



PRESS RELEASE

Announcing the 16th annual Grantmakers East Forum:

GEF 2011: Learn. Reflect. Connect.

Riga, Latvia 4 - 6 October 2011

Brussels, 3 October 2011 – Digital media and freedom of access to information top the agenda as more than 150 delegates gather in the city of Riga to take part in the 2011 Grantmakers East Forum (GEF): Learn. Reflect. Connect. Hosted by the Soros Foundation-Latvia, the Forum provides an unparalleled opportunity for funders to join their counterparts working in the region to network, share ideas and discuss the challenges and opportunities for grantmaking in this dynamic and ever-changing area of Europe.

With an address by **Sarmite Elerte, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia**, this year's opening plenary will focus on the role that recent 'social media revolutions' have played in mobilising citizens and how this affects the role of more traditional media. The opening plenary will likewise address the threats and opportunities of the digital age and discuss the role of new media in promoting democracy, citizen participation, free thinking and access to information.

The title of this year's event embodies GEF's mission of supporting learning, networking and collaboration amongst grantmakers. The conference will discuss traditional grantmaking and how it should evolve to incorporate the current information and communications tools that are now widely available. Specifically, the event will debate whether grantmaking in support of traditional activism remains valid when people are sufficiently self-motivated and have access to these new social media tools.

Plenary sessions will focus, as in previous years, on topics of concern to grantmakers active in the region. This year's programme has been adapted to incorporate more structured sessions on pressing issues to offer delegates a chance for greater interaction and discussion.

As the major industrial, commercial, cultural and financial centre of the Baltics, and with historic transformations of its own, Riga provides a perfect setting for this 16th annual GEF. The event is open to any grantmaking foundation, bilateral donor, international organisation or corporate funder which is based

or working in Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Registration is compulsory, and details can be found below.

“GEF has always been a platform for fresh ideas to be presented, controversial issues discussed and a place where the bond between and among philanthropic organisations and grantmakers has been growing and strengthening. This will continue in Riga, but with the significant backdrop of the critical period for the vitality of democracy, the role of civil society and the global economic and financial instability, changes in the Middle East and North Africa and new perspectives for European Enlargement.” – Haki Abazi, GEF Steering Committee Chair

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Conference venue: Radisson Blu Hotel Latvija, Riga, Latvia

Final programme: <http://www.gef.efc.be/programme>

Registration: <http://www.gef.efc.be/registration>

For further information please visit: <http://www.gef.efc.be> or contact:

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About GEF

The Grantmakers East Forum (GEF), formerly the Grantmakers East Group (GEG) was created in 1992 by a group of European Foundation Centre (EFC) members active in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Newly Independent States (NIS). The group first met as a side event at the EFC Annual General Assembly (AGA) and Conference. However, as interest for the group grew, in pace with developments of grantmaking in CEE and the NIS, GEF developed into an independent project resulting in the Annual Meeting (AM) which takes place in a different country each year.

About the EFC

The European Foundation Centre (EFC), founded in 1989, is an association representing more than 230 public-benefit foundations and corporate funders active in philanthropy in Europe and beyond. The EFC develops and pursues activities in line with its objectives: creating an enabling legal and fiscal

environment for foundations; documenting the foundation landscape; strengthening the infrastructure of the foundation sector; and promoting collaboration, both among foundations and between foundations and other actors, to advance the public good in Europe and beyond.

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