



Conference: Giving a stronger voice to civil society in the European neighbourhood

Development of civil dialogue and partnership relations between civil society, national governments and EU institutions

International Conference to be held at Brdo, Slovenia
2 April 2008

The Conference on the role of civil society in the European neighbourhood will focus on the Eastern European partners of the European Neighbourhood Policy and countries already included in the accession process. Therefore, it is well placed into the context of the Slovenian Presidency and its priorities: Western Balkans, European Neighbourhood Policy, Enlargement policy and intercultural dialogue.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) remains a core priority of the Union's external policies, which can substantially encourage and support reform and modernisation processes undertaken by its partners. Partnership and joint ownership, differentiation and tailor-made assistance remain its key principles. The Commission Communication on a Strong European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of December 2007 was warmly welcomed, since it points out the main areas of further development, which include increased involvement of civil society and strengthening people-to-people contacts. Russia, though not included into the ENP, has through the instrument of EU-Russia partnership an important role both in the EU neighbourhood and in preserving the area of stability and prosperity in the region.

The Western Balkans is another region of major importance for the security and prosperity of the entire Union. At the Thessaloniki European Council, the EU offered the Western Balkan countries a clear perspective of EU membership and adopted a comprehensive strategy of the stabilisation and association process. Since then, notable progress has been achieved. In order to maintain the political momentum and the implementation of the political and economic reform processes, it is time to strengthen and deepen relations with the Western Balkan countries, making the EU perspective more tangible for its citizens. Civil society has to play more important role in promoting democracy and human rights and building stability in the region.

Over the last few years, Turkey, which is a candidate and is already negotiating its accession to the EU, has made tremendous political and economic progress. However, it has to put additional efforts in the reform process in order to align its legislation with the EU acquis, especially in some particular areas.

Therefore, further reforms are expected, such as a new constitution and the adoption of secondary legislation in different areas. As stated by the Government, all sides including the civil society are expected to contribute to these processes.

To respond to the changes in the EU neighbourhood and to help the neighbouring countries face further challenges arising from ongoing reforms, sustainable civil society development should become one of the main objectives of the EU strategy for the





neighbouring countries. Both the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Stabilisation and Association Process underline the importance of the civil society, stressing the increasing role it should play in the process of further democratization and integration into the EU.

The crucial role of the civil society organisations in the social service delivery is unquestionable and fully recognised by both the EU and national authorities. But have civil society organisations (CSOs) really been recognised as fully-fledged partners at the level of policy dialogue? While civil society organisations in the EU neighbourhood mostly engage in the operational/project partnership, their contribution to the policy-making is still quite insubstantial. Is the recognition of the value of the public advocacy at national level satisfactory? Do we lack effective mechanisms of neighbourhood civil society consultation at EU level?

As much as a political consensus (building from top to bottom) is crucial for policy-making, building from bottom to top is essential for the implementation and efficiency of these policies. Civil society can play an important role here. In a climate of some uncertainty regarding further enlargement process and partner countries' different expectations from the European Neighbourhood Policy, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should make a clear statement on the role of the civil society in the EU neighbouring countries in shaping the EU external policies and assistance.

In the framework of the Slovenian Presidency, the Conference provides an excellent opportunity for civil societies to send a political message to the EU about the need to develop a coherent and coordinated strategy for the sustainable civil society development in the EU neighbourhood.

The aim of the Conference

The event is part of an advocacy campaign within ECAS' ITS - Information, Training and Scholarship Programme funded by the C.S. MOTT Foundation to launch a debate at EU and national levels on how to create sustainable partnership relations between civil society actors, the EU and national authorities. The process started with a conference in Brussels on 10 October 2007 and will end with the Zadar conference on 25 and 26 September 2008. The first conference "New external financial instruments - new opportunities for civil society in the EU neighbourhood" focused particularly on the partnership principle referred to in the regulations¹ and its potential impact on stronger civil society involvement in the shaping, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of EU external policies and ENPI and IPA programmes². The Donor Exchange, Coordination, and Information Mechanism (DECIM) initiated by the European Commission and the World Bank has a potential in this respect, aiming to introduce civil society as a key actor in the development process and making civil society organisations contribute to the "aid effectiveness agenda".

¹ Council regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006 establishing IPA; Commission regulation No 2499/2007 of 12 June 2007 implementing Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 establishing an instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA); Commission regulation (EC) No 951/2007 of 9 August 2007 laying down implementing rules for CBC programmes financed under Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the EP and of the Council laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.

² For the full report please go to http://www.ecas.org/file_uploads/1521.pdf



The Brdo Conference on "Giving a stronger voice to civil society in the European neighbourhood: Development of civil dialogue and partnership relations between civil society, national governments and EU institutions" intends to provide a common space for brainstorming about how to create sustainable partnership relations between civil society actors, EU and national authorities, referring to civil society as a key player both at the level of external assistance implementation and policy-making dialogue. The Conference will focus particularly on the following issues that are crucial for sustainable development of civil society in the EU neighbourhood:

- Could the EU develop a long-term coherent and coordinated strategy for the civil society empowerment in the EU neighbouring countries? How could civil society contribute in this respect?
- How to encourage development of partnership relations between civil society, EU institutions and public authorities and on what mechanisms could this cooperation be based? How to promote civil society involvement not only in the EU project implementation but also in shaping the EU programmes and policies?
- How could civil society organisations contribute to the shaping of aid effectiveness agenda? What are the possibilities in this respect under DECIM mechanism?

The Conference will result in policy recommendations (Declaration) on building civil dialogue and partnership relations between civil society, national governments and EU institutions as well as on enhancing the role of CSOs as development actors by engaging them in the dialogue on aid effectiveness. The Declaration will be open for signature of participants.

Who is organising the event?

The Conference is organized by CNVOS - Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs and ECAS - European Citizen Action Service under the auspices of the Slovenian Presidency and in cooperation with the Government Communication Office and the Representation of the European Commission in Slovenia in the framework of the Management Partnership.

Who should attend?

The Conference is expected to attract 130 participants from the EU, particularly the Western Balkans, Turkey and Eastern European ENP partners. Participants will include partners and beneficiaries of the ITS programme, other NGO representatives, public and private donors active in the region as well as officials from EU governments and EU institutions.

Practical arrangements

1. There will be no participation fee. Participants are expected to cover their own travel and subsistence costs. Certain financial assistance will be provided to the





selected participants from Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey through DECIM - Donor Exchange, Coordination, and Information Mechanism.

2. Information is available on ECAS website (www.ecas.org), the website of the Slovenian Presidency (www.eu2008.si) and the Slovenian NGO portal for the period of the EU presidency (www.predsedovanje.si).

3. The working language will be English. No interpretation services will be available.



PRE-CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Informal NGO round table 1 April 2008 (to be held on the day before the opening of the Conference)

17.30–18.00

Registration at the Hotel Mons

18.00–21.00

The Advisory Committee and NGO leaders responsible for the analysis of the Questionnaire in their country (see below) will be invited to attend an informal round table to be held on the evening before the event. The meeting will provide an opportunity to bring the NGO community from different countries and different sectors to debate in an informal atmosphere on issues relevant for all of them, notably to assess the role and efficiency of the EU strategy regarding civil society development in the EU neighbouring countries, to discuss the partnership building principle and CSO involvement in the shaping, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of EU policies and programmes. The questions raised during the NGO round table will help the organisers to guide the Conference debate, enabling them to finalise a list of recommendations to be included in the Ljubljana Declaration.

A questionnaire was elaborated on the basis of the Brussels conference report. The report and the questionnaire were sent to ECAS and CNVOS partner organisations in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, which are disseminating them widely, thus enabling the civil society community to contribute to the formulation and development of the Ljubljana Declaration. At the NGO round table, each country would have to come up with drafted recommendations regarding the role to be played by CSOs in their country within EU external assistance and the mechanisms that would enable them to get involved in the shaping, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of EU policies and programmes.

Programme of the round table (Hotel Mons):

18.00–18.15

Welcome speech by Tony Venables, Director of ECAS and Jože Gornik, Director of CNVOS

18.15–19.30

Short presentations of country reports: Albania, BiH, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia

19.30–21.00

Open discussion on the content of the "Ljubljana Declaration"



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

2 April 2008

08.00

Departure from the selected hotels for the Brdo Congress Centre

Opening of the Conference

09.15–10.30

Brdo Congress Centre, GrandisHall

Welcome speeches

Anita Pipan, Director General, Directorate for Policy Planning and Multilateral Relations,
MFA, Republic of Slovenia

Jože Gornik, Director of Centre for Information Service, Co-operation and Development
of NGOs (CNVOS), Slovenia

Tony Venables, Director of European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), Belgium

Keynote speaker

Jan Trzuszczynski, Deputy Director General, DG Enlargement, European Commission

10.30–11.00

Coffee break

11.00–12.30

Brdo Congress Centre, GrandisHall

SESSION I:

The role of the EU in promoting civil society development and civil space in the countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Western Balkans

Discussion Panel - Issues for debate:

What is the place of civil society in EU external policies towards its neighbours? Could the EU develop a long-term strategy for the civil society empowerment in the EU neighbouring countries? How far do the EU external instruments respond to the political and legal environment of the civil society development in the EU neighbourhood? What are the relative responsibilities of the EU in establishing this enabling environment?



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
URAD VLADE ZA KOMUNICIRANJE



EVROPSKA KOMISIJA
Predstavništvo v Republiki Sloveniji



Chair: Primož Šporar, Director of the Legal-information centre for NGOs and member of the European Economic and Social Committee

Panel:

Wenceslas de Lobkowicz, Advisor - Civil Society Dialogue, DG Enlargement, European Commission

Andreas Herdina, Head of Unit, European Neighbourhood Policy Sector Coordination, DG Relex, European Commission

Katerina Hadzi-Miceva, Legal Advisor, The European Centre for Not-for Profit Law (ECNL), Hungary

Goran Djurović, Executive Director, Centre for Development of NGOs, Montenegro

Discussion, Q&A

12.30-14.00

Lunch, *Brdo, Kokra Hotel*

14.00-15.30

Brdo Congress Centre, GrandisHall and Splendens Hall

SESSION II:

Creating sustainable partnership relations between civil society, EU institutions and national authorities

Issues for debate:

How to cooperate with public authorities in the process of European integration and how to get involved in the shaping of EU policies and programmes? What would be the mechanism of cooperation between EU institutions, national authorities and the third sector? How supportive are EU and national authorities of putting civil society on the agenda of political dialogue and preparing and implementing the action plans? How do the current EU-government aid relations affect the possibilities for CSOs to get engaged in policy dialogue? What partnership models are there and what is their relative importance? Which effective tools could be envisaged in order to encourage the governments and EU institutions to cooperate with non-governmental actors?

Participants split in 2 working groups:

Working Group I: Western Balkans and Turkey

Brdo Congress Centre, Grandis Hall

Chair: Cvjetana Plavsa-Matic, Director, National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Croatia

Panel:

Sašo Klekovski, Executive Director, Macedonian Centre for International Co-operation, Macedonia





Igor Vidačak, Head, Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, Government of the Republic of Croatia, Croatia
Miljenko Dereta, Executive Director, Civic Initiatives, Serbia
Džemal Hodžić, Task Manager, Civil Society Development/Democracy and Rule of Law, Delegation of the European Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Dorian Filote, Sector Manager - Civil Society and Democratisation, European Commission Delegation to Turkey
Rana Birden, Member of the Board, Association for Support and Training of Women Candidates, Turkey

Discussion, Q&A

Working Group II: Eastern Europe ENP partner countries and Russia

Brdo Congress Centre, Splendens Hall

Chair: Marie Skov Madsen, Policy Advisor for ENP, Eurostep, Belgium

Panel:

Tatyana Poshevalova, Chairwoman, Public Association "Centre for Social Innovations", Belarus

Konstantin Baranov, Coordinator of development programmes, "Young Europe", Russia

Natalia Solcan, Head of Political Cooperation with EU division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Moldova

Arina Kraijdan, President, Association for European Training and Information, Moldova

Tetyana Danyliv, Director, GURT Resource Centre for NGO Development, Ukraine

Discussion, Q&A

15.30 – 15.45

Coffee break

15.45-17.00

Brdo Congress Centre, Grandis Hall

SESSION III:

Involving civil society in the "aid effectiveness" agenda
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Discussion panel - Issues for debate:

How do donors contribute to the sustainable development of civil society? Which mechanisms could be used to involve civil society in the programming of donors' priorities? What are the perspectives within the DECIM framework? What are the first DECIM outcomes – developed donors' synergies? Do donors' programmes fully reflect the needs of CSOs at regional and local levels? How may CSOs participate in the monitoring of the process of donors' and government performance against aid effectiveness commitments?



EVROPSKA KOMISIJA
Predstavništvo v Republiki Sloveniji



Chair: Christine Bedoya, Director, TRIALOG, Austria

Panel:

Irma Mežnarič, Vice-Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration, Republic of Slovenia
Jeremy Nagoda, International Coordination Officer, EuropeAid Co-operation Office,
European Commission

Marija Adanja, Head of the International Development and Humanitarian Assistance
Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Slovenia

Irene Payne, Consultant, Innovation and Integrity Division, Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development, France

Aleš Kranjc Kušlan, Coordinator of the Working Group for Monitoring of Slovenian
Official Development Aid, Slovenian Global Action (SLOGA), Slovenia

Discussion, Q&A

17.00–17.45

Brdo Congress Centre, GrandisHall

Closing session: Concluding remarks and presentation of the "Ljubljana Declaration"

Panel: Tony Venables, Director, European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), Belgium

Representative from civil society in Western Balkans and Turkey

Representative from civil society in Eastern Europe ENP partner countries and Russia

17.45

Departure from the Brdo Congress Centre for Ljubljana Jože Pučnik Airport or the
selected hotels