



International Networking Conference

DIALOGUE FOR FUTURE 2023

“The Future of Eastern Partnership: Empowering Democratic and Sustainable Civil Societies”

18-20th of September 2023

Humboldt Carré Berlin

Behrenstraße 42, 10117 Berlin

The Russian war against Ukraine has shaken the region and represents a turning point, the effects of which can be felt not only in the EU, but especially in the countries of the Eastern Partnership: in terms of security, domestic and economic policies. But how does the Eastern Partnership Program have to be adapted under changed circumstances to sustain and enhance the capacities of civil society actors in restoring stability, security, and peace in the region? Which instruments can the EU and its member states use to strengthen the resilience and power of civil society in fighting corruption and defending democracy and human rights? How can civil society organisations be supported by promoting renewable energy, citizens' energy, and the green transition to get more independent and secure? These and other issues will be discussed during the conference.

The main goal of the conference is to bring together change-makers from the EU and its Eastern neighbours for a more society-minded, more sustainable and a deeper dialogue.

Working language: English (no translation)

Sunday, September 17th, 2023

Arrival of participants

18:00 Welcome dinner

Monday, September 18th, 2023

09:00 - 09:30 Registration & Networking

09:30 - 10:00 Ice-Breaking Session

10:00 - 10:15 Welcoming & Presentation of the Conference

- **Enno Strudthoff**, Head of International Projects, wechange eG, Berlin
- **Inna Nelles**, Co-Founder of the German-Ukrainian Bureau, Germany

10:15 - 10:30 Keynote

- **Annalena Baerbock**, Germany's Foreign Minister (tbc)

10:30 - 12:00 Panel Discussion: "Challenges and Opportunities for the Eastern Partnership in Times of Russian Military Aggression"

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) was created to make the participating states and their societies more resilient, inclusive and prosperous as well as accelerate their political association and deepen their economic integration with the EU. Russian aggression against Ukraine prompted the EU to offer the candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova and membership perspective to Georgia. A common Russian threat offers an incentive for upgraded regional cooperation in the EaP security dimension. But how to use the current geopolitical challenges as an opportunity for the EaP vitalization and upgrade? Which structural adjustments of the EaP would help to strengthen civil societies, advance their capacities and increase their leverage in the EaP bilateral and multilateral tracks?

- **Dirk Schuebel**, Special Envoy for the Eastern Partnership, European External Action Service, Brussels
- **Robin Wagener**, Special Envoy for the Cooperation with the Civil Society in the Southern Caucasus, Moldova and Central Asia, Member of Parliament, Greens, Berlin
- **Iulian Groza**, Executive Director, Institute for European Policy and Reforms (IPRE), Chisinau, Moldova
- **Kataryna Wolczuk**, Associate Fellow, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, London

Moderation: Rebecca Harms, former MEP, Greens/EFA, Brussels

12:00 - 13:30 Lunch Break & Networking

13:30 - 15:00 Parallel Working Groups and Bar Camps on the Four Thematic Tracks

A. Building Democratic, Resilient, Equal and Inclusive Societies

Recent democratic backsliding and autocratic tendencies in the EaP region have been targeting democratic values and constraining the spaces for NGOs, think tanks and independent media in promoting freedom of speech and of assembly, and political pluralism. How have the new political, social, economic and security challenges affected civil societies across the EaP countries? How have civil societies coped with these challenges and adopted their activities? What can be improved in the EaP frameworks to protect and support the work of civil societies?

- **Inna Melnykovska**, Central European University

B. Promoting Good Governance and Fighting Corruption through Digitalization and Transnational Networking

Corruption practices of political elites, bureaucrats and businesses pose considerable challenges to the values of democracies and represent a threat to the integrity of societies in the EaP region. At the same time, corruption doesn't have borders. Stolen money and assets are often parked in 'safe Western jurisdictions' with the assistance of Western "enablers". What new opportunities and challenges in anti-corruption have been brought on by digitalization? How effectively have been digital tools applied in anti-corruption activism? How useful are the EU's initiatives to promote digital transformation and anti-corruption in the EaP participating countries and how can they be adopted to the needs of anti-corruption activism?

- **Oksana Huss**, Research Fellow at the University of Bologna
- **Oleksandra Keudel**, Research Communication Advisor, Assistant Professor at the Department of Public Policy and Governance, Kyiv School of Economics (KSE)

C. On the Road to Sustainability, Citizen Energy and Energy Security

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine highlighted the dependency on Russian fossil fuel imports both in the EU and Eastern Partnership. The EU acknowledged the need for immediate actions and with its European Green Deal committed to climate neutrality by 2050. But how can the ambitious Green Deal be translated into local action and bring about a shared understanding of climate and energy security problems and solutions in EaP countries? What can be done to enhance climate efforts and decentralised energy production in Eastern Partnership? How to unleash the potential of the regional exchange and activate climate-related cross-border civil society cooperation?

- **Julia Eichhofer**, Project Manager on Sustainable Energy, Wechange

D. Bar Camp

These slots are open for workshops offered by participants not fitting in any of the topical tracks.

15:00 - 16:00 Coffee Break & Topic Café

At thematic coffee tables, participants can hear the summary of the working groups of other sessions presented by rapporteurs, speakers, and moderators of the working groups.

16:00 - 17:00 Workshop on the Grant Application

The German Foreign Office annually provides grants to civil society actors within the Eastern Partnership programme. The support aims to establish or expand durable, democratically oriented civil-society structures and enhance cooperation between stakeholders from Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries. But what does the application process look like? How to write project outlines and where to apply for them? These and further questions will be

addressed in the workshop, provided by the German Foreign Office. After an initial input phase, the participants are invited to write and share their outlines of projects that can be handed in during or after the conference.

- **Daniel Demele**, German Foreign Ministry

17:00 - 17:45 German Partners' Fair & Networking

German NGOs and think tanks are invited to have stands in the foyer to come into conversations with the participants.

17:45 - 18:00 Welcoming of External Guests

18:00 - 19:45 Panel Discussion: "Europe's Centre of Gravity Shifts East"

After Russia's full-scale invasion, the West rallied in support of Ukraine. Besides the U.S., the most decisive voices and supporters of Ukraine continuously come from the Baltic States, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the Nordic countries. The newfound confidence and moral leadership in the Ukraine portfolio raised the profile and influence of these states within the EU. But is the rising importance of eastern and northern Europe as the frontline states in the confrontation with Russia durable, and does it translate to more influence on overall EU decision-making processes? Is the centre of gravity shifting away from Western Europe? What does it mean for the Union and the understanding of French and German leadership of the EU?

18:00 - 18:15 Keynote on the Future of Europe's East by **Toomas Ilves**, former President of Estonia (tbc)

- **Karolina Wigura**, Sociologist and journalist, Poland
- **Ulrich Speck**, Independent Foreign Policy Analyst, Germany
- **Nathalie Tocci**, Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Italy
- **Martin Svárovský**, former Czech Diplomat (tbc)
- **Kristi Raik**, Deputy Director, Head of Foreign Policy Programme, International Centre for Defence and Security, Estonia (tbc)

Moderator: **Ralf Fücks**, Co-Founder, Center for Liberal Modernity (LibMod)

19:45 - 21:00 Reception

[Tuesday, September 19th, 2023](#)

09:00 - 09:30 Registration & Coffee Reception

09:30 - 10:00 World Café

10:00 - 10:05 Welcoming & Summary of the First Day

- **Inna Nelles**, Co-Founder of the German-Ukrainian Bureau, Germany

10:05 - 10:30 Keynote & moderated interview

- **Sviatoslav Vakarchuk**, Ukrainian musician, intellectual and activist (tbc)

10:30 - 12:00 Open Fishbowl: Ukraine's Societal Resilience and Lessons for the Region

During the full-scale Russian invasion of the country in 2022, the whole of Ukrainian society showed a remarkable degree of resilience and resistance. Many new grassroots initiatives were launched and the old initiatives were re-oriented to support the army, internally displaced, elderly, and other vulnerable groups. But what are the key ingredients of Ukrainian resilience and what are the lessons for the other civil societies in the EaP region? What more can be done by external supporters like the European Union, the U.S., and Germany to make the activism of Ukrainian civil society (more) sustainable?

- **Volodymyr Yermolenko**, philosopher and writer, President of PEN Ukraine (tbc)
- **Oleh Rybachuk**, head of Centre for United Action NGO, Ukraine
- **Orysia Lutsevych**, deputy director of the Russia and Eurasia Programme and head of the Ukraine Forum at Chatham House, United Kingdom
- **Rebecca Harms**, former Member of the European Parliament, expert on Ukraine
- **Olga Onuch**, Senior Professor in Politics, University of Manchester

Moderation: Mattia Nelles, Co-Founder of the German-Ukrainian Bureau, Germany

12:00 - 13:30 Lunch Break & Networking

13:30 - 15:00 Parallel Working Groups and Bar Camps on the Four Thematic Tracks

A. Political transparency and accountability - the power of watchdog initiatives

What is the role of civil society in creating a quality political culture and fighting political corruption? How can citizens monitor elections, politicians and political parties? How can digital tools help to engage citizens in monitoring members of parliament? What is the role of watchdog initiatives in countries' democratisation?

- **Vita Dumanska**, the leader of CHESNO watchdog movement, Ukraine

B. From Protracted Conflicts to People-Centric Security and Peace

Beyond the Russian war against Ukraine, the EaP region is plagued with wars and frozen conflicts in Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, which constrain civil society activities. Furthermore, the protracted conflicts make the societies vulnerable to Russian destructive influences. What lessons can be learned from the experience of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and other regional wars and conflicts to sustain peace and societal resilience? How can the EU prevent new conflicts and escalations in the EaP region and facilitate a long-standing peace?

C. Analysing Geopolitical Shifts in South Caucasus

The recent geopolitical shifts in South Caucasus (SC) are largely due to the 2020 Armenia-Azerbaijan war over Nagorno-Karabakh. While the Western actors were mostly

absent during the war, Russia, Turkey, and other regional players stepped into the emerging vacuum, learning to come to terms with one another. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine again changed the geopolitical picture and power balance, the role of different actors in the region, and beyond. It increased various security, economic, and energy policy-related challenges for the EU, with consequences for its role in the South Caucasus. How much has changed in the EU's foreign policy towards the region and each South Caucasus country? Which way can and should the EU balance geopolitics, economics and promote democracy in the region? How can civil societies ensure that their voices are heard in the current dynamic environment?

- **Mikheil Sarjveladze**, Visiting fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and a postdoctoral research fellow at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena
- **Mahammad Mammadov**, Research Fellow at the Topchubashov Center
- **Harutyun Voskanyan**, PhD Candidate at the School of Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw
- **Ivanna Machitidze**, Lecturer at the New Vision University
- **Franziska Smolnik**, Eastern Europe, Eurasia Deputy Head of Research Division at German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Eastern Europe and Eurasia Division

Moderator: Kornely Kakachia, Director of the Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP), Professor at Tbilisi State University

D. Energy supply in South Caucasus: ways to reduce dependencies on Russian Gas and Oil

This workshop will highlight the role of reporters, watchdogs and civil society in reducing dependencies on Russian Gas and Oil in South Caucasus and promoting climate friendly alternatives. The discussion will also focus on how to address the climate crisis by civil society and governments and prevent new contracts with companies that are unfavourable to the environment and the countries' economy.

- **Tsira Gvasalia**, Environmental Journalist & Founder Cactus Media, Tbilisi, Georgia
- **Suren Deheryan**, Editor-in-chief, Ampop Media, President of Journalists for the Future NGO, Armenia

Moderator: **Clemens Schöll**, Journalism Programme Manager, Clean Energy Wire, Berlin

15:00 - 16:00 Coffee Break & Topic Café with the Presentation of the Working Groups

16:00 - 17:30 Cooperation Session on Project Grants, Professional Skills and Networking

1. Integrating Project Ideas and Drafting Grant Applications with New Partners

Those participants interested in applying for grant applications with the German Foreign Ministry get the opportunity to continue drafting their applications, discuss with potential partners and submit a project outline.

2. **Expert Clinics**

Each conference participant gets a chance to book a one-to-one 10 min time slot with an expert in different fields, relevant to strategy development, project implementation, or problems that EaP countries share in common.

3. **Bar Camps**

These slots are open for skills-oriented workshops offered by participants.

17:30 - 18:00 Welcoming of External Guests

18:00 - 19:30 Panel Discussion: “A New European Security Architecture in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Role of Civil Society”

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine threatens European security and bears the risks of escalation in the EaP participating states. While Russia’s position could be weakening on the battlefield in Ukraine, it is still able to exercise spoiling and destabilising influences in its neighbourhood. The presence and role of the EU as a peace facilitator in the region is thus extremely important. But can the EU live up to these expectations? How to balance the geopolitical and reform-promoting rationals in the EU’s neighbourhood policy? How can the Eastern Partnership Instrument and other EU policy tools be used, to counteract Russian destabilisation efforts and promote sustainable peace in Europe and in the EaP region? How to extend the “sandwich model” of the EU’s top-down pressure and bottom-up pressure of active civil society toward the security and defence policy arena? What can a new European security architecture in the EaP region look like?

Keynote: **Brian Whitmore**, nonresident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council, Assistant Professor of Practice, University of Texas-Arlington, Russia’s ability to exert influence in and destabilise Europe’s Eastern Neighborhood and the Caucasus.

- **Jürgen Hardt**, MP, foreign policy spokesman for the CDU/CSU parliamentary group (tbc)
- **Sergey Lagodinsky**, MEP, The Greens/EFA, Brussels (tbc)
- **Yervand Shirinyan**, Program Deputy Director at Open Society Foundations, Armenia
- **Hanna Hopko**, Chairwoman of ANTS, Ukraine (tbc)
- **Marie Dumoulin**, director of the Wider Europe Programme, European Council on Foreign Relations (tbc)
- **Nico Lange**, Senior Fellow, Munich Security Conference, Germany (tbc)

Moderation: Wilfried Jilge, Historian of Eastern Europe, Expert on Ukraine, Associate Fellow of the DGAP, Berlin, Germany

19:30 - 21:00 Soirée with Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, Ukrainian musician, intellectual and activist (tbc)

Wednesday, September 20th, 2023

10:00 - 13:30 Meetings with NGOs and Think Tanks in Berlin

13:30 - 15:00 Lunch & Final Remarks

16:00 End of the Conference & Departure of the Participants

Organised by:

wechange eG,

Oberlandstrasse 26-35

12099 Berlin

Kindly supported by:



Federal Foreign Office



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