CSF. The process was not transparent and by the autumn of 2010 the only clear results were for Azerbaijan and subsequently for Georgia. In some cases structures appeared and then split again.
3. From the trade union point of view it is of concern that, apart from Georgian National Platform where unions are present and play an important role, **trade unions were largely ignored** and in some case even rejected by NGOs which dominate the process.
4. The selection procedure 2010: Unlike in 2009 available information suggests that all **TU organizations that applied in time have been selected** for participation in the 2nd annual conference of the CSF in Berlin in November 2011. These are: BKDP, GTUC, TCO-S, Solidarnosc, PERC Youth Committee, PERC Women's Committee and PERC itself. The exercise and the discussion at the meeting in October 2010 also suggests that more active involvement of the trade unions themselves, particularly from the EaP countries, will be needed to use properly and adjust where necessary the selection procedure.
5. This does not replace the **need for further pressure to change the premises on which the whole construction is based** and which marginalizes the social partners in principle. The best illustration is that the president of the official unions in Belarus - I. Kozik was selected for a second time as a participant only to raise the issue of GSP restrictions and ask for their removal which some NGOs tried to support. Currently Kozik is on the new EU list of Belorussian public figures that are banned from entering the EU, obviously for supporting the regime of Lukashenko.
6. The organizations selected plus other interested ones held a **preparatory meeting for the forthcoming Berlin CSF annual conference**. The meeting took place in October 2010 supported by the FGTB in which participated S. Boyle, President of the EESC External Relations Section from the EESC trade union Group, and Ivan Voles, EESC representative in the CSF Steering Committee, from the employers Group. Organizations presented at the meeting: KPA (Armenia), AHIK (Azerbaijan), BKDP (Belarus), CMKOS (Czech Republic), GTUC (Georgia), LPSK (Lithuania), NSZZ Solidarnosc (Poland), FNPR (Russia), FPU, KVPU, VOST (Ukraine), TCO (Sweden), CC.OO (Spain), FGTB, Hubert Cambier, Ernst Piehl (consultants), ITUC/PERC.
7. The meeting outlined the **key challenges for the effective participation of the trade unions**:
 - Composition of the Steering Committee with no members from social partners, practically closing channels for recommendations from them to be made to the political level;
 - The interaction of the CSF platforms and the respective policy setting platforms of the EaP where ministers from the countries decide with EU representatives. Recommendations from CSF are presented quite formally with remarks that some of them are in the policy outline itself or that others are too general. The practical outcome is that the minimalist ideas of a Business Forum about disseminating information for SMEs were agreed while and the proposal for a regional survey on social dialogue received no support and did not make any progress.

- No clear channels or mechanisms for participants to promote initiatives and proposals for consideration and financial support. The EaP Vademecum on financing of the EaP (September 2010) mentions civil society as eligible only once in relation to trans-border cooperation.
8. The meeting of trade union was acquainted with the draft proposals of CSF Platform 2 to be taken up by the new platform 2 participants at the CSF Berlin meeting a month later.
 9. **Main conclusions of the October meeting of trade unions:**
 - Under the current circumstances it is difficult to see the rationale for trade union participation in the Civil Society Forum of the EaP. The Employer group has already expressed a similar attitude to the developments.
 - National trade unions in the EaP countries will make efforts to find a place and explore opportunities for real work in the National Platforms and as channels for initiatives in the area of labour and social policy.
 - PERC/ETUC to continue joint actions with EESC and employer organizations and raise the political level of the approach as high as needed to be noticed and trigger an adjustment process for the CSF to properly reflect the weight of the social partners in civil society and the importance of social dialogue along with civil dialogue for a genuine democratic process to work. The issue to be discussed in that light at the PERC Executive Committee, March 2011.
 - To continue the meetings of the unions interested in the EaP and to consider if a more structured approach would bring better results.
 - If the efforts of trade unions fail to deliver meaningful results, to consider withdrawing from the EaP CSF operation and look for other ways to participate/influence the policy.
 10. The 2nd annual conference of the EaP Civil Society Forum – Berlin, 18-19 November 2010 despite all efforts of high policy representatives to counter the obvious disappointment and criticism of the CSF operation again confirmed previously identified trade union concerns and the controversial pattern of work of the Forum.
 11. Commissioner S. Füle (EU Enlargement) addressed the Forum with two official speeches and one at the Czech Embassy reception, each time underlining the important role civil society is expected to play in the EaP process. In his opening speech he recognized certain problems in the functioning of the Forum in the first year, among them the problem with the inadequate representation of the social partners and other relevant groups along the EESC format of representing civil society in the EU. The issue was raised much more strongly and sharply in the intervention on behalf of the EESC President, with practical orientations on how to deal with it. No further reference has followed since.
 12. The most clearly practical message (obviously recognizing the accumulated tensions in the operation of the CSF) was delivered by the Commissioner stating: "Do not panic, money is coming". This may be good news for NGOs that live on projects but seems to take the key issues further away from the purpose of trade union participation in the Forum – access to the policy process and a real chance to influence it in a transparent and democratic way.
 13. In terms of organization and procedure the meeting took the internal differentiation of participants even further by introducing the category of "observer" for all participants from the non – EaP countries. Following their enquiry about their status the trade union group was initially informed that "observers" cannot vote and can speak only if allowed. As the next step obviously was for the group to leave the Forum the staff realized the seriousness of the issue and clarified with the organizers that the explanation given in the plenary meeting was wrong.
 14. In terms of content the work in Platform 2 (economic reforms and EU integration) did quite well and a number of non-union participants underlined and demanded measures and activities related to development of social dialogue and strengthening of the role of social partners. The

president of FPB (Belarus) again raised the need to remove "sanctions" in EU GSP policy and had to be countered for the group to drop the proposal. Another attempt to press the EU to quickly conclude a Free Trade Agreement with Georgia had to be countered too and was dropped.

15. Trade union proposals in Platform 1 (human rights and democracy) and Platform 4 (people to people contacts) encountered much more difficulties and outright resistance. NGOs from some countries refused to include references to labour and social rights as part of the human rights frame on the premise that trade unions in their countries were under government control - so no space for cooperation.
16. The fate of the recommendations from the Berlin conference is not clearer than previously. The first signal, the meeting of the Steering Committee with the EU ministers on 15 December 2010 may be indicative. CSF representatives were given 15 minutes to present the recommendations and were not allowed to stay at the meeting.
17. The last indicator of the work of the CSF is the website launched in Berlin - <http://www.eap-csf.eu>. From all the sections of the website, practical information about something done is in the "News" section: a list of meetings. Even the recommendations from the conference are not on the website on the sections for the respective platforms. So they cannot be freely accessed by anyone even by the participants from other platforms.

18. Possible lines for strategic actions

Following the discussions and exchanges at the PERC meeting in October 2010, the meeting with SSOs in January and the cooperation in the preparation of an EESC opinion on the Eastern partnership policy of the EU the next steps can take different forms but are to be oriented along two main strategy lines:

- Continuing the joint pressure of EESC and the social partners on the respective EU units to address the fundamental flaws in the construction of the CSF which now are not only an obstacle to participation but generate policy contradictions and tensions inside the Forum which then can be complicate cooperation of civil society on the national level. Pressure needs to be raised to levels of real policy-setting and decision-making if it is to be expected to produce results.
- Second, in case the first line does not lead to tangible results initiative can be taken by the EESC and the social partners with other marginalized civil society groups to develop an alternative way of interacting with the EaP operating through an appropriate structure if necessary. The idea is already in circulation.

The two lines are not incompatible and can be put in motion in parallel at a certain point.



European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
Confédération européenne des syndicats (CES)

Brussels, 20 May 2010
JM/TJ/GG/sw

Dear Steering Committee Member,

On behalf of the European Trade Union Confederation and sharing the common opinion with the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), BusinessEurope, Eurochambres, and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), I would like to express our joint concerns as regards the current composition and functioning of the Civil Society Forum established in the framework of the Eastern Partnership initiative. Main international and European organisations representing social partners unanimously consider that the current system of selecting the CSF members does not permit a fair representation of civil society organisations.

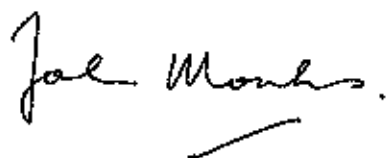
The term "civil society", as defined in the Commission Communication *General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission* (COM (2002) 704) published on 11 December 2002, includes "the labour-market players (i.e. trade unions and employers federations - the "social partners"); organisations representing social and economic players, which are not social partners in the strict sense of the term (for instance, consumer organisations); NGOs (non-governmental organisations), which bring people together in a common cause, such as environmental organisations, human rights organisations, charitable organisations, educational and training organisations, etc.; CBOs (community-based organisations), i.e. organisations set up within society at grassroots level which pursue member-oriented objectives, e.g. youth organisations, family associations and all organisations through which citizens participate in local and municipal life; and religious communities". In this Communication it has also been recognised that "social partners, trade unions and employers' organisations, have a particular role because of their representativeness. This definition of civil society is in line with the analysis developed by the Economic and Social Committee in its opinion *The role and contribution of civil society organisations in the building of Europe* (OJ C 329, 17 November 1999, p. 30).

In this context, we would like to ask the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum, which is now in charge of renewing the Civil Society Forum membership for its next term, to have this definition of civil society in mind when selecting future Forum's members so that a balanced and fair representation of civil society organisations is ensured. This refers in particular to the rule "one organisation, one member" which is currently applied in the selection of CSF.

We would also appreciate that the Steering Committee assumes the task of developing clear methodology and transparent criteria for selecting civil society organisations to participate in the work of the CSF so that civil society is represented in its all diversity and a right equilibrium is ensured as regards its composition.

At the same time, we intend to take appropriate steps in order to mobilise social partners across the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries to become more active, responsive and involved in the work of the CSF for its better functioning and added value results.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Monks." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

John Monks
General Secretary

Cc:

- Mr Stefan Füle, Commissioner of Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy
- Mr Antonio Peralosa, Secretary-General, International Organisation of Employers (IOE)
- Mr Philippe De Buck, Secretary-General, Business Europe
- Mr Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary-General, "Eurochambres"
- Mr Mario Sepi, President of the European Economic and Social Committee
- Mr Guy Ryder, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation

*Eastern Partnership
Civil Society Forum
The Spokesperson*

M. John Monks
General Secretary
European Trade Union Confederation

SM, 05/10

Minsk, 27th of May 2010

Subject: Your letter regarding the selection process of the participants of the next Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership

Dear General Secretary Monks,

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership, I thank you for your attention and your contribution to our work. All my colleagues are fully aware of the fundamental role that the social partners have in the context of the civil society in Europe and in its neighbouring countries. In this context, we replied a few days ago to the message similar to your sent by M. Sepi, President of the EESC (see letter attached).

The European Economic and Social Committee is therefore to be considered as one of the partners of our work. We have in mind to develop as much as possible this common work for raising the civil society perspective on the Eastern Partnership process. All the common efforts are welcome !

I am pleased to respond to your letter of the last 20th of May regarding the selection process of the participants for the next Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership.

The Steering Committee, this year, is in charge of elaborating the criteria for application and for the selection of the next participants to the Forum that will take place in November in Berlin. The criteria have been elaborated through a long, deep and balanced discussion in our meeting held in Kiev in March 2010. Our intention is to allow inclusiveness, openness and representation of the main stakeholders of civil society as well as transparency in the selection process. The selection procedure will include a) a major role of the national platforms in the EaP countries b) a role for the working group coordinators so that to ensure a second qualified voice on the choice. The European Commission keeps a role of endorsement for the selected participants at the end of the process.

The criteria will be available on line in the upcoming week together with the whole application package for the whole European Civil Society.

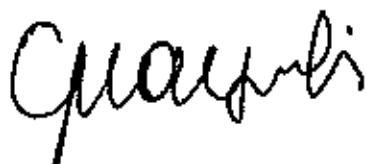
Let me assure you that the issue of the social partners and representatives of civil society has been extensively discussed as you may know one of our colleague, M. Ivan Voles, sits as EESC member. On the other hand, our Steering Committee – in reply to your concern – confirms that the process as it is identified today gives to the representatives of social partners the chance to apply and to be involved. They are also fully entitled to propose to the Steering Committee positions papers that will be included in the working documents of the next event. Through the national platforms, a relevant promotion took - and will take place in the EaP countries - and the organisations that want to participate will be today more informed than in the past event of 2009. If your organisation would help us to disseminate the information to the social partners in the EaP countries, we would appreciate this joint effort.

In order to establish a more institutional relationship and to propose the matter to our next Steering Committee meeting in July, we have suggested a possible meeting with the representatives of the EESC. I am sure they will keep you informed of this following step where you might be requested to be associated by M. Sepi.

I thank you very much again for your attention and interest and I remain at your disposal for any further information.

Sincerely yours

Siarhiej Mackievic
Sopkesperson of the Civil Society Forum
Assembly of Pro-Democratic Non Governmental Organisations of Belarus
s.mackievic@gmail.com



Attached : letter to M. Sepi, President EESC

cc:

- Mr Stefan Füle, Commissioner of Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy
- Mr Antonio Peñalosa, Secretary-General, International Organisation of Employers (IOE)
- Mr Philippe De Buck, Secretary-General, Business Europe
- Mr Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary-General, "Eurochambres"
- Mr Mario Sepi, President of the European Economic and Social Committee
- Mr Guy Ryder, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation

France and Spain call to shift EU funds from east to south

[ANDREW RETTMAN](#)

21.02.2011 @ 09:29 CET

EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS - France and five other south-lying EU members have said the Union should give less money to its post-Soviet neighbours and more to Mediterranean rim countries in the context of the Arab uprisings.

A [letter to EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton](#) dated 16 February and signed by the foreign ministers of France, Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Malta and Slovenia says: "The profound popular movements calling for political, economic and social reforms in Tunisia and Egypt argue in favour of reinforcing the European Union's actions in its southern neighbourhood."

An [attached analysis paper](#) notes that out of the €12 billion put aside for the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2007 to 2013, just €1.80 is being spent per capita in Egypt and €7 in Tunisia compared to €25 in Moldova.

The "assymetries" and "disparities" are "today difficult to justify and sustain," it notes. "These [financial] packages must be reviewed in the light of current events."

The analysis paper also proposes: tying future EU money more strictly to democratic reform; redirecting other EU funds, such as development aid, to north Africa and the Middle East; creating new regional schemes on the model of the Danube Strategy; and boosting European Investment Bank lending to Arab countries by €2.5 billion over the next two years.

The paper adds that the Union for the Mediterranean, a multilateral body bringing together 16 regional countries and the EU-27, should play a "crucial" role in the efforts.

The proposal could throw a lifeline to the Barcelona-based institution, which failed to meet last year due to Arab-Israeli tensions. "It's not dead. But it is ill. It's in a coma," Syria's ambassador to the EU, Mohamad Ayman Soussan, said last week.

Events in north Africa stand in contrast to the recent backsliding on democratic standards in several of the EU's post-Soviet neighbours, such as Belarus and Ukraine.

"Just when the southern neighbourhood of the EU is [being] shaken by a wave of revolutionary situations that toppled consolidated dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt, the eastern neighbourhood seems to be in the middle of a trend towards authoritarian consolidation," Nicu Popescu, an analyst with the European Council on Foreign Relations think-tank, wrote in his EUobserver blog on 14 February.

He pointed out on Monday that "the French play a bit with the numbers" since the occupied Palestinian territories are the largest European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) beneficiaries per capita and southern countries already take two-thirds of the total ENP pot.

The French-led southern initiative comes after the Hungarian EU presidency had to cancel plans to hold a summit with six post-Soviet countries in May because Paris tabled a G20 summit on the same date.

With Poland keen to focus the Union's attention on the east when it takes over the EU presidency in July, Polish EU affairs minister Mikolaj Dowgielewicz told Polish press agency PAP on Sunday: "As

the EU, we have equally important duties in the east [as in the south], perhaps a little different, but equally serious. In this context, I wouldn't see it in a competitive sense."

The French-led proposal for the southern neighbourhood will be discussed by EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels on Monday and at a multilateral event including US and Arab officials hosted by Ms Ashton in the EU capital on Wednesday.

EU commissioner Stefan Fuele will for his part publish a major review of the ENP by April.

German EU affairs minister Werner Hoyer on the margins of a foreign ministers' dinner in Brussels on Sunday also said the EU must "become more visible" in the south following the region's "tectonic shift." Berlin favours opening up EU trade with Arab countries instead of channeling more aid, however.

Italian foreign affairs minister Franco Frattini said the EU must create a "Marshall Plan" for the region, referring to the US' post-World-War-II reconstruction effort in Europe.