

Conference „Europe’s Unstable Eastern Neighbourhood: What role for Civil Society?”

3rd November 2015: Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU, Václav Havel Library, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Czech Centre Brussels and European Partnership for Democracy invite you to Václav Havel European Dialogue Conference with focus on the relationship between Eastern Europe and European Union. The event will be held on 18th November 2015, from 18:00 to 20:00 at European Parliament under the auspices of MEP Pavel Svoboda from EPP Group in Room 2Q2.

The program of the conference will include two panel discussions: first with the theme of **Eastern Neighbourhood of the EU** with **Volodymyr Ogrysko**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, and **Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili**, Former Minister for Reintegration of Georgia. Second panel will be oriented on **European Neighbourhood Policy** and its current review with **Rostislav Valvoda**, Director of Prague Civil Society Centre, **Iryna Shvets**, Civic Network OPORA Ukraine, and **Sona Ayvazyan**, Transparency International Armenia and representing Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

The conference “Europe’s Unstable Eastern Neighbourhood: What role for Civil Society?” aims to continue a debate about Europe and to contribute to a discussion in the context of European Neighbourhood Policy Review, especially with a focus to the importance of the engagement of civil society for democracy.

An active and self-confident civil society is one of the crucial prerequisites for any functioning democracy. Whereas in some states of the Eastern Partnership civil society is an important part of the reform efforts, in other countries it is perceived as a problematic by the government. This situation is being influenced by developments in Russia, where we witness steps aimed at limiting the freedoms and independence of civil society. At the same time, Russia, herself is facing many external and internal challenges and threats, engages in military action against Ukraine and her activities challenge European security and our values of democracy, pluralism and the right to make foreign policy choices.

Civil society is an important part of EU Neighbourhood Policy. The conference will aim to answer the following questions: What are the tendencies for civil society Eastern Partnership countries? What are Eastern partnership countries' needs and expectations from the EU and the Eastern Partnership? What should be the EU’s role vis-à-vis civil society in Eastern partnership countries? Is EU engagement efficient? What is the role of the EU, when faced with assertive Russian policies towards its neighbours?

When: 18th November 2015, 18:00

Where: Room 2Q2, European Parliament, Brussels

Contact: For any questions and registration please contact Kristina Pavelkova at pavelkova@czech.cz, +32 2641 89 47. If you do not have a badge to access the European Parliament you need to register and provide personal details before 6th November.

Programme

17.30 – 18.00	Registration
18.00 – 18.15	<p>Welcome and Opening remarks</p> <p>MEP Pavel Svoboda, Chairman of Committee on Legal Affairs, EPP Group</p> <p>H.E. Ambassador Martin Povejšil, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to European Union</p>
18.15 - 19.00	<p>Panel discussions</p> <p>Moderator: Jacques Rupnik, political scientist, Václav Havel Library Trustee</p> <p>Eastern Neighbourhood of the EU</p> <p>What is the development in political thinking in Eastern Partnership countries towards the EU? Is EU engagement in EaP efficient? What is the role of the EU, when faced with assertive Russian policies towards its neighbors? What are the tendencies for civil society Eastern Partnership countries?</p> <p>Volodymyr Ogrysko, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ukraine Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili, Former Minister for Reintegration, Georgia</p>
19.00 - 20.00	<p>European Neighbourhood Policy – state of the play</p> <p>What are the tendencies for civil society Eastern Partnership countries? What are Eastern partnership countries' needs and expectations from the EU and the Eastern Partnership especially for civil society? What should be the EU's role vis-à-vis civil society in the Eastern partnership countries?</p> <p>Rostislav Valvoda, Director of Prague Civil Society Center, Czech Republic Iryna Shvets, Civic Network OPORA, Ukraine Sona Ayvazyan, Transparency International, Armenia</p>