

# Contribution of the European Economic and Social Committee to the Eastern Partnership

Organized civil society and its role in the implementation of the goals of the Eastern Partnership

CEBRE Business Breakfast

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# EESC and Eastern neighbours

- The Contact Group for Eastern Neighbours was created in the EESC in 2004 to cover the 6 partner countries of the EaP and Russian Federation.
- CGEN is analyzing the situation of the civil society in the partner countries and establishing, maintaining and developing contacts and joint events with the civil society organizations
- EESC elaborated several exploratory opinions about the role of the civil society in Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and in the countries of South Caucasus and organized several seminars and conferences.



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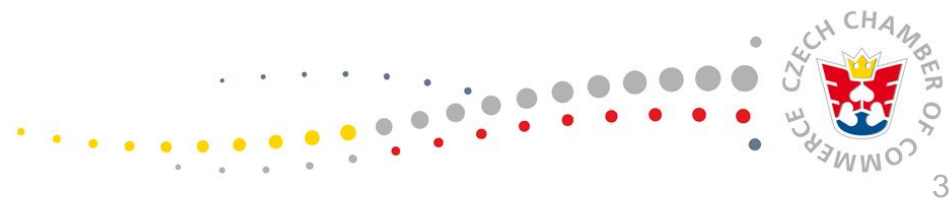


# EaP initiative and the Czech Presidency

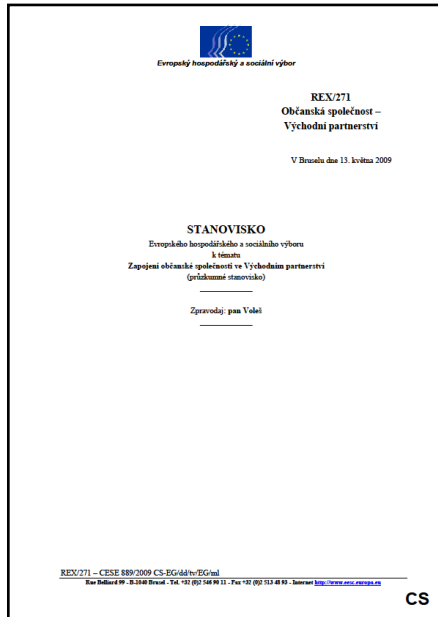
- EESC welcomed and supported the Polish and Swedish initiative to establish the Eastern Partnership
- The Eastern Partnership proposal became one of the priorities of the Czech Presidency in the first half of 20 **EU2009.CZ**
- EESC was officially requested by the Czech Presidency to prepare the opinion about the role that civil society should play in the Eastern Partnership
- The opinion REX 271 was handed over to the Commission and the Czech Presidency to be taken into consideration by the Prague EaP Summit in May and for the steps to establish the CSF



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# The main recommendations of the EESC opinion REX 271



The opinion elaborated proposals and recommendations how to involve the civil society in the EaP:

- On the bilateral level the CSO should be engaged in the preparation, negotiation and implementation of the new Action Plans, follow-up of the sub-committees activities and be included in the comprehensive institution building programme.
- CSF should become the multilateral tool for cooperation and exchange of know-how and experience between the civil society organizations from the EU and EaP countries to identify and implement the goals of the EaP



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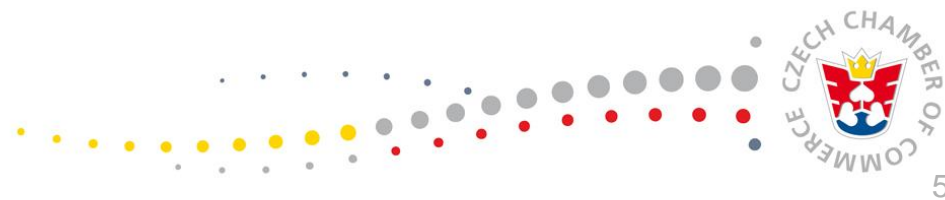


# Participation of the EESC in the start-up of EaP activities

- The EESC became the permanent member of the thematic platforms
  - TP 1 (democracy, good governance, and stability)
  - TP 2 (Economic integration and convergence with EU policies)
  - TP 4 (contacts between people)
- The EESC closely cooperated with the Commission in the preparation of the first constitutional meeting of the CSF
- The representative of the EESC was elected as member of the Steering Committee that was established by the CSF.



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# CSF and working group 2 results

- CSF convened in 16.-17.11.2009 in Brussels
- 4 working groups were meeting separately
- WG 2 on economic integration and convergence with the EU policies adopted list of recommendations:
  - Necessity to involve the CS to get the support for necessary reforms
  - Importance of the rule of law for good functioning of the economy
  - Support for the core objectives of the TP and request to be involved in its work
  - List of issues that should be taken into consideration (better regulation, social dialogue, customs, monitoring of the implementation, sustainable development, green business, solving of visa, support to the WTO membership, education, capacity building of the CSO, involvement of the business representative organizations in DCFTA negotiations)
  - EaP should be an opportunity to develop relations among the partner countries
  - Support to entrepreneurship and particularly to SMEs, to consumers
  - Call for new flagship to support the business contacts
  - Assistance to the EaP partner countries to face the consequences of the crisis
  - Two concrete actions proposed: EaP Business Forum and Social dialogue promotion

# Critical remarks on the CSF



- The CSF in its present composition does not correspond to the EU understanding of the organized civil society
- The CSF and its SC are composed mostly of the NGOs and think tanks
- Absence of the major components of the civil society the social partners – organizations of employers, business, entrepreneurs as well as employees organizations like trade unions
- The weak representation of grassroots NGOs like consumers organizations, representatives of SMEs, social economy, handicapped people, farmers etc.
- There is a serious danger of the structural imbalance and onesided orientation of the CSF in future.
- The composition of the CSF should be corrected at its next meeting planned for November of this year.



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# The need to engage the missing stakeholders

- The organizations representing employers, trade unions and the non or unrepresented NGOs in the partner countries and their networks in the region should be invited to join the process
- The European network organizations such as BusinessEurope, Eurochambres, UEAPME, Eurocommerce, ETUC and other relevant network should engage in the CSF to make it more representative and efficient



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



# The recommendations how to involve the civil society in the EaP

## On the bilateral level

- The engagement of the social partners organizations of employers, chambers of commerce, SMEs representative organizations and trade unions in the EaP process is needed to gain the civil society's support for the necessary economic and social reforms in the partner countries.
- The EC and the MS should guarantee the participation of the CSO in the preparation and in the process of bilateral negotiations about the new Association Agreements and DCFTA and in their implementation to enable the CSO to explain the goals of these agreements to the public
- The CSO should play also the role in the monitoring process of the implementation of the new Action plans by the state institutions in the partner countries and the EU institutions as well.
- The EU should support the sectoral tools to enable the countries that would adopt the European acquis in the given sector to get involved in the work of the respective EU institutions and agencies without the right of vote similar to the position of the EEA



# The recommendations how to involve the civil society in the EaP

## On the multilateral level

- In the multilateral field the representatives of the CSF should be given the chance to participate in the Thematic platforms to present their recommendations
- Experts of the CSOs should be invited to join the expert pannels that are being established by the TPs.
- It is necessary to keep the momentum of the EaP process during the Spanish presidency and not to weaken the drive under the pretext of the crisis and its consequences or because of other pressing priorities followed by the EU like the Latin America, Russia, USA etc

