Civil society
At the heart of the Eastern Partnership
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CIVIL SOCIETY INFO PACK
June 2016

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SUCCESS STORIES

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Civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries should play a crucial role within their societies in providing policy input, developing new initiatives and in holding governments accountable for their actions, the EU believes. It considers them as major actors in promoting democracy and human rights, the rule of law and sustainable economic and social development.

EU support seeks to strengthen the role of civil society in the policy-making process and to promote a more favourable attitude of governments towards them. It considers that in order for reforms to be successful stronger participation of civil society is needed so as to enhance the oversight of public services and strengthen public confidence in those services.

Support to CSOs is given at the bilateral level, with a country envelope of 5-10% of the total bilateral allocation, to support and strengthen their capacities. At a regional level it seeks to strengthen their networks, in particular the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF). The Eastern Partnership itself is to a large extent about regional cooperation and bringing partner countries together to work on issues of common interest.

Civil society: support rising to €148 million in 2014-17

Following the launch of the EaP, the creation of the Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility (CSF), civil society became a major stakeholder in the implementation of reforms and democratic changes. Total financial support to civil society in the region has risen steeply over the years, from €30 million in 2007-10, to €68 million for 2011-13, and €148 million for 2014-17. Through the Civil Society Facility, support was provided for the involvement of civil society in various sectors, for example: oversight functions in public finance policy and management, food safety reform, policy dialogue with parliament, election observation, environmental protection, social inclusion, local development and public policies.

“Everyone benefits when civil society is strong, proactive and independent. Democratic governments know they are stronger when they listen to you.”

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy
The EaP Civil Society Forum: a leading platform

With more than 500 CSOs under its umbrella, the role of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) as a platform for interaction and as a stakeholder in the policy dialogue in the participating countries has become increasingly prominent since its creation in 2009. Its thematic working groups are discussing issues of European integration in areas of democracy and human rights, visa facilitation, economic integration, environment and climate change, youth and social policies, etc.

Also, the EaP CSF is a part of tripartite dialogues between the government, civil society and the EU, for example in Moldova and Georgia.

The Forum believes the path to European integration is a long-term process, often requiring a change of a mind-set. Thus public awareness activities have been a prominent feature in its activities. The work to increase accountable and participatory policy-making in the EaP countries is ongoing, with many challenges lying ahead.

Through its re-granting scheme, the EaP CSF is funding 17 regional projects in 2016, and 15 in 2015, with issues ranging from ENP East Media Freedom Watch to Energy Union and Energy security in EaP countries.

“The EaP CSF has become an effective mechanism for channelling information from civil society to European institutions and back”

CSF steering committee co-chair Krzysztof Bobiński

Delivering results on the ground

Between 2014 and 2015, six NGOs from four countries (Armenia, Moldova, Poland and Ukraine), all members of the EaP CSF, worked together on a joint project funded by the EU, monitoring conflict of interests in public institutions. Over two years, the project:

- Identified 66 cases of conflict of interest
- Interviewed 1,151 officials from 42 public institutions
- Trained 66 local NGOs
- Organised over 80 events involving 3,000+ people

Full story
A dedicated programme to support civil society

The Eastern Partnership has given strong impetus to the EU’s involvement with civil society in the region, with involvement of CSOs in policy dialogue, and support to civil society mainstreamed across all sectors of intervention. At the same time, the EU channels increased financial support through the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, strengthening the role of civil society in implementing reforms and democratic changes.

The Civil Society Facility

The Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility was the first programme dedicated to civil society in the European Neighbourhood.

The main goal of the Facility, established in 2011, is to reinforce CSOs so that they play their part in change and can be real actors in the democratisation process. This is done by boosting their contribution to policy-making, and developing further their advocacy, networking and monitoring capacities.

Funding from the Facility supports the Civil Society Forum Secretariat, as well as its working groups and national platforms.

It also funds the Civil Society, Dialogue for Progress project, strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations in partner countries.

In addition, the Facility supports actions at both regional and bilateral level. These projects support very diverse issues. The impacts of the various grant projects with civil society range from better living conditions for vulnerable groups (such as children with disabilities) to increased capacities of civil society to carry out budgetary analysis and expenditure tracking in order to make sure that public spending is transparent and responds to citizens’ needs.

From 2011 to 2013, the Civil Society Facility supported more than 100 organisations in all 6 EaP countries, with almost €40 million in EU funding.

Civil society: an EU priority for 2014-2020

The regulation setting up the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the financial arm of the ENP, offers substantive support to civil society:

“The objectives of this Regulation should be pursued with the appropriate involvement of external action partners, including civil society organisations and local authorities, in preparing, implementing and monitoring Union support, given the importance of their roles. This Regulation should also support the strengthening of the capacity of civil society organisations to guarantee effective domestic accountability and local ownership, and to play a full role in the democratisation process.”
Support on the ground

On a local level, much support to civil society is given via the EU Delegations, which often have calls for proposals, while Delegations are regularly organising both structured and informal consultations with civil society actors.

This information, along with a list of all projects funded in the country, can be found on Delegation websites.

Here are some examples of what is being done on the ground:

**Armenia**

The *Strong CSOs for a stronger Armenia* project aims at boosting the capacities of Armenian CSOs to allow them to be independent development actors, more responsive to citizens’ needs, and proactively support the country’s development.

**Azerbaijan**

The EU is the largest foreign donor supporting civil society in Azerbaijan, with over 60 projects funded and some €11.9 million between 2007 and 2013. Support is provided primarily through the NSA and EIDHR instruments, which focus on supporting vulnerable groups, human rights defenders, media freedom, free and fair elections.

**Belarus**

Since 2011, the EU has strengthened its engagement with civil society and the public at large. Support includes projects aiming at guaranteeing freedom of thought, conscience and religion, improving women and child rights, increasing capacity of CSOs and human rights defenders etc.

**Georgia**

In November 2015, €6 million were earmarked for the Civil Society Facility in Georgia to improve the sustainability of CSOs in Georgia, with a particular focus on diversifying their funding sources. It will also help strengthen CSO advocacy and oversight, particularly in the framework of monitoring EU-Georgia agreements.

**Moldova**

An EU-funded regional project on conflict of interest has been very visible in Moldova, leading to closer cooperation between civil society and government. As a result Transparency International Moldova was asked by the Ministry of Interior and the State Chancellery to prepare trainings for their staff on how to prevent conflicts of interest.

**Ukraine**

The EU Delegation in Ukraine has created a civil society dialogue webpage to allow civil society actors to provide their views on a range of issues of importance to the way the relationship between Ukraine and the EU will develop in the future.
Additional funding channels

In addition to the dedicated Civil Society Facility and the support available at bilateral level, the EU also supports civil society actors through a range of additional channels. These include:

**EED – European Endowment for Democracy**
Established to help political actors of change that face obstacles in accessing donor funding, such as journalists, bloggers, non-registered NGOs, political movements. The EED offers a rapid and flexible funding mechanism for beneficiaries who are not or are insufficiently supported, in particular for legal or administrative reasons, making it a very unique tool. It primarily seeks to support groups and activists that cannot be supported by existing EU instruments or other programmes. The EED, which is not an EU institution, receives an EU grant to support its set-up and functioning.

**EIDHR – European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights**
The EIDHR is designed to help civil society to become an effective force for political reform and defence of human rights. It is the main instrument that aims to help fight against human rights violations and promotes media freedom by supporting CSOs’ unhindered access to the Internet and the use of electronic communications technologies.

**NSA-LA – Non-State Actors and Local Authorities thematic programme**
Aims at encouraging non-state actors and local authorities to get more involved in development issues. Supporting Non-State Actors and Local Authorities means encouraging local participation in development, at both national and local level. It also means working for better governance and more participative development, which is thus more relevant to citizens. The EU believes these organisations are a real benefit given their proximity to local communities and their greater flexibility when it comes to implementation.
Useful Links

Info Centre interview – Civil Society at the heart of the Eastern Partnership
www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id=755&id_type=6&lang_id=450

Info Centre Interview – European Endowment for Democracy
www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id_type=1&id=37587

Info Centre interview – Civil Society Forum
www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id=682&id_type=6&lang_id=450

Info Centre – Civil Society and Local Authorities webpage
www.enpi-info.eu/themeeast.php?subject=14

EuropeAid – Civil society webpage

Civil Society – helpdesk

Info Centre – Eastern Partnership webpage
www.enpi-info.eu/maineast.php?id=506&id_type=2

EaP Civil Society Forum website
http://eap-csf.eu

Civil Society. Dialogue for Progress website
http://www.csdialogue.eu

EU Neighbourhood Handbooks
From the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre website, a number of different handbooks can be downloaded, offering tips to media professionals for improved coverage of EU cooperation activities, but also providing information on how to access EU funding or to navigate through EU jargon.
A wealth of knowledge at your disposal, just a click away on www.euneighbours.eu.
Documents

2015 regional progress report

Communication: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations (2012)

Regulation establishing ENI (March 2014)


Info Centre documents Library – civil society
www.enpi-info.eu/library/theme/Civil%20society%20and%20local%20authorities

info packs
Other Info Centre info packs are available online:
EAST and SOUTH

EU Neighbourhood Library
Our online database
www.euneighbours.eu/library/

www.euneighbours.eu/library/
The EU: a major donor for the Neighbourhood

EU support to the region is mainly channeled through the European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR).

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) funding approved for the period 2014-2020 is € 15.4 billion. The ENI replaces the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), for which the funding was € 11.2 billion for the period 2007-2013. The new instrument provides faster and more flexible funding, allowing for incentives for best performers, to 16 partner countries to the East and South of the EU's borders.

**East:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine.

**South:** Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine*, Syria**, Tunisia.

*This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

**The EU suspended all its bilateral cooperation with the Government of Syria and its participation in regional programmes in 2011.

The EU Neighbourhood Info Centre is run by the EU-funded OPEN Neighbourhood programme, which is implemented by two mirror projects, EU Neighbours South and EU Neighbours East, communicating the results of EU support in the South and the East of the Neighbourhood.

www.euneighbours.eu

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