

➤ CENTRE FOR EASTERN COMPETENCES

Centre for Eastern Competences (CEC) is a **think-tank created with the participation of the City of Lublin, Lublin Voivodeship local government** as well as an international organisation belonging to the UN system – **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**. Its creation is a sign of the importance attached in Lublin Region to the cooperation with eastern partners – tens of projects implemented together over the years gave birth to the feelings of mutual trust, passion and the ability to work in such areas as:

- 1) good governance – efficient management in the administration;
- 2) civil society;
- 3) science and education;
- 4) culture for development;
- 5) business relations;
- 6) social innovations;
- 7) sustainable development.

Centre for Eastern Competences is not only a **knowledge base about the projects, good practices, initiatives and organizations** that implement them. The purpose of the CEC is to initiate new ventures and to co-create new quality in the widely understood development cooperation, including by **building a community** of people, institutions and organizations engaged in activities in different countries that will speak as one voice about the issues important in this part of the world.

At the core of the Centre for Eastern Competences lies the work for social development, education, culture, business, strengthening of mutual communication and dialogue. CEC supports creation of networks and elimination of barriers, including those resulting from the mutual prejudices and stereotypes. CEC's mission is to inspire and activate an effective and sustainable transnational cooperation, determining potentially the most effective courses of action between the European Union and Eastern Europe as well as the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. It is also to mutually explain social conditions and cultural specificities of individual countries and nations of the East and the European Union (EU), and as a result to generate socio-economic

benefits arising out of their cooperation.

The activities serving to fulfil the mission and goals of the CEC are aimed at cataloguing and classifying the knowledge as well as "best practices" in the field of initiatives implemented together with the partners from the East, cross linking of partners, implementing of new ideas, providing recommendations. In practice it means the organization of training courses, seminars, conferences, preparing reports and formulating positions. Another CEC's activity is to arrange meetings between the leaders of various programme lines with potential cooperation partners, representatives of NGOs, universities and business ventures. It is also to work within local communities with a global impetus and an intention to share the experience as well as to acquire new skills needed for the balance and clarity of taken actions.

❖ **EASTERN EUROPE INITIATIVES CONGRESS (EEIC) – A SHARED SPACE FOR THE DECISION MAKERS AND ACTIVISTS**

Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress is a flagship project of the Centre for Eastern Competences. The Congress took place between 11th and 13th September 2012 and it was a meeting of representatives of central and local governments, NGOs and institutions from Poland, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia which are involved in the transnational cooperation. The European



Commission Representation in Poland took the honorary patronage over the Congress. Given that the main mission of the CEC is to catalogue and classify the knowledge and experience of transnational co-operation between Poland, the European Union and its Eastern Partners, the main theme of the Congress was the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the opportunities that are opened by the development cooperation.



The success of Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress – the first such initiative in the region - was the gathering of practitioners in the field of cross-border cooperation as well as decision makers from almost all countries of the Eastern Partnership. A shared space for substantive discussion on issues crucial to both the development of the region and further international cooperation, was created. Significance of the event was well appreciated by the Polish authorities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Administration and Digitization, as well as the European Commission Representation in Poland, whose representatives spoke both in the opening session and plenary discussions. The

status of the meeting was also raised by the letter from Polish President, Bronisław Komorowski, addressed to the organizers and those involved in EEIC, which emphasized the importance of the Congress and reminded of the role of Lublin as a "gateway to the East".

Among the speakers of the Congress a special attention is deserved for the presence of Ewa Synowiec, the Head of the European Commission Representation in Poland, who – together with Krzysztof Żuk, President of Lublin and Dmitry Mariyasin, New Development Partnerships Coordinator of the UNDP Bratislava Regional Bureau – had officially opened the Congress.

During the EEIC **16 panel discussions** took place, including 2 plenary sessions (opening and ending), about **4 areas of the programme**:

- 1) **good governance;**
- 2) **civil society;**
- 3) **culture without borders;**
- 4) **science/education.**

237 people took part in the debates and discussions during EEIC, including more than **50 participants** came from **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova,**

Germany, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Switzerland and Ukraine.

The strength of the Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress was its democratic, participative nature, expressed by inviting to participate the representatives of various communities involved in the cross-border cooperation: central governments, local governments, representatives of European (European Commission Representation in Poland) and international (UN system) institutions, of the world of science and education, cultural institutions, NGOs, media and experts that deal with the topic of the East, as well as the development cooperation. The method of organising both the plenary and thematic sessions, was based on opinions and voices of the participants, that were taken into account in this document.



◆ RECOMMENDATIONS

The most significant result of the Congress were the conclusions and recommendations. Lublin has an extensive experience in elaborating, collecting and managing of such results – the recommendations after the organized in 2011, the Eastern Partnership Culture Congress (EPCC) are taken into account and used by the EU and government institutions during (re)designing and shaping of their cultural policies. More importantly, the experience of the previous EPCC indicate that the people participating in these types of events are willing to cooperate, cross-link and engage in the development of such policies and recommendations.

The goal of this document is to summarise main thesis, observations and recommendations for each of the programme areas in which the discussions took place.

It is worth to note that – regardless of the content of the recommendation – the comments and positions of people participating in the event pointed towards an extraordinary worth of those

type of initiatives from the point of view of building of the international community, focused on the issue of development cooperation between the countries of the East-Central Europe and Central Asia. It is extremely important that during this year's EEIC, the work in the area of „Culture without Borders” was based on the ready, created in October 2011 during the Eastern Partnership Culture Congress, set of recommendations. It became a practical illustration of the process of implementation of the participative developed recommendations about the cultural policy.

During the plenary session that ended the Congress, the leaders of programme areas attempted to summarise the current work. The results were very promising and one more time proved how big is the causative power in this type of ventures.

During the EEIC 2012 the following recommendations within each areas were developed:

● **Within the „Good governance” area:**

1. Development strategies, executed with the use of participative methods, should be created for the whole region. It is justified by the lack of specific expectations for the Eastern Partnership on the part of eastern partners, which in turn in a long-term perspective results in the lack of one, consistent vision of the Eastern Partnership.
2. It is advised to tighten the cooperation with the subregions located farther from the EU eastern border. At the same time, the borders of the areas where the implementation of the cross-border cooperation programmes is possible should be extended, resulting in a increased accessibility of the grants.
3. It is desired that the infrastructure investments implemented with the use of aid funds were not only the basis for local development but also a contribution to promote the Eastern Partnership.
4. A significant decentralisation, and at the same time diversification of funds intended for actions in the countries of the Eastern Partnership, is recommended so it would allow local governments, NGOs and other subjects – creators of the cross-border and development cooperation – to access the financial instruments.
5. Initiative should be taken to harmonise the laws of the Eastern Partnership countries with the EU law to allow for the optimal transfer of knowledge and experience in the field of effective

operation of the public administration as well as its cooperation with partners that represent different sectors. Achieving of such formulated goal is possible with the use of education, dissemination and promotion of knowledge about European integration (among others) and legal reality of member states, in the East.

6. The evaluation of the actions, projects and initiatives taken with eastern partners should be qualitative, multi-stage and long-term, which will allow to minimise the purely quantitative and indicative approach to the implemented tasks and will highlight the focus on the process and sustainable social change.

● Within the „Science/Education” area:

1. It is necessary to bring together the legal framework and funding instruments as well as to create an efficient technical infrastructure in the field of science, research and education activity to allow for the implementation of actions in a long term time horizon. That is at least 10 years long.
2. To appoint new networks of the cooperation while supporting the old ones at the same time, should be one of the core categories of the science and education cooperation.
3. Educational innovation should be promoted through spreading the circle of subjects involved in education, especially the institution of civic education. It should also be allowed to implement a non-formal education methodology, which can be implemented by institutions outside of the traditional education circle.
4. It is required to work towards linguistic education, through supporting of learning the national languages of Eastern Europe and Central Asia countries, to allow an equal communication and dialogue that takes cultural and linguistic differences into account.
5. It is required to take actions towards standardization and bringing together education frameworks between the countries of the EU and those outside of the EU. That's why determined and more involved steps should be taken towards the strengthening of the process of dissemination and adaptation of European frameworks in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. It results from the fact that they are an effective instrument of translation, thanks to which the qualifications are becoming more transparent, understandable in different countries and systems in Europe and, in a perspective, outside of Europe too. Moreover they make

reality out of two fundamental objectives which are the mobility of the citizens moving across the countries as well as providing an easy access to education for all of their life. This has a colossal meaning in the context of eliminating cultural, socio-economic and mental barriers.

● Within the „Culture without Borders” area:

1. Culture is a notably important determinant of social and economic development. That's why we declare to cooperate towards building of the Eastern Partnership as a cultural project: while respecting the subjectivity of all of its participants, based on a multi directional cooperation between the countries of the EaP and the EU.
2. We believe that the models and mechanisms of development stimulating, social participation and transparency developed within the cultural cooperation, can be a model for other areas of public life in the countries of the EaP, providing a key impulse to change the operational standards of public and non-public institutions.
3. We believe that the most important objective is the development of new models of cultural cooperation with the the EaP countries: to include the subjects from the EaP into the work over the shape of the European Neighbourhood Policy.
4. Building a network that will support the organisations and creators from the EaP countries; creating and implementing solutions for development of cultural sector and cultural education system. The Eastern Partnership Culture Network should be a bottom-up initiative answering to the needs of members/communities that the network unites. Because of the existence of many models of networks, the Eastern Partnership should create its own model corresponding to its needs. The network doesn't have to be an institution but a process of cognition, joint creation and taking action. The most important objectives of the network are:
 - building partnerships inside the EaP and between the countries of the EaP and the EU;
 - „map of culture of the Eastern Partnership”;
 - supporting the international cooperation and professionalization of culture staff (workshop groups, seminars, meetings, residencies), as well as the exchange and distribution of knowledge between the cultural and academical centres;
 - representing and advocating on the EU, national, regional and local levels;
 - creating and implementing of new financial programmes for the EaP, stimulating the

decision-making bodies of the EU to include the EaP countries into the existing funding programmes. Decentralisation of the financial systems in the EaP.

5. All of the recommendations developed during last years the Eastern Partnership Culture Congress are still up to date, especially the recommendations about the culture network of the Eastern Partnership.

● **Within the „Civil Society” area:**

1. It is required to pay more attention to the issue of availability of small funds, and thus short term projects. Previous experience shows that the projects with comparatively low budgets are expanding the access to the funds to organisations and actions taken locally.
2. The process of transformation and democratisation that is taking place in post-soviet countries is an undisputed value, which is why the member states of the European Union are obligated to share the experiences and successful transformations know-how with the countries of the Eastern Partnership. It is necessary for the experiences of, for example, polish transformation to be adapted to the socio-political-economic conditions of a given country and not to be transferred in a literal way.
3. Financing authorities, donors and organisations implementing the projects, should allow for the possibility of a defeat, because it is not possible to fully achieve all of the strictly specified objectives of the project. It is particularly possible when the objectives and indicators are determined way before the implementation of the project. There's also a strong need for the use of innovativeness and for going beyond the known patterns while making decisions, which can also result in an insufficient achieving of the assumed indicators.
4. It is required to promote the specification of subjects in particular areas, to avoid blurring or doubling of the competences – the specification should encourage cooperation instead of rivalry or monopolization of specified fields by the subjects interested in cooperating with the East.
5. It remains valid to expect the strong international actors to still focus on long term, strategic cooperation and to be the facilitators of changes and social innovations.

These recommendations are a voice in the discussion taking place in recent years, about the directions of the development of transnational cooperation as well as about the expectations for the project of the Eastern Partnership. By showing and highlighting those ways of thinking, they are also pointing to the need of expressing a common position of East-Central Europe including the position of Poland and Lublin. The organizers of EEIC managed to gather participants that gave expression to the feeling of responsibility for shaping of the relations with Eastern neighbours of the European Union. It is also an expression of the need for equal participation in shaping a coherent vision of the development of Europe.

We invite to cooperate and share your comments and suggestions about these recommendations as well as to support the actions of Centre for Eastern Competences in Lublin.

CONTACT:

◆ Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress' organizational office

Lublin City Office
Non-Investment Projects Department
Okopowa 11
20-022 Lublin
phone: +48 81 466 2850
fax: +48 81 466 2851
kongres@lublin.eu

◆ Eastern Competences Centres contact point

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Project Office Poland
Peowiaków 11
20-007 Lublin
phone: +48 81 532 2327
anna.szadkowska@undp.org (Polish, English)
katarzyna.zabratanska@undp.org (Russian, Ukrainian, English, Polish)