

Conference "Working with Civil Society to Find Effective Solutions and Improve Governance: Towards better EU Impact in Partner Countries",
Riga, 14 October 2015

Avalon Hotel, Riga, 13. Janvāra street 19

PROVIDUS with support of Europe for Citizens programme is organising an international conference on the EU role in supporting the development of civil society in partner countries and its impact on governance, with particular focus on the Eastern Partnership and Central Asia countries.

The goal of the conference is to deepen the discussion about the role of NGOs and civil society in EU development cooperation and aid policies, with particular focus on its impact on local civil society in two regions: Central Asia and the Eastern Partnership countries. Also the role of European development NGOs in facilitating or 'mediating' EU impact in these regions will be discussed.

Participants and target audience

The conference will bring together representatives of European think-tanks and civil society organisations working with development and humanitarian aid and representatives of civil society organisations from Eastern Partnership countries and Central Asia.

Conference Programme

9.40 – 10.00 Registration

10.00 – 10.15 **Introduction** (Maria Golubeva, PROVIDUS)

10.15 – 10.40 **Keynote** (Zanda Kalniņa – Lukaševica, Parliamentary State Secretary, Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

10.40 – 12.30 **Empowering Civil Society to Facilitate Reforms and Improve Governance: challenges of matching EU aid policies to local realities**

Speakers: Jos Boonstra (FRIDE), Taras Droniuk (CEDOS, Ukraine), Mikayel Hovhannisyan (Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Armenia), Nasima Nazrieva (OSI Tajikistan), Nino Khurtsidze (Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Georgia). Facilitated by Vita Tērauda (PASOS).

Rapporteur: Iveta Kažoka (PROVIDUS)

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 15.20 **Perspectives on Partnership: the role of European development and humanitarian NGOs in building the capacity of civil society in partner countries**

Speakers: Svetlozara Kabaktchieva (DG ECHO), Ondrej Nadvornik (People in Need), Iluta Lāce (Women's Resource Centre Marta, Latvia), Jan Piekło (PAUCI, Poland). Facilitated by Maria Golubeva (PROVIDUS)

Rapporteur: Mikayel Hovhannisyan (Eurasia Partnership Foundation)

15.20 – 15.50 **Conclusions**

15.55 – 16.40 Presentation: **"EU Aid Volunteers initiative – a new opportunity to get involved"**

Svetlozara Kabaktchieva, DG ECHO of the European Commission

The presentation will outline the main features of this new EU initiative, the objectives, actors, procedures and opportunities for the citizens and organisations to contribute to the humanitarian aid and capacity building in countries outside the Union.

16.40 – 18.30 **Reception**

Rationale

Conference participants will be encouraged to describe and analyse the challenges to empowerment of civil society in neighbourhood countries receiving EU aid, and to propose ways in which the EU could better empower local civil society and improve the role of EU-based NGOs as equitable partners in capacity development.

The conference should generate constructive debate between European development NGOs and think tanks and civil society organisations from Eastern Partnership countries and Central Asia about the ways in which the EU should improve and strengthen its support of the engagement of civil society in development and reforms in partner countries.

Recommendations developed by conference participants will be integrated in a policy brief on improving the impact of EU development aid on civil society development in receiving countries.