

## Central and Eastern Europe Civil Society Forum

Bucharest, 27-28 November 2014

A quarter of century has passed since the communist authoritarian regimes have crumbled down in Central and Eastern Europe by a generation who did not know that it was impossible to change the all-powerful system they were living in. Inspired and supported by the Western democracies people in our region started to rediscover long lost values and to (re)build the institutions guaranteeing civil liberties and human rights. Freedom of association and freedom of expression and the solidarity of long oppressed citizens were the foundation on which civil society was rebuilt. The path was not smooth and the progress was slow in most of our countries. Civil society activists came together to advocate and fight for their beliefs against formidable the forces and inertia of the authoritarian heritage. Ten years ago the European Union opened itself to the first wave of countries from Central and Eastern Europe, as a recognition of their democratic transformations and as an incentive for further progress. The European institutions and the Governments of the older democracies have been the main inspiration and support of the progressive energy of the young civil society in our region. The future looked bright.

Twenty five years after the fall of authoritarianism and only ten years after the accession to the EU we find ourselves suddenly in more troubled waters. The economic crisis and the change of how the whole world system works has put a lot of pressure on European governments and on the solidarity and values on which the European Union has been built. Climate change, world armed conflicts, tougher competition for global resources make the picture even worse. European citizens are faced with a completely new environment dominated by two key words: instability and precarity. Statemanship is in short supply and the political establishment is under serious criticism across Europe for failing to cater for the public good. Citizens feel betrayed and abandoned. Some of them have given up. One temptation is to look back at political solutions that Europe believed that will never be possible again. Populism, extremism and authoritarianism seem again to appeal to a large number of European citizens. Core democratic values and fundamental human rights appear now negotiable. Inspiration is sought in the despotic and corrupt regimes of the world.

For civil society in Central and Eastern Europe more than elsewhere the concerns are higher. Democratic institutions are fragile, civic culture is weak, corruption is eroding the public welfare, the confidence in the public institutions and the social capital. A quarter of century of economic transition and social change have been difficult and poverty remains widespread. People are tired and seem not willing to withstand further hardship. Populism flourishes further opening the path to authoritarianism. The moderating influence of the European institutions and of the older democracies is muted by the domestic crisis in the old EU member states. The armed conflict on the Eastern border of the Union is testing the willingness of the European Union members to remain in solidarity and to defend the European core values and principles. So far for civil society in our countries this looks bad.

Against this gloomy picture, there is hope. Other European citizens have decided to put up a fight for the values they cherish: human dignity and human rights for which democracy remains the only guarantee. From Spain to the neighboring Turkey, in Bulgaria, Romania and more recently in Hungary, citizens have taken to the streets and are making their voices heard.

The development of a strong and active civil society was not included among the official criteria for accession (political criteria). Nonetheless in time the European Union came to emphasize the role of civil society (in particular of a strong and democratic NGO sector) in building stable and healthy democratic societies prior to the accession of CEE countries to the EU. This element has become visible both in various official documents (i.e. progress reports) and in actual policies (through the various funding programmes

dedicated to or involving CSOs/NGOs). While the approach remains visible in the relation of the EU to third countries (particularly prospective new member states), it is rather absent from the European domestic sphere. The assumption that EU member states are stable democracies with long(er) tradition of civil society participation and checks and balances of power is at present more fragile, with younger democracies (such as CEE member states) in a worse context. It seems rather strange that, given the emphasis on the political conditionality in relation to third countries, there is no Community competence in the field of civil society as “democracy and democratisation remain largely outside EU-level responsibilities” and are not covered by the *acquis communautaire*.

Although, particularly more recently, the role of civil society has been recognized in the process of EU policy formulation (for instance the European Economic and Social Committee includes CSOs as full consultative entities, not only in the traditional role of social partners as employers’ associations and trade unions, but also under a specific third group “Various Interests” where a wide range of NGOs are included), it does not appear in the extensive legislative body of the European Union. EU is interested more in this consultative function of civil society than on the role or the development of the third sector in a member state. While this approach is in line with the essential features of civil society (independence, freedom of association, subsidiarity), EU has not attempted to provide benchmarks or standards for the role of CSOs in a modern liberal democracy (not even for prospective member states). “As a result, there are no binding Community rules on civil society and no *acquis communautaire* on the third sector”. While that omission does not seem to pose serious challenges to civil society in “older” democracies, the case can be made that it leaves CSOs in new member states vulnerable to negative influence from the political sphere and, consequently, that it actually weakens the democratization processes still underway in most of the post-communist countries.

The economic crisis and its various effects have a considerable impact on EU societies. Old weaknesses are resurfacing and new challenges are coming out of the crisis. Democracy (under its various older and newer historical models) is under pressure as citizens demand change. Civil Society Organizations are themselves affected by the economic, political and societal transformations. It is an excellent time to discuss and revisit the role and mission of civil society organisations.



## Conference Report

Over 250 participants from 18 countries attended during the 2 days of the Forum, including a high number of Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) leaders. Representatives of the main European institutions were also present: European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe, Agency for Fundamental Rights.

The Forum successfully contributed to achieve the following objectives:

- to renew the sense and tradition of solidarity and cooperation among CSOs in CEE;
- to identify the main priorities for the European civil society in the fields of democracy, rule of law, good governance and human rights;
- to generate ideas for joint advocacy work at national and EU level on the identified priorities.

The forum was opened by a conversation between two personalities coming from Central and Eastern Europe, Romanian philosopher Andrei Plesu and Adam Michnik, one of the main leaders of Polish dissent and central figure in the collapse of the communist regime in Poland. "We need civil society to bring the moral dimension to the society" said Adam Michnik during the dialogue with the Romanian philosopher. "There is no historical necessity. Everything is decided by the people", he added. "Civil society represents the wine and bread of democracy".

During the two-day conference, fundamental problems of the societies from the region were discussed: good governance and corruption, rise of populism and extremism, revival of civic movements and tension between economic recovery and environmental issues. The importance of civil society in the region and the need to defend European democratic values in the context of "illiberal" tendencies in Europe and Western society were emphasized. For democratic values to remain upright we need a "citizens' watch", characteristic to civil society. The main risks to which civil society is exposed at the moment are "the ideologization of the concept of civil society, its bureaucratization and of its reliance on "professional activists"", stated Andrei Plesu.

Mere membership of the European Union does not guarantee the political criteria on which states were initially accepted in this club. Such criteria continued not to be respected even after accession. What could change this state of affairs would be a recognition and greater involvement of citizens, either directly or through NGOs. A more careful monitoring of the democratic indicators, accompanied by precise mechanisms of prevention and sanction of deviations is currently explored through the European Commission's initiative to establish a new mechanism to strengthen the rule of law (EU Framework to strengthen the Rule of Law).

"We need to restore the inspiration in values that we take for granted", observed Ognyan Minchev, Executive Director of the Institute for Regional and International Studies in Bulgaria, during a session of the forum. Certainly, there are similarities in the region in terms of how citizens perceive violation of their fundamental rights and respect for the rule of law by the national authorities as it was revealed by the recent street protests in Bulgaria, Romania or Hungary. In order to revitalize democracy, Kuba Wagnanski, Director of the Polish Non-Governmental Organization Klon / Jawor, suggested focusing on "everyday democracy (on community level), which people prefer because it makes them feel actually involved." On the same note, the Romanian political scientist Alina Mungiu-Pippidi believes that "democratic change comes from local entrepreneurship that generates cohesion rather than from foreign intervention".

Civil society remains the most important promoter of democracy in the region and the main message for policy makers was focused on the need to bring back citizens at the forefront of concerns and public agenda. "A democracy that does not produce civil society slips into populism, or leads to indifference", notes Andrei Plesu. "We build a democracy based on the respect of the individual citizens in Europe. (...) Norway is interested in building democracy and human rights because democratic countries are stable countries", declared H.E. Astrid Emilie Helle, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Council of Europe.

## Main conclusions and recommendations

There is an agreement that at present the main European values and principles - democracy, rule of law and human rights - are more vulnerable than ever.

Democracy is a process which requires constant vigilance in many countries. In the current context, the focus should be in ensuring resilience of European democracies to negative events. There is a crisis of the traditional democratic institutions caused or revealed by several factors: a generalized sense of insecurity among European citizens; an increase of inequalities; a general disenchantment with the traditional democratic system and with the current political leadership; the decline in membership of several essential democratic institutions (i.e. political parties and trade unions); the rise of the populist and extremist political forces which is not countered by an adequate response from the traditional political parties; social interaction through online media which has created new expectations and forms of democratic participation.

Recent developments at the Eastern border of the European Union are questioning the European solidarity in the defense of core European values. Increased attack from outside on European values and on the EU itself represent a wake up call for both European political decision makers and civil society.

### 1. Support for democracy and rule of law in Europe

EU should strengthen its mechanisms to prevent democratic backsliding in member states. So far EU has proven ineffective in dealing with this problem. EU legislation and the *acquis communautaire* provide a basis for action only if there is enough political will by member states. EU should institute a more substantial reviewing and debating of democracy in member states, through a process of peer review and open debate. That will draw an increased public attention on the dangers of deviating from democratic principles and of weakening democratic institutions and it will encourage democratic political parties to adopt clearer positions to prevent that. While there is more disagreement on the actual space for intervention in this area by EC, EP is better positioned to act, and should work together with EESC and FRA, in close cooperation with civil society for effective reviewing and debating instruments.

Upon the initiative of four external affairs ministers in Luxemburg in 2013, the Commission has started developing the idea of a rule of law mechanism that would allow for early reaction in case member states deviate from basic rules of democracy and rule of law. In March 2014, the EC has presented to the European Parliament a communication to further develop the rule of law mechanism. The Communication starts by defining the core principles of rule of law within the EU insisting that they are not just of declarative nature, but need to be accompanied of procedural requirements: "Those principles include legality, which implies a transparent, accountable, democratic and pluralistic process for enacting laws; legal certainty; prohibition of arbitrariness of the executive powers; independent and impartial courts; effective judicial review including respect for fundamental rights; and equality before the law". Rule of law is seen as being directly linked with democracy and a prerequisite to the protection of the values listed in article 2 of the TEU.

Within this mechanism the EC should work together with the member state from the moment when a risk is identified to avoid that a systemic threat to the rule of law develops into a "clear risk of a serious breach" in the meaning of article 7 of the TEU. The mechanism applies equally and uniformly to all member states. The mechanism is not envisaged to be used when individual breaches are identified, but only when threats to the rule of law of a systemic nature exist.

The process is composed of three stages:

- Commission assessment: the EC collects information and issues a "rule of law opinion" to which the member state responds.
- Commission recommendation: the EC issues a "rule of law recommendation"
- Follow-up to the recommendation



The NGOs could have a role in all stages – offering information to the EC in the first stage, issuing position papers regarding best ways to address the threats identified in the second stage and offering information on the follow-up on the recommendation in the third stage. The NGOs could also submit their findings to other international institutions that could express a position on the issue of concern. The EC may use external expertise from FRA, Venice Commission, members of European networks of judicial councils, Supreme Court presidents or Constitutional Courts.

Ensuring good governance, the respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption are essential to rebuild citizens' trust in the democratic institutions at national and EU level and to preserve EU itself. EC should introduce democracy and rule of law as horizontal priorities in national EU programmes.

Political decision makers should view the increased forms of citizen mobilization as an opportunity for reform rather than as a threat. At national level, Governments in many European countries should become more concerned with using the new online means to open the space for citizens' engagement in the decision making process. European political families should play a guiding role and they should encourage the adoption of the best practices in member states in the area of political and electoral reform (particularly on bringing more transparency and integrity in the financing of political parties). CSOs should play a more important role in mobilizing and supporting citizens to participate in decision making processes, particularly at local level.

There is a mounting tension between the necessity of finding new ways for economic recovery (particularly in the area of energy and mineral resources) and the concern citizens' for environment and civil and social rights. To eliminate suspicion and to rebuild democratic trust, Governments and EU institutions should be more transparent and allow for open consultation in the decision making process in areas where there is a potential conflict between interests of private corporations and the legitimate rights of citizens.

## **2. Strengthening Civil Society**

Civil Society has an essential role to play in the fields of democracy, rule of law, good governance and human rights as watchdog, generator of policy ideas and political reform and promoter of civic education and of active and effective citizenship.

EU institutions (particularly EC, EP) should further recognize the role of CSOs in the fields of democracy, rule of law, good governance and human rights, to engage them in effective consultation and evaluation processes and mechanisms and to provide political support whenever they are under attack at national level.

The situation of CSOs operating in these fields varies from country to country, yet there is a general trend: there is a shrinking space for civil society engagement with public policies both across EU member states and at European level, in terms of access to decision making and resources. While ideally, resources for civic action should be generated locally from the private sector and from local communities, in reality public financial support remains important. EU institutions should continue to be a model and to offer standards of effective consultation with civil society for every member state.

EC should revise and enhance its programmes to support CSOs initiatives in the fields of democracy, rule of law, good governance and human rights not only at EU level, but also at national level. This should be done both through the use of the European programmes for each country (as it was the case in Croatia for example), but also through reforming EU wide programs such as Europe for Citizens to focus more on national priorities in the area of citizen participation and democracy (based on existing models such as the NGO Fund of the EEA and Norwegian Grants, or on instruments that the EU used in the pre-accession period and on ongoing instruments for civil society in relation to candidate and Neighbourhood countries: the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Civil Society Facility (CSF), European Endowment for Democracy (EED)). Dedicated programmes for civil society watchdogs and think tanks should be expanded in the fields of rule of law, good governance and anti-corruption.

CSOs themselves should strive more to diversify their resources, to connect better with local constituencies and to support grassroots initiatives.

European democracy is threatened by the rise of populist and extremist political forces which is fuelled by the direct and indirect causes of the economic crisis and by a general state of insecurity felt by European citizens. Citizens are disenchanted with the opaque way in which decisions affecting their welfare are made, with corruption and bad governance. Populist and extremist political forces take advantage of this situation and target minority groups as scape goats. The political discourse has deteriorated over the last few years, with traditional political parties copying extremist forces' themes rather than firmly rejecting them. European political families should resist this temptation and should work together to impose standards and practices on their national membership to preserve core democratic values and institutions at national level.

There is a direct link between civic education and the rise of illiberal political forces. EU should be concerned with the quality of civic education curricula in member states. CSOs should play a more important role in civic education.

EU should find adequate ways to fight anti-democratic external propaganda directed against European core values by illiberal countries that support populist and extremist movements within member states.

CSOs should strengthen their solidarity mechanisms to defend targeted minority groups and to react whenever civil society is under attack in any EU member state.

# PROGRAMME

Bucharest, November 27<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup>

National Library of Romania, Unirii Boulevard 22

Thursday, November 27, 2014

9.30 – 11.00 Opening session: *A Conversation about Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe*

A quarter of century has passed since Communism has been brought down in Central and Eastern Europe by a generation who did not know that it was impossible to change an all-powerful system. Freedom of association and expression and the solidarity of long oppressed citizens were the foundation on which civil society was rebuilt. The path was not smooth and the progress has been slow in most of our countries, in confrontation with the formidable forces and inertia of the former regime. The conversation will look at the meanings of civil society, citizenship and the transformation of the public space in Central and Eastern Europe.

**Adam Michnik** Historian, essayist, former dissident, public intellectual, and the editor-in-chief of Poland's largest newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza (PL)  
**Andrei Plesu** Philosopher, essayist, journalist, literary and art critic (RO)

11.30 – 13.00 Plenary session: **Democratisation in Europe: Mission Accomplished?**

Civil society has become one of the main allies of the European Union in the process of Europeanization of new member states, particularly in the field of human rights, building democratic institutions and civic culture and rule of law. The hope was that Central and Eastern European countries would develop into stable liberal democracies, with open and pluralistic societies. The session will explore to what degree these expectations have been fulfilled and how relevant civil society has been in the process up to the present.

**H.E. Astrid Emilie Helle** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Council of Europe (NO)  
**Karen Fogg** Former Head of EC Delegation in Bucharest (1993-1998) (UK)  
**Alina Mungiu-Pippidi** Professor of Democracy Studies, Hertie School of Governance (RO)  
**Kuba Wygnański** Director of Klon/Jawor Association (PL)  
Moderator: **Ionuț Sibian** Executive Director of the Civil Society Development Foundation (RO)

14.30 – 16.00 **Parallel Sessions: How Will European Democracies Survive the Economic Crisis?**

**A1 The New Wave of Intolerance and Extremism in Europe**

The rise of populism, extremism and xenophobia is now a constant presence in most of the European countries, fuelled by insecurity and the fears brought along by the economic crisis and the new world (dis)order. The respect for human dignity, human rights and diversity - one of the cornerstones of the European Union and one of the dimensions of its soft power projected to the world - is under threat. The session attempts to review the causes of this phenomenon and will discuss the resources that European (civil) societies have to halt and reverse this trend.

<b>Bridget O'Loughlin</b>	Coordinator of the No Hate Speech Movement Campaign, Council of Europe (CoE)
<b>Florin Feșnic</b>	Researcher with the Center for the Study of Democracy of the "Babeș-Bolyai" University (RO)
<b>Valeriu Nicolae</b>	Regional Director for Advocacy at World Vision Eastern Europe, Middle East, South Caucasus (RO)
<b>Björn van Roozendaal (online)</b>	Programmes Director with ILGA – Europe (NL)
Moderator: <b>Dovilė Šakalienė</b>	Executive Director Human Rights Monitoring Institute (LT)

## B1 Discontent against Bad Governance and Corruption

All across Europe (and particularly in Central and Eastern Europe) there is a mounting discontent of the citizens against perceived inefficient and corrupt public authorities that add a further burden to the long and difficult economic crisis. The session will discuss to what degree civil society organizations have been successful in their role of advocates for transparency, good governance and public integrity against a political system plagued by the parallel process of transition to democracy and capitalism and which are the best ways and tools that deliver results.

<b>Zuzana Wienk</b>	Executive Director Fair Play Alliance (SK)
<b>Laura Ștefan</b>	Anti-corruption expert (RO)
<b>Nele Leosk</b>	Program Director at e-Governance Academy (EE)
<b>Grzegorz Makowski</b>	Director of the Anticorruption Programme at Batory Foundation (PL)
Moderator: <b>Cristian Ghinea</b>	Director of the Romanian Center for European Policies (RO)

## C1 Democratic Deficit and New Civic Movements

In the context of the painful social consequences of the economic crisis, the traditional political establishment in Europe is being challenged for failing to cater for the public good. All over Europe critics of the democratic deficit raise their voices not only through the myriad of extremist parties all across the continent, but also citizens occupying together the new space of personal democracy. The session explores the roots and shapes of the new protest movements and their implications for the traditional political establishment and civil society organizations.

<b>Vintilă Mihăilescu</b>	Professor National School of Political Sciences and Public Administration (RO)
<b>Georgi Iliev</b>	Protest network (BG)
<b>Amana Ferro</b>	Senior Policy Officer of the European Anti Poverty Network (EU)
<b>Miguel Ongil</b>	Podemos (ES)
Moderator: <b>Ioana Avadani</b>	Executive Director of the Center for Independent Journalism (RO)



## D1 Economic Recovery vs. Environmental Concerns

The economic crisis offers new opportunities for the business sector and Governments alike to push for untapped natural resources (ore mining, energy resources) as a way out of the trouble, in spite of local citizens' concerns about the dangerous environmental impact of such actions. The ensuing dispute is generally portrayed as battle between realists and idealists. The session aims to discuss to what degree this image is correct, whether a balance can be struck between economic recovery and sustainable development and where the red lines should be drawn.

<b>Bogdan Olteanu</b>	Deputy-Governor of the National Bank of Romania, Honorary Ambassador of the World Wide Fund for Nature (RO)
<b>Steffen Stierle</b>	ATTAC Germany - STOP TTIP Steering Committee (DE)
<b>Lavinia Andrei</b>	President TERRA Mileniul III (RO)
<b>Otilia Nuțu</b>	Policy analyst - energy and infrastructure with Expert Forum (RO)
<b>Peter Medved</b>	Director of the Ekopolis Foundation (SK)
Moderator: <b>Toni Vidan</b>	Friends of the Earth Croatia (HR)

## 16.30 - 18.00 Special debate: **A Conversation about the Shadow of "Illiberal States"**

At present Europe finds itself in a context which bares substantial resemblance with the periods before the first and the second world wars. Facing mounting pressure by the extreme right political movements an increasing number of Governments are tempted to limit civil liberties, to negotiate human rights and to extend their control over the society, looking up to authoritarian regimes outside Europe. The economic crisis and the change of how the whole world system works has put a lot of pressure on European governments and on the solidarity and values on which the European Union has been built. The session focuses on the external implications of the domestic challenges to democracy in Europe and on the desirable answer by the European Union.

<b>Ognyan Minchev</b>	Executive Director, Institute for Regional and International Studies (IRIS) (BG)
<b>Gabor Toka</b>	Professor at Central European University (HU)
<b>Vlad Mixich</b>	Journalist (RO)
Moderator: <b>Andrei Țârnea</b>	Executive Director of the Aspen Institute Romania (RO)

## Friday, November 28

### 9.30 - 10.30 Plenary session: **Supporting Democracy at Home and in the EU. What Policy Agenda for the Next 5 years for Central and Eastern European Civil Society?**

For civil society in Central and Eastern Europe more than elsewhere the concerns are grave. Democratic institutions are fragile, civic culture is weak, corruption is eroding the public welfare, the confidence in the public institutions and the social capital. Populism flourishes further opening the path to authoritarianism. The moderating influence of the European institutions and of the older democracies is muted by the domestic crisis in the old EU member states. 10 years after the EU accession, civil society organizations in Central and Eastern Europe are challenged more than ever to significantly influence EU in the field of democracy and the rule of law.

The session debates on the priorities and the ways for civil society in the region to define and carry out together advocacy initiatives at the EU level.

<b>Pawel Krzeczunowicz</b>	Civil society expert (PL)
<b>Oli Henman</b>	European Representative of CIVICUS (UK)
<b>Codru Vrabie</b>	Civil Society activist, Funky Citizens (RO)
Moderator: <b>Mariana Milosheva-Krushe</b>	Civil society activist and expert (BG)

### **10.45 - 12.15 Parallel Sessions: Supporting Democracy at Home and in the EU. What Policy Agenda for the Next 5 Years for CEE Civil Society?**

#### **A2 Interactive Workshop: Citizens Reborn. From a New Culture of Protest to a New Culture of Participation?**

**Facilitator: Oana Preda** Executive Director of the Resource Center for Public Participation (RO)

Over the past years, in various European countries citizens have taken to the streets to show their dissatisfaction with the traditional political establishment. A new culture of protest fed by the use of social networks and globally inspired has spread over Europe. Generally protests are not lead by mainstream civil society organizations. They are (self)coordinated in a very open and horizontal fashion. A new civic enthusiasm appears to have been born in places where citizens have usually been absent from the public sphere. However, given the rather spontaneous nature of the movements and their horizontal coordination, the protests face various challenges. The session aims to identify in a dynamic and interactive way the various types of back-up that civil society organizations can provide for the protest movements.

#### **B2 Roundtable: Checks and Balances: the EU Leverage**

*Location: Mircea Eliade Hall*

While political conditionality prior to the accession of new member states to the EU have produced major reform steps, for many observers it has become clear that progress is reversible. Once inside the EU, many Governments lost the incentive/pressure to continue reforms in key areas, particularly in the fields of justice and rule of law. Domestic checks and balances are still weak while the resistance of the system is increasing. The roundtable explores whether the EU layer of governance provides the needed leverage to balance the reversal of the democratization process in member states. It focuses on identifying the most effective mechanisms for which CSOs should advocate at EU level.

<b>Angela Filote</b>	Head of the Representation Office of the European Commission in Romania (EU)
<b>Renate Weber</b>	Member of the European Parliament (RO)
<b>Veronika Mora</b>	Director of Ökotárs Foundation (HU)
Moderator: <b>Martina Divjak</b>	Head of Advocacy at Center for Information Service, Co-operation and Development of NGOs CNVOS (SI)

## C2 Roundtable: Civil Society for All

Location: Mircea Vulcanescu

Although developing a strong and active civil society was not part of the official (democratic) criteria for accession, at various occasions the European Union pointed to the democratic value of the third sector and indicated its preference for the development of a vigorous civil society before the CEECs joined the Union. While CSOs providers of social and educational services have found quicker a relatively good domestic support, civic organizations and watchdogs have been struggling without the financial support of the foreign donors. The roundtable discusses whether existing EU and national policies and programs are well adapted to allow for the survival and development of civic organizations. It focuses on identifying ways to strengthen the support for civic organizations and watchdogs through joint advocacy initiatives.

<b>Ewa Kulik-Bielinska</b>	Director of Stefan Batory Foundation and Chair of the European Foundation Centre (PL) (tbc)
<b>Goran Forbici</b>	President of the European Network of National Civil Society Associations (SL)
<b>Luben Panov</b>	Program Director of the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-profit Law (BG)
Moderator: <b>Valentin Burada</b>	Program Director of the Civil Society Development Foundation (RO)

### 12.45 – 13.45 Five Projects that Will Rock the Future

The architecture of our future is an arm length away for each of us. Some choose to wait and see what future has in store for them. Others systematically act on anticipating and influencing its design. This session will present only a fraction of the work NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe do every day in creating a future that avoids our past mistakes and answers to society's ever-evolving needs. Presentations and know-how transfer of CSO case studies/good practices in the following fields:

- a) **Anti-corruption**
- b) **Good Governance and Transparency**
- c) **Public Participation**
- d) **Hate Speech**
- e) **Civic Movements**



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The overall objective of the NGO Fund is to strengthen civil society development and increase its contribution to social justice, democracy and sustainable development. Thus, the NGO Fund contributes to the overall objectives of the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement to reduce economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between 16 beneficiary states and the donor states Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.