

Steering Committee Co-ordinators, Working Group 4 - Contacts Between People

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**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM
WORKING GROUP 4 – CONTACTS BETWEEN PEOPLE**

-- Prague, 2 March 2012 --

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and EU representatives meeting in Prague on 5 March 2012 are called upon to reflect on the following recommendations submitted by the participants of the Contacts between People working group of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Meeting in Prague on 2 March 2012, the Forum participants propose to the ministerial meeting that they support implementation by EU institutions and member states of the following:

- Ensure participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) during the preparation of regular Eastern Partnership summits, intergovernmental platform meetings and ministerial meetings, as well as in the course of drafting specific programme modalities. Towards this goal, structured dialogue between the European Commission and CSOs should be fostered through the use of the Forum's working groups and national platforms.
- Ensure open access for Eastern partners to the new generation programmes, especially programmes supporting Contacts between people, such as Erasmus for All and Creative Europe.
- Further reduce Schengen visa fees for all categories of applicants from the Partner countries, with a view to removing visa fees altogether, promote among member-states successful models of online visa application schemes, and establish joint one-stop application facilities in all Partner countries.
- Prioritise speedy completion of the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements (VFRAs) and Visa Liberalisation Action Plans between the EU and respective Partner governments, insist on publication in full of progress reports prepared by the Partner governments, and ensure that visa facilitation and visa liberalisation come into effect when the respective countries have met the stated criteria.
- EU delegations in the Partner countries should co-operate closely with CSOs to conduct effective promotion campaigns providing clear information about:
 - funding and participation possibilities, wherever possible in the local language,
 - benefits resulting from the Association Agreements,
 - the rights of migrants to the EU originating from Partner countries - civil, political, and socio-economic, in particular labour protection rights - and assist support and guidance programmes concerning opportunities for return migration to the Partner countries.
- The EU and member states should explore possibilities for researchers from the EU to visit the Partner countries, and vice-versa, through programmes such as Marie Curie Action.
- The European Commission and member states should continue to support the Jean Monnet Initiative, and to increase the number of scholarships available for students from Partner countries.
- Adult, non-formal and non-vocational education, as well as youth, must remain separate autonomous chapters within the single new generation programmes.
- Progress in Association Agreement negotiations should continue to be conditional on observance and protection of human rights, as well as other political criteria. However, radical steps - such as the freezing of negotiations - should remain measures of last resort to prevent possible harmful effects upon the citizens of the respective Partner countries.
- A new clause should be added to Association Agreements defining the legal conditions to facilitate the effective functioning and independence of CSOs (modalities of registration, taxation, co-operation with foreign entities). These particular legal conditions should be specified in a separate document summing up requirements for legislative changes to be made at the national level by Partner countries.