

PRELIMINARY REPORT

Funders to Confirm Their Commitment to Stay in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Newly Independent States (NIS)

European funders gathered in Bratislava for the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Grantmakers East Group confirmed their commitment to stay in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States. This statement was complemented by United States donors who emphasized that close transatlantic cooperation is a guarantee for the healthy development of Civil Society in the region.

The AM's plenary sessions and workshops addressed key challenges facing donors in the countries they work in and more specifically in three principle areas: Public Participation, European Union Accession, and Good Grantmaking Practice. The highlights of the AM included:

- Strengthening grantmakers' involvement in building Civil Society in the Caucasus and Central Asia
- Joining community foundations' efforts to fight for social justice
- Enhancing cooperation among donors to support institutional development of NGOs

The workshop on challenges to Civil Society in the Caucasus and Central Asia explored various grantmaking strategies to help build more sustainable and democratic societies. There is a need to build trust between Civil Society and the State, form coalitions and networks, and strengthen internal democracy of NGOs. NGOs also need to become better-rooted in their own societies starting from local communities.

Participants of the Community Philanthropy workshop discussed to what extent current developments in community philanthropy across the region are coping with issues of social justice. It was emphasised that in order to pursue social justice more seriously, grantmakers are challenged to invest in community philanthropy organisations that establish social justice programmes, including the level of schools, as well as fund wider campaigns to influence public opinion.

The workshop on institutional development grants was of great interest for many participants. Such grants are seen as one of the instruments that should help mature NGOs in achieving long-term financial sustainability. It was noted that the engagement of donors should go far beyond "project delivery". They need to enter in long-term partnerships with grantees, help them in strategic planning, and encourage new ways of raising funds.

The Eighth AM of the GEG held on 23-24 October 2003 in Bratislava, Slovakia, gathered 160 representatives of private, public, and corporate funders from 28 countries. The event was organised by the EFC and the GEG Steering Committee and was hosted by the Donors' Forum – Slovakia.

The next, Ninth AM of the GEG will be held on 21-22 October 2004 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Issues to be considered at this Meeting include:

- Learning how CEE non-profit organisations can tap new resources
- Sharing lessons learnt with the candidate countries in South Eastern Europe
- Drawing attention to the difficult situation of NGOs in the NIS
- Supporting development of donors' fora throughout the region of CEE and the NIS