



Нацыянальная платформа

Форум грамадзянскай супольнасці
УСХОДНЯГА ПАРТНЁРСТВА

**To the Head of EU Delegation in Belarus
Mrs. Maira Mora**

**To the Head of EEAS Directorate for Russia, Eastern Partnership,
Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE
Mr. Gunnar Wiegand**

Coordinating Committee of the National Platform
Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

Minsk, 23 September 2013

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Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Coordination Committee of Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum expresses its concerns about the feasibility of the previously announced decision by the third phase of the European Dialogue on Modernization with Belarus society and formulates proposals in this regard.

Representatives of civil society organizations, united under the National Platform of EaP CSF, from the very first steps of the European Dialogue on Modernization are active supporters of the initiative and its direct participants within EDoM working groups, as well as periodic international thematic meetings.

National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum sees the European Dialogue on Modernization with Belarus society as a significant and potentially effective tool to start the transformation of the country. This initiative is particularly relevant and important, as it is also the catalyst for a number of processes within the framework of content related initiatives of the Eastern Partnership, which is actively involved considerable number of civil society in Belarus.

Having this approach, National Platform on numerous occasions contacted to the European Commission and other interested parties with suggestions for optimizing activity, management and decision-making system in the framework of the Dialogue, and insisted on the inclusion of National Platform representatives into EDoM Coordination Group (position paper from 02.04.2012, materials of EDoM roundtable from 17.10.2012, letter to the head of the EU Delegation to Belarus from 9.12.2012, position paper on 18.03.2013).

Unfortunately, we are forced to admit that the majority of our comments and suggestions to this point were not taken into account.

The variant of development of the third phase of the Dialogue, presented on August 28, 2013 at a meeting of EDoM Coordination group at the meeting in the EU delegation to Belarus, does not match the vision and needs of civil society organizations, cooperating within the Belarusian EaP CSF National Platform. This approach actually takes the initiative to exclusively project mode. The expert component of the Dialogue becomes the dominant factor in the initiative, thus minimizing the space and opportunities for the use of the initiative as a tool for dialogue between the stakeholders in Belarusian society. Obviously, this approach increases the risk of imbalance between the thematic priorities of the Dialogue, when aspects of the socio-economic development will dominate the issues of political and legal reform.

The consequence of such an approach may be the loss of CSOs possibilities to participate in the Dialogue as active stakeholder and their de-motivation in work with their target groups with excluding EDoM from their priority agenda.

We should also note **non-transparency of decision-making on the further development of the Dialogue.** While civil society organizations and NP itself pro- actively participated in EDoM work, none of their members were not involved in any consultation on the choice of alternatives for development of the Dialogue. Despite the proposed observer status to NP within EDoM Coordination group, its representatives were not invited to discussion of possible alternative of development for the third phase of the Dialogue. These facts show that the dialogue is not adjusted properly even among the most direct partners in EDoM, significantly limiting the potential of this initiative at the level of society as a whole.

We call upon the European Commission and other stakeholders to keep the European Dialogue on Modernization with the Belarus society as a tool for the development of a difficult but necessary process of dialogue of actors within the country. In order to ensure the required quality of EDoM as initiative that is important for the society we should:

- 1) **Ensure the presence in the EDoM process key socio-political stakeholders** (political opposition, EaP CSF National Platform, major CSOs of the national level). These actors should have the status of participants with decision-making rights, and not only involved as an observer, which if necessary will be consulted.

2) **Provide a balance between the themes of the Dialogue.** Less convenient for governmental experts questions of political and legal reform can't be ignored and should be treated with equal priority than issues of economic and social development.

3) **Ensure the transparency of decision-making,** also in the project to support the Dialogue, under the implementation of the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies. The project should provide the "separation of powers" and establish the governing body of the number of Belarusian stakeholders with possibilities to participate in decision-making regarding EDoM process.

We express our commitment to a more detailed explanation of our position and specific proposals in the dialogue with representatives of the European Commission, the EU member states and all Belarusian stakeholders in order to introduce the required changes in EDoM and to give the Dialogue a new dynamics, allowing to reach the goals and objectives set before the initiative.

Sincerely yours,

Ulad Vialichka, Chairperson of Belarusian EaP CSF National Platform, International Consortium "EuroBelarus"

Yaraslau Bekish, member of CC NP, National facilitator of EaP CSF on Belarus, Green Alliance

Andrei Yahorau, member of CC NP, Center for European Transformation

Piotr Kuzniatsou, member of CC NP, Gomel Democratic Forum

Siarhei Mackievic, member of CC NP, Assembly of NGOs of Belarus

Aksana Shelest, member of CC NP, Humanitarian Technologies Agency

Alexander Valchanin, member of CC NP, "Union Chernobyl-Belarus"