



News Summary - Issue 2 (05.08.2013)

Dear members, friends and supporters of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum,

The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum wishes to share with you its latest developments through the News Summary - the *ad hoc* communication format briefly reporting news and updates of Forum's activities. **Have a look at the second issue of the News Summary!**

Upcoming events

IN THE SPOTLIGHT > EU-RUSSIA CSF GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE HAGUE, 5-7 OCTOBER 2013

The EU-Russia CSF is cordially inviting you to take part in its [4th General Assembly](#), which will discuss topics relevant to Russian and EU civil society actors. **Crucial decisions on the Forum's organizational development** will be made together with the election of the new Steering Committee. The [preliminary agenda](#) includes a two-days plenary meetings and a **public session on Monday 7 October**, followed by a visit to Dutch civil society organisations. **Technical information** about **registration** for participants and observers, costs and visa are [available on our website](#).

- **CSF Visa Expert Group open dialogue session, Moscow, end of October/beginning of November 2013** (*exact date and venue will be announced soon*). The event will provide a platform for an open dialogue session between EU and Russian experts and stakeholders to present progresses based on analysis of best practices towards visa facilitation and liberalisation, contribute with recommendations and engage into discussion with other experts from academia, think-tanks and NGO sector, media and official bodies from EU and Russia. For more information please follow the [Visa Group in Facebook](#) or contact the coordinator, [Kristina Smolijaninovaite](#).

News&Activities from the Forum

UNEXPECTED NEWS. We regret to inform you about the **cancellation** of the European Youth Forum "[Pilorama Laboratory](#)", a project held under the auspices of the EU-Russia CSF. The International Civil Society Forum "[Pilorama](#)", usually held at the Memorial Centre of the History of Political Repression "[Perm-36](#)", will not take place this year as well. To learn more about the reasons that led to the cancellation of these events and about other CSF projects, please read the [interview to Kristina Smolijaninovaite](#), project coordinator of the German Russian Exchange.

- On July 26, the discussions "**Public Journalists: Opinion Leaders or Outsiders?**" and "**Europe and the Crisis. Perspectives for the Russia-EU Relations**" were held at the conference hall of the "AMAKS Premier Hotel" in Perm. Despite the cancellation of both "Pilorama" and "Pilorama Lab", these discussions, originally scheduled for the event in Perm, were preserved thanks to the efforts of the organising team - composed of several Russian and Europeans NGOs with the support of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Perm Region, the Robert Bosch Foundation, the European Commission and the EU-Russia CSF. Leading experts from Russia and European countries together with EU-Russia CSF representatives discussed the role of public journalism as well as the challenges

that prevent closer ties between Russia and EU considering the current situation of Europe. *The report of the event will be soon available on the CSF website.*

- On June 27, a round-table discussion on "**Problems of discrimination in the Russian Federation**" was held in St. Petersburg in the framework of the Working Group "[Human Rights and the Rule of Law](#)" projects. Participant organisations of the EU-Russia CSF Working Group discussed the report submitted by the Government of Russia to the UN Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Their considerations were included in a document that should be assessed during the CSF General Assembly in The Hague.
- The **Final Report of the project "[Police Transparency in the EU Countries and Russia](#)"** within the Working Group "[Democratic Structures and Processes](#)" will be launched in September. Project participants from Portugal, Poland, Lithuania and Russia have been studying the legislation regulating police transparency and developing guidelines on how to improve law enforcement bodies' transparency in EU countries and in Russia. The results of their analysis will be included in the Final Report of the project together with their National Reports.
- The **Reports of the two research projects on "[Research on Environmental issues](#)"** within the Working Group "[The Environment](#)" are expected to be published at the end of October. The purpose of the projects is to conduct research on environmental issues relevant both for Russia and the EU. The first research project is a comprehensive study of the development of biodiversity conservation strategy in Europe and Asia in the context of global warming. The second research project is devoted to solve the problems of river ecosystem management and sustainable development of transboundary waters on the example of the Don river.
- Retrospectively looking at their experiences, the [participants of the Youth Exchange Programme](#) - six young employees from CSF member organisations - shared their impressions and views on the programme. Their project ideas involved several work fields, for instance, ecology, practical implementation of the right of public information, civic engagement and communication. The results of these cooperation projects will be presented at the upcoming General Assembly.
- In light of the recent Russian developments, Stefanie Schiffer (European Exchange) and Yuri Dzhibladze (Center for Development of Democracy and Human Rights) designed a **policy paper on "[European Solidarity for Russia's Civil Society](#)"**. The paper analyses the current situation of civil society in Russia, calls for the European Union to set a clear signal of solidarity with Russia's civil society and provides insightful recommendations.
- The latest CSF **policy brief "[Russian Civil Society Under Threat - How to Respond?](#)"** by Fraser Cameron and Orysia Lutsevych (EU-Russia Centre) is reflecting on the possible EU strategy to respond to the developments in Russian Civil society.
- The CSF Steering Committee commented **on the conclusions drawn at the 31st EU-Russia Summit (Yekaterinburg, 3-4 June) in the Statement "[Again, EU-Russia Summit missed the chance to take down barriers between citizens from the EU and the Russian Federation](#)"**.
- On 31 May, just a few days before the EU-Russia Summit in Yekaterinburg (3-4 June 2013), the EU-Russia CSF **panel discussion "[EU-Russia relations – Time for a Rethink?](#)"** was held in Brussels. Panelists condemned the recent crackdown on NGOs in Russia and agreed the EU should be more vocal in its criticism of Russian behaviour.

- On 22-23 May, twenty representatives of organisations from the Working Group 3 “[Social issues and civic participation](#)” met in St. Petersburg to assess its projects and discuss future activities. In particular, they explored the possibility of creating an online resource of best practices of civic participation and civic education, and of developing a cooperation interests map of NGOs from EU countries and Russia. They also provided recommendations and developed own proposals in preparation of the General Assembly in The Hague. *The full report of the meeting will be soon available on the CSF website.*
- The Forum has recently welcomed two **new member organisations**: [PASOS](#) and [Antikomplex](#). To learn more about the current **projects of our members** please visit the section [Opinions and Ideas](#) of our website; if you are interested in **becoming a member of the EU-Russia CSF**, please read carefully the [procedure on our website](#).

News from civil society

- The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Lady Catherine Ashton, has repeatedly addressed her concerns on the situation of civil society in Russia through her statements. The most recent ones reflected [on LGBTI rights in Russia](#) and [on the sentencing of Aleksey Navalny and Pyotr Ofitserov](#).
- The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia CSF has expressed its position and its deep concerns on Russia’s civil society situation in the Statements “[On the persecution of independent civic organisations in Russia in the framework of the legislation on “foreign agents”](#)” (11 June) and “[On deterioration of the legitimate work of human rights groups in Russia](#)” (9 July).

STAY CONNECTED! To be always updated on the developments within the CSF, in Russia and at the level of EU-Russia dialogue, please follow our [website](#), [Facebook official page](#) and [Twitter account](#).

With best wishes,

The Communication Team of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

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