

## ***Invitation to contribute an opinion on the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum***

In its Communication on 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2008 on the Eastern Partnership<sup>1</sup> (EaP) - a new multilateral framework of cooperation, addressed to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine - the European Commission underlined that “ongoing reforms [in these countries] require stronger participation of civil society to enhance oversight of public services and strengthen public confidence in them.” In this context “particular attention should be paid to the involvement of civil society” in the EaP initiative.

The Commission proposed “to support the further development of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)” and, in particular, “to establish an **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** to promote contacts among CSOs and facilitate their dialogue with public authorities”. The Commission invited “the European Economic and Social Committee to participate in the Civil Society Forum”.

In its conclusions on 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2009 the European Council adopted the Declaration of the Eastern Partnership that “will engage a wide range of actors, including government ministries and agencies, parliaments, **civil society**, international organizations, financial institutions and the private sector”.

The Commission services have begun to develop the concept leading to the establishment of the EaP Civil Society Forum. At this stage, it is envisaged that the Forum could be structured around yearly conferences where relevant subjects would be discussed and the results of the work of the Forum would feed into work of the multilateral structures of the Partnership.

To ensure the transparency and objectivity of the process leading to the creation of the Forum, all interested parties are invited to provide their opinion, in particular on the following questions:

1. How can the goals of the Eastern Partnership be advanced by a Civil Society Forum?
2. How should participation in the work of this Forum be determined?
3. What should be the structures of the Forum? How would it interface with the other EaP structures (platforms, panels etc.)?
4. What role should the European Commission play in the launch and in the work of the Forum?

In your opinion please be brief and concise and send your contribution to:

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2008) 823, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0823:FIN:EN:PDF>

[RELEX-D1-EAP-CIVIL-SOCIETY@ec.europa.eu](mailto:RELEX-D1-EAP-CIVIL-SOCIETY@ec.europa.eu) before **25 April 2009**.

*Thank you in advance for any contributions*

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