

The European Union's Non-state Actors and Local Authorities in Development Programme,  
Coordination, Cooperation and Networking Activities Among European Organisations

# THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND AID EFFECTIVENESS



This project is funded by  
the European Union



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Sofia, 2013



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## List of Abbreviations

AfT.....	Aid for Trade
CONCORD.....	Confederation for Cooperation of Relief and Development NGOs
CSO .....	Civil Society Organisation
EIDHR .....	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENPI .....	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EU .....	European Union
IPA .....	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
MDGs .....	Millennium Development Goals
MFA.....	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGDO.....	Non-Governmental Development Organisation
NGO .....	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMS .....	New Member States
ODA .....	Official Development Assistance
OECD .....	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNDP .....	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF .....	United Nations Children's Fund
WTO.....	World Trade Organization

# INTRODUCTION

## Development assistance

The United Nations Millennium Declaration<sup>1</sup> (adopted in 2000) has formulated the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). By concurring with the Declaration, countries commit to put their best endeavour in the global strive to reduce poverty, improve healthcare, and promote peace, human rights and sustainable environment. Securing resources to MDG implementation has been identified as one of the main international development cooperation issues. Being closely related to MDG, development assistance aims to ensure necessary resources from both governments and agencies in support of economic, social, and political development, and environmental protection in developing countries.

EU has been a leading partner in development assistance, with the development policy being one of the numerous Community policies. At the same time, this policy is a component of the overall foreign policy of both the Community and member states, thus making it different from any other Community policy regulating issues of internal nature. The current crisis has forced EU to not just continue honouring commitments under the European Development Policy but also undertake additional measures in response to crisis implications, also in the long run. To that end, development priorities have been reshaped and some urgent assistance has been delivered to include raising initial instalments, accelerating budget support and enhancing assistance effectiveness.<sup>2</sup> Some new initiatives have been introduced to help developing countries to cope with global crisis consequences. These entail: increasing size of assistance to countries covered by European Neighbourhood Policy and EU candidate countries; accelerating and improving Trade Aid initiative implementation and efficiency; increasing export credits to cover a larger business volume; and providing investment guarantees and credit lines to European Neighbourhood Policy countries.

## Civil society

Civil society organizations play a significant role in international development cooperation. As a token of solidarity, a number of European states assisted developing countries's strive for political and socio-economic development well before establishing the European Union and institutionalizing the European policy for non-governmental sector development.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.undp.bg/millennium\\_goals.php?lang=bg](http://www.undp.bg/millennium_goals.php?lang=bg)

<sup>2</sup> Commission of the European Communities. Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Supporting Developing Countries in Coping with the Crisis. Millennium Development Goals – Impact of the Financial Crisis on Developing Countries, Brussels, 8.4.2009, COM (2009) 160 final



Quite often civil sector assistance provided to developing countries preceded, and in some cases even superseded state aid.<sup>3</sup> Civil organizations operate in various areas and possess diverse competences. In recent years a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) specializing in the area of international development and humanitarian aid (NGDO - Non-Governmental Development Organisations) have been set up in a number of European countries. They allow placing donor-development assistance beneficiary relationship on new grounds. NGDOs conduct a dialog with EU institutions on issues of international development cooperation, participate in EU institutions' work in their consulting capacity and implement EU funded development assistance programmes and projects.

Experience gained indicates that a full-value participation of civil society and business in assistance provision depends on the maturity, competence, preparedness and capacity of such organizations to cooperate with developing country partners on competitive grounds and generate funds to implement projects for the purposes of development. At the same time, organization representatives possessing the motivation required can hardly attain significant results without the participation of the state. Such assistance is provided on competitive grounds following procedures that guarantee transparency and accountability.

European NGOs have established structures to liaise with European institutions. In the area of development such a structure is CONCORD – a confederation with members from both EU member states and European NGDOs. CONCORD unites 27 EU member states national development platforms and 18 international networks, and represents close to 1800 non-governmental organizations which are supported by millions of Europe's citizens. Two of CONCORD programmes – TRIALOG and DEEP (Development Education Exchange in Europe Project) are dedicated entirely to the development area. TRIALOG aims at building the capacity of NGDOs in new EU member states, in EU accession states and EU accession candidate states. The main objective of DEEP is to enhance public control and provide training on global issues such as poverty and famine.

As a result of the cooperation with the civil sector some good practices are developed, thus enriching EU and member states' agenda on development issues. Along with that civil organizations stir up their activity in international development assistance beneficiary states via enhancing cooperation with partnering NGOs in these countries. In the future it is expected such NGDOs to become the principal actors in development cooperation with the purpose of assisting developing countries in building up civil society foundations.

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<sup>3</sup> Lyuba Zaharieva, Paper prepared under 'Bulgarian Development Policy: Transparency in Creating Regulations and Program Framework' Project  
<http://bdi.mfa.government.bg/>

## **COMMON CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **The role of civil society as a development actor in Central and Eastern Europe**

This chapter strives at drawing a complex picture of what role the civil society plays in the international development co-operation policy of 9 countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and is based on the individual research papers that were elaborated in each respective country.

### **Unique role of civil society in CEE countries coupled with particular challenges**

In all the countries where the role of the civil society was examined, there is a common understanding and recognition that civil society is a crucial actor in international development co-operation, this fact being acknowledged both by the civil society itself as well as by the government representatives. This is a standard practice also in the other developed countries where civil society is usually one of the driving forces of development policy, participating in the policy design and execution, education on global issues, as well as exerting effective pressure on governments to increase its commitments to development countries, take actions at global level or to shape development policy in one way or another. The special importance of non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) in Central and Eastern European countries is underlined by the fact that they were often ahead of their governments. Such organisations often emerged earlier than the countries of the region accepted international commitments as donor countries. They made use of funding available from various international donors to participate in development projects, and to bring the global issues to the attention of national policy makers and publics. However, unlike their western counterparts, they have to face multiple challenges a low general awareness of global development issues within their countries, low levels of comprehension why their countries should help less prosperous countries, underfinancing of the sector as well as low capacity to perform many of the tasks that the more established development civil society organisations take for granted.

### **Diversity of organisations across the region**

The NGDO scene across Central and Eastern Europe is highly diversified, and it is thus not easy to draw a picture of what it looks like. However, several main groups of entities that deal with international development co-operation can be identified, based on a combination of certain criteria.

The first group of NGDOs would be represented by faith-based organisations. These are traditionally engaged in natural and manmade disaster relief and humanitarian actions, but their scope of operations is not necessarily



limited thereto. Their advantage is that they are usually very well internationally connected, by having co-operated with their sister organisations in more established donor countries (for instance Slovak charities often started to operate in Africa along with the Austrian ones). They often operate in various areas of the world, beyond the priority recipient countries for the region.

Secondly we find examples of “typical” development NGOs, that work on a complex set of development issues beyond the limited scope of their home countries’ priorities, and for whom the development co-operation is the sole or main *raison d’être*. These organisations are rather typical for bigger countries of the region that also have a more established tradition of development aid provision, such as Poland, Hungary or the Czech Republic, and are less numerous. In some cases, they are almost at a par or comparable with their western counterparts. With huge budgets and manpower (e.g. People In Need in the Czech Republic or Polish Humanitarian Action), they are more successful in bidding for international projects as well as very active in influencing national and international involvement of development policy.

Thirdly, there is a set of organisations that are engaged in a segment of development co-operation typical for Central and Eastern Europe, that is transition experience, know-how generated during the EU accession process and democratic transformation. These organisations often build on their own experience and capacities that was developed during their countries’ transition and are now capable of transferring it to other countries. These are usually smaller than the classical multi-issue development NGOs. They tend to operate in areas geographically conferred to close EU neighbourhood, mainly the Western Balkans or ex-Soviet Union because these are the regions where assumingly the Central European experience is mostly transferrable.

Fourthly, there are organisations which are not exclusively focused on development co-operation but for whom it represents only one part of their portfolio. This is quite a diversified group in itself, and typically involves single-issue organisations (e.g. gender equality, healthcare) who often work also nationally, organisations engaged in global education and awareness raising on development issues (working mainly nationally), or organisations and think-tanks researching development issues. Arguably, this is the most typical group of the Central European development sector of civil society.

## **National NGO platforms in place in all the countries**

It should also be noted that the NGO sector in Central and Eastern Europe is organised into national platforms, thus reflecting the practice in other EU countries. Such platforms nowadays exist in all the countries surveyed. All the national platforms are members of CONDORD, the EU-wide umbrella organisation of NGOs active in development-co-operation and humanitarian aid. The size varies, which is natural given the different size of countries and their sectors. What is quite striking is that in case of Hungary, which has quite a large and diversified NGO scene, only 16 organisations are full members of HAND, which is fewer than in much smaller Estonia (AKÜ with 21 members) or Latvia (LAPAS with 30 members). On the contrary, it has to be acknowledged that HAND is not a unique platform of development co-operation in Hungary: the organisations active in Africa founded their own platform called Hungarian Africa Platform, although there are some overlaps with HAND. But it poses questions of representativeness of this platform and to what extent it could serve as an institutional partner to the MFA, given that the number of Hungarian organisations engaged in development co-operation is much larger (about 60). Similar situation emerged in the Czech Republic, which has also two platforms: one of them – FORS – gathers “typical” development NGOs, whilst the other – DEMAS – encompasses organisations active in the area of democracy promotion and human rights. This is explicable by the specificity of the Czech case where the democracy promotion and transition is decoupled from other development activities such as poverty eradication or sustainable development. However, these cases are rather exceptional. Otherwise the national platforms are fairly representative of the development sector in the other countries.

Most of the development platforms are recognized as an institutional partner of the administration (especially MFAs) in issues relating to development co-operation. In majority of cases, they also receive some kind of core operational grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, except for LAPAS in Latvia. This leads to quite a paradoxical situation that LAPAS is competing for funds with its members. In the Slovak case it was also recognized that

although the Slovak platform receives a core grant from the foreign ministry, it is not free to use the funds at its discretion. The platform organisations typically provide services and capacity building to their members, but also engage in educational and awareness raising activities nationally as well as undertake advocacy vis-à-vis governments on development policy issues. But the large internal heterogeneity of the platforms internally, with bigger multi-issue organisations as well as rather small ones, makes it sometimes difficult to articulate a strong position towards the government, thus ending at the lowest common denominator. In some cases, the emergence of the platforms was perceived as more top-down process (e.g. in Hungary or Estonia, where they emerged as a result of capacity-building exercises financed by external donors). Thus an argument can be made that NGDO platforms still need a clearer strategy in terms of what they want to achieve and tangible advocacy goals.

## **Involvement in the development policy cycle still insufficient**

The key role of NGDOs is often recognized in the national legislation on development co-operation, or strategic documents relating thereto. These describe the civil society as a key partner in the process of the development policy planning, implementation and evaluation, and provide framework for its involvement. However, as the research has shown, the practice varies greatly across the region. While in some countries the system of civil society input into the policy cycle still remains mainly on paper (which is for instance the case of Bulgaria or Romania), in others the civil society has provided substantive input into the policy debates. The Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia represent the most advanced cases in terms of dialogue with the government. The Czech platform FORS holds regular consultations on major policy documents regarding development policy, participates in Council on International Development Co-operation and enjoys very good informal contacts with the MFA officials. At the moment it is preparing an input into the mid-term review of the Development Co-operation strategy for 2010-17 period. There has also been a shifting of personnel between the administration (particularly MFA) and civil society sector, which makes mutual contacts and comprehension easier. However, when it comes to lobbying the top political level, for instance on issues of overall ODA budget, even FORS recognizes that its leverage is rather limited. In case of Poland, a regular mechanism of consultation was firmly put in place in 2011, following the enactment of development co-operation. The civil society also played a major role in terms of providing input into the bill and performs a major role in monitoring the system of Polish development assistance, whose analytical part has been greatly expanded in 2012 report. Despite the intensified contacts and the enactment of international development co-operation, the Polish NGDOs highlight that many of their criticism regarding the new institutional arrangements were not taken into account. The Slovenian NGDO platform SLOGA is engaged in the discussion on the formalization and strengthening the dialogue between the civil society and government, which should be formalized in the spring of 2013.

However, the survey has shown that the NGDOs across the region still consider their involvement in the development policy formulation as insufficient and with low impact. The feeling is that despite the official declarations, they are not treated as partners by the government. Another problem that was mentioned in the Romanian and Slovak reports which underscores this fact is the frequent fluctuation of officials dealing with development assistance, which makes it harder to engage in regular working consultations. The difficulties of engaging in policy dialogue is also underpinned by generally low level of awareness of development issues among policy makers.

Some of the organisations are involved in advocacy activities, mainly at the national level, whose aim is to influence the course of national development policy, mainstreaming the development issues in the curricula or secure more ODA funding. International or EU advocacy is not very common, firstly because of the need perception to contribute to the domestic policy framing primarily, secondly because there is not enough experience or capacity on part of many of the NGDOs. On the other hand, some opportunities for EU advocacy arise with the EU Presidency. Thus LAPAS has lobbied for turning the 2015 (year of the Latvian EU Presidency) as a European Year of Development Co-operation, as the Millennium Development Goals will expire. An increased activity could have been traced during the Polish EU Presidency in 2011, especially the activities of Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH). The aim of changing the public discourse through advocacy was also

mentioned in the reports, although it can be assumed that this is more linked to awareness raising rather than advocacy activities. However, most of these advocacy activities are undertaken on ad hoc basis, as few of the organisations have the capacity to engage continuously. The Hungarian report stresses that for many Hungarian NGOs this is an either-or dilemma: if they decide to engage in traditional development, there is no scope to engage in advocacy. It is not uncommon that the advocacy work is performed jointly or conferred to the abovementioned national platforms, as seem to possess greater legitimacy speaking on behalf of the sector as such (as in the abovementioned case of LAPAS), and disposing with better capacities – some of them have created permanent posts of policy or advocacy officers. Many organisations also realize that advocacy has to be substantiated with solid and reliable research, so they worked towards increasing their research capacities. For instance Zagranica Group, the Polish national NGO platform, started to produce regular series of policy briefs *Opinions, Debates, Analyses*. Similarly, the Czech FORS platform gathers think-tanks researching development issues, such as Glopolis or Institute of International Relations, that can provide a substantive input into FORS's advocacy work.

## **Geographical focus of civil society organisations not conferred to closer neighbourhood**

When examining the radius of operation of Central European civil society organisations, one could expect that due to a particular development policy focus of Central European countries, the civil society organisations will be active in the area of Western Balkans or former Soviet Union. It is true that this area remains the main focal point also for Central European NGOs, but by far not exclusive one. For instance, the Hungarian development organisations performed projects in 76 countries across the globe. Similar is the case of Czech, Slovak or Polish NGOs who performed projects in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia or Latin America. But also organisations in smaller countries who have little previous experience with development co-operation (or contacts with the Third World from the communist era), such as Estonia or Slovenia<sup>1</sup>, have been active well beyond the EU neighbourhood. This shows that the Central European civil society sector is able to operate beyond the “usual suspects” and attract funding also from other donors than the national ODA budgets. It can also be assumed that mainly the humanitarian and disaster relief organisations enlarge the geographical scope of operations. For this reason, CSOs from countries with not such strong tradition or capacity for disaster relief, such as Latvia<sup>2</sup>, are likely to show more limited geographical span of operations. One additional limiting factor is the scarcity of diplomatic representation in the Third World countries. This is becoming challenging even for the bigger donor countries of the group that are closing down their embassies in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Poland or the Czech Republic – it might decrease the Polish and Czech NGOs appetite to continue activities in the countries where they no longer can rely on their countries diplomatic support. Insuring coherence between diplomatic representation and development priorities is naturally of a paramount importance.

## **Prevalence of education and awareness raising among Central European NGO's activities**

The rather distinct nature of the development co-operation discourse in Central and Eastern European countries explains why global education and awareness raising feature high on the agenda of NGOs. In many of these countries, the general public is not very receptive, sensitive let alone informed of issues such as poverty eradication or sustainable development. The mental shift from perceiving themselves as poor nations and recipients of aid to pertaining to the rich countries club has still not taken place in most of the societies. This situation has obviously been aggravated by the economic and financial crisis. For this reason, the change of the prevailing negative discourse, or absence of global development issues therein is in focus of many of the

<sup>1</sup> Estonian NGOs have been active in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Palestine, Tunisia, Nepal, Thailand, Mozambique, Angola, Malawi, Guinea Bissau etc. The survey among Slovenian NGOs reveals that 65% of them undertook activities in Africa and 50% in Asia as opposed to 45% in Western Balkans and 35% in other European countries.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Latvian report, there is no organisation working in the field of humanitarian aid or disaster relief in Latvia.

NGDOs in the region. This is further underlined by the fact that undertaking these activities is less demanding in terms of financing and human resources than implementing complex development projects.

Large majority of CSOs target their awareness raising on young people, where they probably see a larger potential for making a change in the public perception through potentially larger spillover effect among young generation, their easier access to additional sources of information (especially internet) and perhaps also more global outlook. However, an important target of these campaigns is also opinion leaders, educators or policymakers.

The means to raise public awareness about development issues vary, and include ad hoc media entries, publications of information bulletins and newsletters or public and charitable events. In some cases, examples of broader campaigns in support of development issues have been accounted for, such as “Czechia against poverty” campaign, which is part of Global Action against poverty campaign, and which employed a variety of means including the media entries, website and multitude of related events and is supported by numerous Czech as well as global celebrities.<sup>3</sup> The global education and awareness raising activities take place mainly at the national level. The research has illustrated that far fewer organisations undertake such activities in the recipient countries. Notwithstanding the importance of these endeavours, it begs the question of the development co-operation efficiency and brings us back to square one in terms of insufficient funding and capacities of the majority of Central European NGDOs in terms of delivering classical development activities.

As to the actions undertaken by the civil society organisations in the recipient countries, they vary according to the size and scope of operation of each organization. But the general prevalence is of educational and training activities, capacity building, technical assistance or transfer of know-how, reflecting a more typical regional expertise. Issues such as poverty reduction, health or sustainable development are far less prevalent, and mainly implemented by large multi-issue NGDOs, as these can afford to establish missions in recipient countries, which is an indispensable condition for performance of more complex development projects. Although, it cannot be discerned whether the training and capacity building also thematically deal with these traditional development issues.

## **The vicious circle of lack of funding and insufficient capacity**

The research has illustrated that the two major challenges that are perceived as problematic for the efficient functioning of the civil society sector in development co-operation is the difficulty of accessing funding as well as the problems with human capital.

## **What explains the underfunding of Central European NGDO sector?**

The survey of funding has shown a dominant dependence of most of the NGDOs on two sources of funding: private donations and government funding that represent bulk of financing of most of the organisations. Corporate funding for development activities are still rare across the region and have to be perceived as a result of generally low awareness of the private sector in development issues, or something that is very much detached from the economic reality of Central Europe. Thus large part of private funding comes from private foundations based mainly in Western Europe, in the USA or other rich countries. Individual donations are also on the rise, but they have to be attributed mainly to organisations that work in humanitarian and disaster relief which have been increasingly successful in raising funds through donation SMS or setting up special donor accounts in response to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods or tsunamis in various regions of the world. Individual philanthropy for classical development projects is much less developed in the region, apart from some exceptions such as “virtual” adoptions of children or organisations working in Africa (e.g. in Hungary). Also, in many cases especially the more established NGOs have developed innovative ways of individual philanthropy, such as online sale of products from developing countries (such as Czech NGO SIRIRI,

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about the campaign, please refer to: <http://ceskoprotichudobe.cz/en/?id=95-home>. Among the world-famous celebrities, the campaign is supported for instance by Salma Hayek, George Clooney, Penelope Cruz, Antonio Banderas or Emma Thompson.

which works in Central African Republic), or increasingly popular address of smaller donors through new social media.

As to the government funding, it also proves to be difficult. Firstly, the overall level is relatively small. This creates fierce competition for limited funds, leading often to the race-to-the-bottom approach and forcing organisations to cut down the project budgets. This makes it especially difficult for small organisations. In some countries, such as Bulgaria or Romania, the development organisations do not enjoy access to national ODA funding at all, or have not so until recently, so they had to rely solely on funding from international or private donors. In other cases, such as Slovakia, the CSOs heavily rely on the funding from the Slovak government, which makes them rather a hostage of the official direction of the SlovakAid. Secondly, the CSOs in the region often complain about the lack of flexibility of government funding and bureaucratic procedures attached to it, which makes their life even more difficult. More transparency and predictability in the process could definitely be envisaged. A good practice would be for instance the Project Cycle Manual, published by the Czech Development Agency in 2011 and setting a uniform methodology and template for preparation, planning and management of Czech bilateral ODA projects. Thirdly, the necessity to co-finance most of the government funding projects often represents an insurmountable challenge especially for smaller NGOs, although this problem is even more imminent in case of EU-funded projects.

The EU funding is often perceived to be beyond the reach of many Central and Eastern European NGOs, although in some cases (e.g. Czech Republic) the organisations were increasingly successful in EU projects and tenders. This fact is being attributed to two factors. Firstly, many organisations lack the capacity to apply for EuropeAid projects, because of lack of references, or capacity to manage them because their personnel is already too stranded. Secondly, there is a problem of co-funding which is required for almost all the EuropeAid projects. This can often not be secured, and resulted in situations such as when a Latvian NGO had to withdraw from a project on increasing women entrepreneur capacity in Belarus which it won because it could not raise extra funds. An interesting way of tackling this problem was introduced in the Czech Republic, and could also serve as kind of good practice. The Czech Development Agency reserves certain portion (approximately 1.1 million €) of ODA budget for the so-called trilateral projects, and the same scheme is in place for democracy assistance and transition projects (administered directly by MFA). This means that if a Czech NGOs succeeds in EuropeAid tender it can apply for co-funding under this scheme. While this can partially explain why the Czech NGOs have been more successful than others in bidding for EU funds, the truth is that this funding is not automatic (there is an annual call for proposals) and in the last two years the amount of funds available has been significantly lower than the number of proposals, at least under the Czech Development Agency calls.

## **Capacity problems: how to keep staff in times of crisis?**

The problems with funding translate into the problem with staffing which endangers long-terms sustainability and further growth of NGOs. This problem was accounted for by an absolute majority of organisations surveyed.

Many organisations pointed to the problem of big fluctuations of their staff and the burn-out syndrome, whereby huge workload imposed of their employees usually results in a loss of motivation. The NGO staff often have to engage in all the activities from fundraising and proposal writing, through project implementation and reporting, and additional activities such as PR, education, advocacy and awareness raising. The Polish report accounts for the ways in which organizations tried to tackle the issue of high fluctuation and burn out: use of specific incentives tailored to the staff needs and expectations, a clearer distinction between permanent staff and collaborators, and horizontal pay scheme whereby all the employees are engaged in revenue generation, linking their personal situation to the overall performance of the organisation.

Another problem is that many organisations cannot afford to keep full-time staff, which grossly endangers their long-term viability. The part-time and especially project-contracted staff is absolutely prevalent in case of most organisations surveyed. The organisations across the region also rely heavily on volunteers in performing their tasks. While this is quite normal in the development co-operation business, the striking pattern is that a



large number of organisations use volunteers also for tasks that should be performed mainly by professional staff, such as training and capacity building, advocacy or fundraising. Although in the latter case it should be assumed that this approach is quite adequate in case of e.g. collecting donations. However, the research does not account for what kind of fundraising activities volunteers are engaged in, leading to the assumption that at least some of the organisations use volunteers also in face-to-face meetings or project proposal writing.

Some of the NGOs, however, developed ways of tackling the issue of staff funding. The Polish report specifically accounts for two possible solutions. One is the so-called “solidarity bag”, whereby part of the overheads is transferred to a special fund enabling to pay a basic salary once there are no projects to finance the salaries. This model is applicable to organisations that employ mainly project-based staff, however more or less permanently. Another solution is a flexible salary, which is tied to a uniform rate that can be adjusted according to the actual situation and project funding, either downward or upward. Another good example would be the case of the Czech Republic, where the Czech Development Agency has a programme of capacity building of Czech NGDOs, which can finance salaries of the permanent staff.



## BULGARIA

### Introduction

Bulgarian strategic and programme documents on official development aid (ODA) set forth the principles of civil society and business participation in rendering such aid. Council of Ministers Degree 234 dated 1 August 2011<sup>1</sup> stipulates that achievement of development goals shall be the deed of the entire society, and activities regarding provision of aid shall not be curtailed as to its individual subjects. Government, civil society and business representatives participating in aid provision process shall be involved in it as well.

At this stage, both government institutions and CSOs are still in the process of building capacity for participation in international development cooperation. Bulgarian NGDOs are striding their own development road which differs from the one that majority of European NGDOs have gone through. In the recent years Bulgarian NGDOs have had the opportunity to take part in development assistance projects funded by other EU member states or by EC with European NGDOs or consortia thereof, such as CONCORD, CARE and CARITAS being the implementing bodies. The experience acquired through these projects has become a valuable element in national capacity development with respect to participation in international development cooperation.

As of presently, Bulgarian CSOs already possess the necessary characteristics that make them a reliable partner. They are perceived as one of the hallmarks of a developed democratic society, and play an increasingly important role in country's political life. The quality of their expertise and research increases along with a rise in public trust for their independence and expert operations.

The **Bulgarian Platform for International Development (BPID)**<sup>2</sup> was established in 2009 in Bulgaria. It joins together 22 diverse profile non-governmental organizations. The majority of them are operating in the education area providing services in development education. Others are dealing with studies of socio-economic issues in society, equality of women, volunteers' recruitment and assigning to humanitarian missions. The goal of the Platform is to be an active and legitimate partner to government institutions in implementing Bulgaria's commitments to EU policy on cooperation and relationship development with third countries. BPID efforts target regulatory framework improvement and implementation of active development policies. BPID is a member of CONCORD, thus gaining more opportunities to access EC funded development programmes and projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Decree 234 dated 01 August 2011 on the Policy of Republic of Bulgaria regarding Participation in International Development Cooperation, enacted on 09 August 2011, promulgated in the State Gazette No 61/09 August 2011.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bpid.eu/about>

Government documents<sup>3</sup> envisage broad participation of the civil society sector in formulating and implementing Bulgarian development policy, but such participation has not been made concrete. For the time being, the nature of Bulgarian civil society development organizations' participation in the process of drafting national regulatory framework on development issues is rather that of an observer. They are not eligible to vote at the sessions of the International Development Working Group. It is perceived that funding of Bulgarian CSOs projects is to be under the Bulgarian official development aid. Under discussion is the option to cover for Bulgarian CSOs membership fee in CONCORD through the state aid budget allocated to development assistance. No specific solutions to these issues are offered at present.

## **1. Analysis of civil society role as development actor**

### **Survey methodology**

The purpose of the survey presented was to establish the characteristics of Bulgarian civil society sector participation in development assistance. Information was collected using the following methods: questionnaire survey, the questionnaire card being developed jointly with project partners; a focus group with CSOs representatives; interviews and discussions. Topics considered were associated with CSOs participation in development policy formulation, forms of participation and geographic orientation of projects, public-private partnerships, participation in humanitarian aid and prevention of natural disaster damages, funds to finance development activities, promotion of development assistance, etc. The project team formulated proposals to both the government and NGOs, for a more active participation of the civil sector in this process.

Questionnaire survey and focus group conducted under the project confirmed some basic conclusions about Bulgarian CSOs participation in development assistance, namely: availability of good expert capacity to work in this area; preparedness to take part in development policy formulation jointly with government experts; potential to promote development assistance across society; good partnership among CSOs in project development, and a modest financial resource for projects in the development area which renders a small number of such projects.

### **CSO profile**

The survey covered CSOs, members of BPID. The questionnaire card was sent to 20 non-governmental organizations, 12 were received back duly filled-in. CSOs that responded to the questionnaire and took part in the focus group indicated a diverse subject of activity. They were involved in various areas of public, political, economic, social and cultural life. Predominant were the organizations focused on education issues, along with those dealing with rights of women.

### **Millennium development goals and development assistance awareness**

Majority of experts associated with the above organizations were very well aware of the millennium development goals and development issues. They defined development assistance as a 'multidisciplinary area dealing with the synchronicity of economic, social, political and institutional mechanisms at national and international level, which can lead to improving living conditions of the poorest and underprivileged communities.' This financial aid provided by governments and other agencies was to secure economic, social, political and ecologic development of the ODA countries. Development assistance was associated with implementation of the millennium development goals – combating poverty and marginalization while observing human rights of citizens. Importance was also attributed to establishing 'fair trade'.

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<sup>3</sup> Policy Concept of Republic of Bulgaria on the participation in international development cooperation, Draft of Republic of Bulgaria's Mid-term Programme for Development and Humanitarian Aid for 2010-2012, Decree № 234 dated 01 August 2011 on the Policy of Republic of Bulgaria regarding Participation in International Development Cooperation, enacted on 09 August 2011; currently active work is being done on the overall formulation of political documents in this area.

CSO experts assessed their knowledge and understanding of development assistance as very good. For all survey partaking organizations, development assistance and millennium development goals fall within the priorities of their activity.

Civil society sector experts were fairly familiar with national and European documents available in the area of development. For Bulgaria, these documents referred to the abovementioned Concept and Decree. As for EU, some documents associated with outlining EU policy in development cooperation and joint actions with third countries were mentioned. Millennium development goals represented the leading framework in view of development cooperation policies as well as the Agenda for Change adopted in 2011, referring to a more precise allocation of European budget funds. Bulgarian CSOs were fully aware that EU activities in development cooperation were based on European Consensus on Development signed in 2005 and joining member states, the Council, EP and EC under a common European vision on development.

CSOs were familiar with specific EU action plans and strategies elaborated to tackle issues such as gender equality and empowerment of women, rights of children, reducing disaster risks, food safety, migration and mobility. Activity of DG 'Development Cooperation' (established on 03 Jan 2011) responsible for devising European policies in that area as well as for development assistance implementation via programmes and projects all across the world was also well known.

The majority of CSOs viewed country's advancement regarding implementation of international development cooperation policy objectives as rather negative. This opinion of the civil society sector coincided with the view of the better part of government administration experts. Similar were the findings presented in CONCORD Monitoring Reports. Bulgaria was one the most poorly performing EU member state with respect to funds absorbed for international development cooperation. The trend of reducing funds on the part of Bulgaria did not suggest fulfilment of financial commitments for forthcoming periods.<sup>4</sup>

### **Participation in formulating objectives and tasks of development assistance policy. Public-private partnership**

Some experts assessed participation of non-governmental sector in formulating objectives and tasks of development assistance policy to be at an average level, while others viewed it as poor. Talks and discussions conducted indicated that civil society sector representatives had the will and preparedness to get more actively involved in discussing policies, existing issues and formulating priorities in that area. However, government institutions were still unprepared (not well organized) to adopt such a procedure.<sup>5</sup>

Consistency level of civil society organizations activity with development objectives was assessed as average. Civil society contribution to development objectives achievement was deemed to be insufficient and assessed as rather small.

Civil society organizations put a strong emphasis on the role of public-private partnerships. Most useful were believed to be: working group arrangements, consulting, provision of joined grant schemes, drawing up joined action plans, conducting joined awareness campaigns and promotional activities.

### **Forms of participation and geographic orientation**

Bulgarian CSOs provided services mainly to Third World Country partners. These were: development project management, technical assistance in natural disaster relief and recovery, volunteer recruitment, international development training.

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<sup>4</sup> As of presently, official development aid amounts to 0.09% GDP. Upon joining EU, Bulgaria has taken on the commitment of allocating 0.17% GDP by 2010, and 0.33% GDP by 2015. These commitments were not observed.

<sup>5</sup> CSOs representation in government institutions formulating development policies was expressed mainly via involvement of BPID representatives (1 representative) in a Development Working Group.

Majority of civil organizations directed their activities to countries within the region – Macedonia, Albania, Serbia (either independently or in partnership with local organizations). The rationale behind it was: geographical proximity, no language barrier, some common features. Efforts were directed also to Black Sea Basin and former Soviet Union countries. For instance, Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) oriented its activity towards Tajikistan, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia.

Depending on subject of activity, CSOs operated in diverse areas. For instance, one of the main activities of the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation involved setting up an International Institute for Women's Rights and offering specialized training for lawyers practicing in Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries. Arrangements provided for two annual sessions for about 15 representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Moldova, Azerbaijan, etc. In the last 5 years Foundation experts worked as consultants under initiatives, associated with gender equality and protection from domestic violence in Morocco, Georgia, Moldova, Croatia, and Macedonia.

In partnership with international organizations, some CSOs (ADRA Foundation) oriented their activity to more remote regions such as Africa and the Caribbean Basin, and contributed to a major international project, for instance, in Haiti; in Rwanda development aid onset in the civil society sector was supported. In the recent years, though with some difficulties, efforts had been directed towards some neuralgic points of the Developing World such as Central Africa, and Haiti, zones falling within the international community range of vision.

Development projects focus areas encompassed almost all millennium development goals –poverty reduction, education, equality of women, child mortality reduction, maternal health protection, healthcare, and global partnership.

Duration of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations varied. Short-term projects, such as provision of a single campaign health assistance and training, as well as multiannual projects (most often via participation in international projects), such as disaster and emergency aftermath recovery, and development training and education projects, were implemented.

Majority of CSOs stated that they maintained good partnerships with local CSOs and local authorities. For instance, ADRA Foundation Bulgaria mobilized its donors and provided assistance to local authorities. Local CSOs were also involved, especially when marginalized groups were targeted for intervention.

Another positive feature was the joined work with international organizations. That meant that the potential of all subjects was mobilized on the grounds of a partnership – local non-governmental sector, local authorities and international agencies.

### **Participation in preventing natural disaster damages**

Some CSOs participated in preventing natural disaster damages, such activities duration being dependent on the particular case and on needs assessment. An emergency short-term intervention was provided initially. Then, should it be deemed necessary, it was followed by planning a process of long-term support that could later be transformed into development projects in partnership with local representatives.

Organizations possessing the capacity of responding to a disaster within 72 hours were very few; such an organization was BRC, having the potential to react in a timely manner. In the majority of cases, the issue was brought down to human resources that had to possess expertise in international training, experience in needs assessment and follow-up intervention planning, and also, a specialization in international humanitarian law.

When humanitarian aid was to be provided, some CSOs operated together with international organizations. For instance, ADRA Foundation Bulgaria, being a member of the international humanitarian network of ADRA, had been assigned a consultative status to the UN.

## **Funds to finance development activity**

Financial funds to support CSOs development operations were provided from external sources. BRC was probably the only organization operating in the development assistance area which received a state subsidy. Donations on which some CSOs relied, account for 10-20% of their budget, and their share varying from year to year. European programmes provided a large share of funds, for some CSOs reaching as high as 50%. The majority of CSOs were foundations with no members and membership fees. Civil society members looked for financial options from large (international) funds, for example, from some American funds such as Blumberg, Open Society, etc.

Certain tax relieves were also employed, mostly tax exemptions applicable to humanitarian aid imports, mainly hospital furniture and equipment, and medicines donated to state and municipal medical establishments.

The main fund raising methods used were: public and charity campaigns, sending messages and direct contacts.

As whole, civil organizations operating in development assistance area possessed a number of qualities that allowed them to look for and acquire successfully financial means. These were: good public image of the organization, good partnership with other organizations. Some CSOs, especially those dealing with humanitarian aid, employed volunteers in fund raising. Organizations associated with humanitarian activity made particularly strong impression – many had developed skills to identify a meaningful 'cause' requiring support and fund raising.

In 2011 and 2012 a decline in the sustainability of Bulgarian CSOs was observed. Due to the financial crisis, grants to NGOs allocated by competition and designated for implementation of projects to the public benefit were suspended in state budget 2012, such a decision being taken without consulting the civil society sector. Yet for another successive year, no Structural Funds financing for civil society development or civil society capacity building would be granted.<sup>6</sup>

## **Promotion of development assistance. Development activity effects**

Bulgarian CSOs used their best efforts to elucidate the development assistance topic to the general public. The main objectives in that relation were: raising the level of understanding of problems, promoting development assistance and supporting the activity. Organizations dealing with humanitarian aid strived to increase the number of volunteers participating in missions. In the recent years a major project on 'development education' had been devised to involve in partnership various civil society organizations from ODA countries.

Civil society organizations were trying to promote development assistance by conducting active campaigns on development issues, the topic definitely lacking popularity in the country. Most often the topic was introduced as discussion point in projects and among volunteers. Few were the organizations preparing regular bulletins and information materials, disseminated online and in English in various countries. Journalists' involvement in drawing up materials was not a popular practice.

Public events proved to be the most widely employed option to promote development assistance (for instance, Round Table entitled 'Participation of Bulgarian civil society in EU development policies' financed by Presidency Fund and implemented by EKIP Foundation; 'Intercultural communication week' with Bulgarian, Roma, Dutch and French youth – ADRA Bulgaria); publications – mainly on projects and online trainings. Setting up the Bulgarian Platform for International Development was relatively well reflected on the Internet thus giving rise to discussions on development issues.

Young people were the main target of CSOs' messages. Those dealing with humanitarian aid often sought potential volunteers amongst their audience.

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<sup>6</sup> At the end of 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted a Strategy for Supporting the Development of Civil Organizations in Bulgaria for 2012-2015; this would bring more clarity to the NGO financing issues.

Whenever there was an opportunity, Bulgarian CSOs tried to popularize issues at local, national, European and international levels.

CSOs measured the effects of their work by: increased support to the organizations, increased number of volunteers and donations. According to some CSOs, issues related to development assistance should become part of educational programmes. Some CSOs sought active feedback from project participants – for instance, youths, marginalized groups, volunteers and local communities where projects were implemented. Their reaction was observed and recorded, as well as their preparedness to get involved in new projects.

### **Advocacy and impact policy**

Bulgarian Platform for International Development and some individual CSOs put efforts in changing development policy so that it could raise activity levels and become more purposeful. Most frequently the interventions were on ad hoc basis, in some cases with the aim to resolve national problems, less frequently the ad hoc approach addressed resolving international problems.

Some organizations tried to impact public development policies by joined actions with other CSOs working in the same area. As yet no organizations had come up with profound surveys and analyses intended to decision-making institutions, nor were regular bulletins and materials issued to attract public attention. Since no state budget funds had been allocated to such type of activities, no actual impact of work performed could be sought for. These activities still dwelled in their initial phase; to this end, a good example could be the current project aiming to draw a more complete picture of CSOs' involvement in development assistance, to assemble all participants in the process, to provide them with a platform to discuss issues, to look for common solutions, and promote them.

Publications were more rarely used, so were the media, public relations and campaigns. The fact that young people were the predominating supporters of CSOs' proposals to change policy made a good impression. Majority of CSOs were not satisfied by their activity associated with promotion of development assistance – they assessed it to be average.

### **Human resources. Volunteers' position**

CSOs human potential in development assistance area was of interest. Organizations with no full-time employees due to insufficient financing marked an increase in number. Project-employed staff was significant in number. Some organizations (ADRA, BRC) operated on the basis of a large number of volunteers – active and periodically involved, the majority being young people, including some foreign citizens.

Bulgaria was among the countries with the lowest number of volunteers – only some 5% of the population exercised volunteer work.<sup>7</sup> Majority of CSOs had not as yet acquired the knowledge and skills needed to use volunteer input efficiently.

Volunteers performed a large scope of development activities. In some cases they were involved in fund raising. In promoting development issues and provision of services, mostly social and educational, and mainly to marginalized groups, and also in advocacy and tutoring volunteers were particularly active. Recruitment of volunteers was done mainly on the basis of individual persuasion. In many cases volunteers expressed willingness to get involved as a result of positive impressions from certain CSOs operations. Recruitment was also achieved via public event arrangements. Some CSOs hired local volunteers to work in ODA countries by means of individual persuasion and public events. In all cases a strong cause was necessary to attract volunteers.

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<sup>7</sup> Data from 2011 World Donation Index of the Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation, presented at the press-conference of Bulgarian Centre for Not-for-Profit Law.



## Donation

A relatively small number of CSOs provided grants and as a rule such grants were small in size. Grants were provided to physical persons, most often to marginalized groups, victims of trafficking in humans, people with specific health problems and to members of socially weak families. Organizations could also receive grants, usually in the form of co-financing. As a rule, only a small portion of the annual budget would be allocated to donations, usually less than 10%; in fact grants were more of an exception. Donations to third parties were very rare, and when provided, they would cover for an acute need that could not be settled by applying any state/local institution mechanism. Funds were usually used to implement CSOs projects. Donation main objectives were of educational, social/integrational and health nature. Educational grants were allocated to teachers, young activists, government experts and journalists.

Some CSOs tried to provide grants for organizing and participating in public campaigns. For example, ADRA had organized 5 such campaigns for the last 5 years. CSOs sought partnerships and coalitions in organizing such campaigns. Majority of organizations surveyed stated a will to expand the activity in the future.

## 2. Good Practices

In Bulgaria, development assistance projects had not been that many as yet, but one could expect that partnerships with EU organizations and coalitions and good cooperation among Bulgarian CSOs would lead to increase in project number. Some of the projects implemented by BPID<sup>8</sup> members were:

- MedPlaNet - ARCI - Project of organization ARCI – Silistra branch - <http://www.bpid.eu/en/node/185>
- Social cohesion through investments in Human resources - Project of organization ARCI – Blagoevgrad branch - <http://www.bpid.eu/en/node/185>
- Steps to self-reliance - SOS Children's villages - Project of organization SOS Children's villages Bulgaria - <http://www.sosbg.org/>
- United Nations Model - simulative games - UN Association of Bulgaria - <http://www.unabg.org/>
- For A Better Future - UN Association of Bulgaria - <http://www.unabg.org/>

### **Project “Let’s learn! Pilot implementation of development training in formal Bulgarian education”**

A targeted training was required in order to attract society to international development issues and secure its active participation. One of the big projects with a long-term objective currently under implementation is entitled: ‘Let’s learn! Pilot implementation of development training in formal Bulgarian education’. The project is a joined three year initiative of a coalition of six civil society organizations which are among the founders of the Bulgarian Platform for International Development. The project aims to contribute to the process of international development cooperation policy formulation by setting up a transparent mechanism and stirring civil control, and by introducing global education to the Bulgarian school curricula. Development education is still not part of school and university curricula as an educational subject. It is expected that the project will play the role of a pilot initiative for dissemination of knowledge to less developed countries across the world. Project participants offer an intriguing presentation of the international development topic. Their purpose is to predispose young people to a more profound exploration of the topic and prompt their active participation. In this way, young people will acquire new knowledge of a planetary scale allowing them to become advocates to the idea of providing assistance to those in need in order to build a better and fairer world.

Main project activities are directed towards capacity building of prospective teachers and trainers that later will integrate the knowledge acquired into the subjects they teach. As a project product it is envisaged to devise a Manual containing various cases, examples and photos to serve as an education aid in the course of the continuous education. Training seminars for volunteer-leaders and journalists under the initiative will guarantee long-term sustainability of public campaigns. Continuous education will have a long term effect

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bpid.eu/en/current-projects>

regarding attitude change and hence, will impact in a positive manner any future work on the problems of developing countries. An interactive website has been designed to stimulate target group participations in discussions on global development issues. Project participants are: Global Initiative on Psychiatry; Caritas Bulgaria; Cooperation for Voluntary Service (CVS) Bulgaria; Centre for Inclusive Education; Gender Project Bulgaria; Blue Link.

### **Project “Civil society and private sector as contributors to MDGs implementation in Moldova”**

Another project related to millennium development goals and development assistance is entitled: Civil society and private sector as contributors to MDGs implementation, supported by Non-state actors – In-country interventions Republic of Moldova, developed by the Centre for Economic Development.

The overall objective of the project is to increase the capacities of sectoral CSOs and private sector representatives, defined as development actors by Accra agenda, to contribute more effectively to the implementation of MDGs and their targets. During the project implementation the Center for Economic Development is acting as the leading organization with partners two Moldavian organizations - Institute for Public Policy and Expert Group.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- To analyze the sectoral input of CSOs and private sector representatives to the implementation of MDGs in the areas such as education, health, economic and trade development, social policy, transport, communication, customs, youth.
- To raise the awareness amongst local stakeholders (government, CSOs, private sector and individual citizens) on the importance of the achievement of the targets of MDGs by the end of 2015.
- To advance the capacities of sectoral CSOs and private sector representatives and their networks to contribute to MDGs implementation reflected in the key national strategic documents.

The project targets the poverty reduction in the context of sustainable development, including the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and other internationally agreed targets such as Accra agenda. It aims at strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations as a pre-condition for a more equitable, open and democratic society through support to their “own initiatives”. The project offers an approach related to the achievement of an inclusive and empowered society in Moldova.

The specific factors that have been taken into account are the readiness of the civil society representatives to take part in the project activities; the level of positive attitudes of the key project target groups towards the MDGs implementation and integration into the national public policies.

The main activities developed under the project are:

- Elaboration of consolidated policy researches in key development sectoral policies on the type of involvement and contributions the CSOs and private sector representatives have towards MDGs implementation.
- Organizing meetings and creating national clusters of CSOs so as to consolidate national efforts towards MDGs implementation.
- Developing national awareness campaigns in key development sectors so as to bring key MDG targets closer to decision makers, businesses and citizens.
- Organizing National conference on the occasion of the MDGs targets implementation for the period 2011-2015.
- Trainings of CSOs and private sector representatives on general and specific monitoring techniques in the area of development.
- Development of manual on successful monitoring techniques applied in the area of development.

### 3. Civil society's challenges when implementing development aid project

Questionnaire survey and focus groups results outlined the main challenges faced by Bulgarian CSOs in their work on development assistance. These are:

- Government policy regarding development assistance is unclear, thus posing a serious challenge to civil society – where, with whom and how to operate.
- Civil organizations in Bulgaria do not have financial resources to conduct purposeful development assistance.
- A real public-private partnership is needed to involve civil society in providing development assistance and contributing to expanding public support on these issues in Bulgaria.
- Society sensitivity to development issues is negligibly low, and this poses a serious obstacle to generating resources via donations.
- It is necessary to actively promote the topic of international development cooperation in order to achieve nation-wide commitment to the events occurring outside country's geographic borders, and to assert Bulgaria's participation as a donor-country in the international arena in compliance with country's European and international pledges.
- Civil organizations sensitivity to the issues is low compared to that in other European states, and majority of them believe that in-country problems hold higher priority (this approach is not deprived of reason).
- Many civil society organizations find it difficult to identify partners and entry-points in development assistance recipient states.

### 4. Suggestions for problem decisions and recommendations

#### Proposals to the government

On the grounds of proposals made by the civil organizations it can be said that, in a very categorical manner, these organizations express their preparedness for a broader public-private partnership and participation in the process of formulation and implementation of development assistance policy. Identified among the initiatives proposed to the government by the civil society sector regarding promotion of civil society participation in development assistance are:

- To accelerate adoption of basic strategic documents that regulate the issue of where and how purposeful development assistance is to be conducted and who will guarantee a clear role of civil society in this process.
- To conduct a dialog with civil society on Bulgaria's strategic priorities and approaches to the implementation of country's development assistance policy.
- To secure real involvement of CSO sector representatives in formulation, planning and implementation stages of the national development cooperation policy.
- To involve CSO sector in joined working groups for devising an Action Plan and concrete initiatives on development assistance (public-private partnership).
- To draw up a government assessment of the capacity of civil society organizations (of those that have expressed such a will) and attract them as experts and external monitoring specialists in development assistance.
- To establish a financing mechanism and a fund for financing international development activities initiated by the Bulgarian civil society sector under Bulgaria's priorities.
- To designate grant schemes for projects to be implemented in cooperation between Bulgarian civil society organizations and ODA countries.
- To organize bilateral and multilateral seminars with the purpose of building partnerships and networks between Bulgarian public and private actors and ODA countries.
- To organize and carry out joined trainings.

- To conduct public debates and forums dedicated to development cooperation.
- The government to set up an online forum intended to inform the general public about government activities in development assistance area and dissemination of an online bulletin on Bulgarian development assistance.

### **Proposals to civil society**

CSOs call on civil society to take a proactive position, to play an active role, to propose common positions regarding national development policy based on experience and expertise accumulated. Organizations propose:

- To draw up and conduct a purposeful coalition policy regarding government institutions responsible for provision of an official development aid.
- To implement jointly initiatives aiming at sharpening public sensitivity on development issues at all levels.
- To identify, promote and support good practices evolving from Bulgarian public and non-governmental area in ODA countries.

## **Appendix 1**

### **List of NGOs member in the Bulgarian Platform for International Development**

<http://www.bpid.eu/en/current-projects>

- Balkan Agency for Sustainable Development
- Center for Inclusive Education
- Center of Women's Studies and Policies Foundation
- BlueLink Information Network
- Index Foundation
- C.E.G.A. - Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives
- United Nations Association of Bulgaria
- Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association
- „Foundation “BG Chance”
- Caritas Bulgaria
- BlueLink Information Network
- Alliance for Regional and Civil Initiatives (ARCI)
- ADRA BULGARIA Foundation
- SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria
- Gender Education, Research and Technologies foundation (GERT)

## Appendix 2

### List of Projects with BPID members input

- Equal employment opportunities - ARCI
- "Electronic challenge for modern education" - ARCI
- Quality care for children in Europe - SOS Children's villages
- "Education Against Child Labour" - UN Association of Bulgaria
- The Flying University for Human Rights Education - UN Association of Bulgaria
- Leaving Care - SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria
- Initiative for responsible parenthood - SOS Children's Villages
- "Nadejda" - SOS Children's Villages Bulgaria
- In dialog with the local authorities - SOS Children Villages Bulgaria
- A chance to stay in my family - SOS Children Villages Bulgaria

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[http://www.undp.bg/millennium\\_goals.php?lang=bg](http://www.undp.bg/millennium_goals.php?lang=bg)

<http://www.bpid.eu/en/current-projects>

# CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic has well-established and effective system of development cooperation<sup>1</sup>, and a self-standing transformation cooperation that focuses on human rights and democracy support through civil society actors in the target countries. The Czech civil society is one of the key implementing actors within the development cooperation, and has a unique position in the transformation cooperation.

## 1. Development cooperation

Czech Republic re-emerged as a donor country in mid-1990s with a complicated and fragmented structure of decision-making and implementing bodies. After the reform that took place in 2008-2010 and was fully finalized at the beginning of 2012, the system has stabilized with the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid* at the centre of policy-making and coordination, and with the *Czech Development Agency (CDA)* as the implementing body managed by the MFA.<sup>2</sup> The inter-institutional *Council on International Development Cooperation*<sup>3</sup> acts as advisory body to the MFA, ensuring coordination with other ministries; the civil society participates as an observer.<sup>4</sup> Major documents, including the *Act No. 151 on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid* of 2010 and *Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010-2017*<sup>5</sup> were adopted, confirming the country's development cooperation obligations and goals.

The Czech Republic's amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) has remained in relative terms at 0.11% of GNI in 2012 and it is certain it will not achieve 0.33% of GNI in 2015, as stipulated in the EU Council Conclusions of 2005. The total amount allocated for bilateral cooperation was frozen for 2013-2015. However, unlike in most of the EU countries in times of economic crisis, the total amount of Czech ODA has been slightly increasing thanks to raising allocations of the multilateral part of the budget. The bilateral development projects targeting the priority countries<sup>6</sup> will work on a budget of CZK 396.5 million (app. € 15.4 million) in 2013-2015 (yearly), and additional CZK 56 million (app. € 2.2) is allocated to domestic activities, e.g. to support the global development education, capacity-building and networking of the Czech civil society sector, enhancing

<sup>1</sup> Humanitarian assistance falls under the same budget with yearly allocation of CZK 73 million (app. € 2.8 mil) and institutional structure, with the Czech Development Agency as implementing institution.

<sup>2</sup> For details, please see (Sladkova, 2011)

<sup>3</sup> The Czech Development Agency and Council on International Development Cooperation were established in January 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Civil society is represented by the Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FORS), a platform organisation of the development cooperation civil society actors.

<sup>5</sup> There are also sectoral strategies like National Strategy for Global Development Education 2011-2015, Multilateral Development Cooperation Strategy 2013-2017, etc.; the civil society has been instrumental in their drafting process.

<sup>6</sup> Bilateral development cooperation target countries include: priority countries with a cooperation programme (programme countries): Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Moldova, Mongolia; priority countries without a cooperation programme: Cambodia, Georgia, Kosovo, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Serbia; other target countries (historical connotations): Angola (funding not envisaged in 2013-2015), Vietnam, Yemen, and Zambia.



platform organisations and preparation of the Czech teachers for missions in the target countries. Out of this budget line, the development activities of the Czech regions and municipalities in the target countries are supported. It also includes CZK 28 million (app. € 1.1) for the so called support to trilateral projects of the Czech entities, e.g. amount allocated for co-financing of mostly EU-funded projects and EU tenders.<sup>7</sup> According to the 2011 evaluation report of the *Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FORS 2012)*, the Czech NGOs implement 34% of the bilateral development projects budget in comparison to 37% associated with the business sector. The bilateral budget is distributed via public procurement and grants; public procurement is regulated by law and usually covers 100% of project costs, the conditions and objective of the project are fully defined by the Czech Development Agency; grants usually require co-financing and the projects are selected within open calls that define framework objectives and goals. In 2011, the *Project Cycle Manual* providing uniform methodology and templates for the preparation, planning and management of development cooperation projects was published by the Czech Development Agency and is considered a significant step towards increasing transparency and effectiveness of the process.

The civil society sector has always played an important role in policy-shaping and delivery of the development and transformation cooperation. There are over 50 civil society organisations active in the field of development cooperation<sup>8</sup>, including big multi-issue organisations, single target country organisations, organisations active in the Czech Republic only, or single issue actors, taking forms of NGOs, foundations, daughter international organisation, think-tanks (*Glopolis*) and research institutions (*Institute of International Relations*). Many NGOs in the area face low personal and structural capacity and depend on volunteers to the large extent, including those who have larger parent organisation. At the same time, the civil society sector acknowledges there is a great number of NGOs in this area, and therefore generalised risk of duplicity. Only 3-5 NGOs are considered to have capacities to implement long-term complex projects; the rest are rather small or specialized organisations. One of the biggest Central European NGOs, *People in Need*<sup>9</sup>, was established in 1992 primarily in order to provide humanitarian aid (similarly *ADRA* and others), and contributed substantially to the re-emergence of the Czech Republic as a donor state and development policy making, with some of its leading figures shifting gradually to the posts at the MFA. The civil society sector has been also key player in raising awareness (*Czechia against Poverty* campaign, *Rozvojovka.cz* website, etc.<sup>10</sup>) and development education<sup>11</sup>. A platform organisation, *Czech Forum for Development Cooperation (FORS)* was established by fifteen NGOs in 2002 and was one of the founding organisations of *CONCORD*, European NGO confederation for relief and development, in 2003.

At the time of economic slow-down and with transformed and predictable system of development cooperation<sup>12</sup> with considerable level of transparency, the civil society focuses on improving programming and implementation processes and on general lobbying for ODA budget. The inter-ministerial *Council on International Development Cooperation* serves as institutionalized access point into the development cooperation policy-making for the civil society, represented by *FORS*. As the sectoral ministries have been gradually losing competences and budget with regards to development cooperation, there are no heavy weights in the room anymore and the real policy is done elsewhere. Some of the civil society actors as well as *FORS* enjoy good informal access to the decision-makers at the MFA and CDA; there are regular consultations on major policy documents, and the civil society is able to voice and advocate its policy, programming and technical recommendations related to projects implementation. At the higher political level, the civil society lacks systemic work and regular contact with the decision-makers and ways for influencing the overall development budget are very limited.

<sup>7</sup> Scheme has been in place since 2006.

<sup>8</sup> The bilateral development projects are also implemented by universities - *Czech University of Life Science Prague, Mendel University, Mendel University in Brno, or Palacký University Olomouc*.

<sup>9</sup> A multi-issue NGO that focuses on Development cooperation and humanitarian aid, transformation cooperation, and social integration and education and information programmes in the Czech Republic.

<sup>10</sup> Started in 2005, the campaign has been carried out by a network of Development NGOs and is a part of Global Call to Actions against Poverty.

<sup>11</sup> There is a general view the Czech public is generally rather supportive towards development cooperation and its goals. According to Special Eurobarometer 375, 83% of Czech believes it is important to help people in the developing countries but only 59% support the development aid (cooperation).

<sup>12</sup> There is an annual budget and tentative budget planning for 3 years prepared in May of the year preceding the implementation period, adopted by the MFA and consequently by the government. Such a practice is not very common in other EU member states.

As the bilateral budgets are frozen until 2015, the mid-term review of the *2010-2017 Development Cooperation Strategy* that is taking place on the course of the next year will focus on increasing effectiveness. Many NGOs suggest to narrow down the number of priorities<sup>13</sup> and target countries<sup>14</sup> while opening new funding line with flexible programming open to initiatives that would have broader geographic focus; the CDA has been already considering such a budget line for NGOs that would enlarge the access to funding of those NGOs that do not work in target countries or on priority issues. High number of priorities, limited budget and relatively even distribution of funding within the priority areas cannot deliver projects with significant impact and sustainable solutions. Besides lowering the number of priorities, the programming should be more focused, either allowing the civil society to come with complex strategies for a sector, under a condition of involvement of other Czech organisations, or to enhance capacities of CDA that would define problems in selected sectors and actively look for implementing actors. As the Czech Republic is a modest donor and the bilateral projects bring in the visibility, to multiply the effect, the co-funding of the projects funded from different sources, mostly from the EU, should be enhanced.

Economic crisis has stretched both public and private finances both at national level and EU level. Most Czech CSOs have an experience as regards dealing with scarce resources and they have learned out of it; there is a sense of improvisation and natural efficiency. The vicious circle of lacking money for a fundraiser have not prevented some of them from effective fundraising from various sources, while even touching more and more substantial amounts from the EU.<sup>15</sup> As far as re-granting allowed for in the EU projects, the € 100 000 limit seem to be too restrictive for carrying out major projects, while only allowing support e.g. to little local community projects. More flexibility in this regard, including rising the re-granting limit, would be welcome from the Czech CSOs.<sup>16</sup>

Bigger organizations and more renowned can profit from public image in order to attract private donors (*PIN*) whereas smaller entities rely on public grants or alternative (and often creative) ways of fundraising. Increasing number of Czech NGOs focus on alternative ways of fundraising. Small organizations (*SIRIRI*) opted for direct addressing of small donor while using new social media (Facebook). This approach may be very efficient while being very little costly. Others use online sales of products coming from the target countries and other similar means which can provide funding rather for smaller scale organization than the bigger ones. Czech CSOs are more and more aware that donors must be not only addressed but somehow cherished, including even personal and stable long-term ties in order to become a sort of “darling” of the particular donor, both private and public. Nevertheless, current financial restrictions most donors are facing do not allow the latter to have too many darlings.

Within the domestic funding, the CDA as the implementing body creates annual plans; the civil society has recently managed to persuade the Agency to publish indicative planning of granting priorities; the public procurement runs under different regime regulated by law and is closed to external consultations. Out of the technical issues, the fiscal year is mentioned; the calls are open in May, funding starts in June and the one-year projects should be concluded and reported by the end of the year. The time for effective implementation is thus limited. It is unlikely the system can be changed but some tools to make the funding more flexible could be introduced, like starting the implementation of selected projects before the contract is signed or counting in pre-financed project activities. The grant applications could be also further streamlined in repetitiveness. Like in case of EU funding, there is very limited flexibility in rules for spending and accounting; however, it is not considered a major problem as the difficult operations and activities can be covered from other grants and it is necessary to maintain transparency and efficiency of spending.

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<sup>13</sup> At the moment, there are in fact eleven priority areas under five priority sectors. For details, see (Sladkova, 2011) or the *2010-2017 Development Cooperation Strategy*.

<sup>14</sup> One of the criteria for a target country should be the presence of the Czech embassy, as its role is considered essential for delivering projects. Due to budget cuts, several Czech embassies across the world were closed down, out of the target countries, it is the case of Yemen.

<sup>15</sup> According to the survey carried out by FORS, the Czech NGOs have been apparently more and more successful in reaching out to EU money but this effort has always represented a heavy administrative burden for them.

<sup>16</sup> PIN even voices willingness and preparedness to re-grant and administrate € 800 000 in re-granting.

The civil society is acknowledged as a key actor in raising awareness about the development cooperation and provides very good information service; the budget line for development education and awareness raising projects amounts to CZK 15 million (app. € 600 000) yearly and is considered underfunded. The mass media are not well-receptive to the development issues and especially small NGOs cannot effectively enter the media time.

The cooperation with the business actors has been rather rare; there is a project in the area of basic education implemented jointly by *PIN* and *Allkon* company in Angola. FORS is currently running a mapping project involving civil society, business and universities, which should define strengths of each sector, potential areas of cooperation and possible tools facilitating the cooperation. Despite diverging motivations and priorities, the NGOs rather welcome the idea of cooperation with business sector and acknowledge advantages stemming from that cooperation. Business could appreciate local contacts, knowledge and know-how of NGOs and - in exchange - could boost NGOs' capacity both in concrete projects and in terms of general operation.

### **Platform organisation – FORS**

*Czech Forum for Development Cooperation* (FORS) is well-established platform with over ten years of history, associating around 50 subjects, that focuses on influencing policy-making at domestic and EU level, capacity building and cooperation among members, cooperation with other actors and partners outside the platform, raising awareness, monitoring and watchdogging activities. Its goals and priorities are stated in 2011-2015 strategy<sup>17</sup>; the platform implements capacity-building projects, produces position papers, evaluation reports and surveys among the member organisations and serves as focal point for the MFA when an aggregated position of the civil society is needed. It does not implement projects in the target countries. The core funding of the platform comes from the Czech Development Agency. In order to avoid the conflict of interest, the platform is fundraising for the domestic policy work elsewhere, namely in the EU.

The relatively large number of constituting organisations with various interests that display different levels of involvement and capacities to contribute to the policy work, has not always allowed for delivering coherent and effective action. The lowest common denominator rule when agreeing on working priorities does not allow for much flexibility and it tends to produce rather general assignments. On the other hand, the platform is not only the sum of its parts. Some suggest a debate on effective advocacy tools should take place and the added value of the platform should be more explicit; the regularly issued good-quality position papers are considered low-impact activity. A stronger FORS with a clearer strategy and tangible advocacy goals would be an asset for the whole community and would stimulate the engagement of the members.

Further focus on transparency of processes related to domestic funding and on systemic gathering of members' experience from the field, involving the project officers in order to produce expert input into the policy-making and implementation approaches, are well selected issues for policy input. With the exception of the development education and raising awareness, and several projects, the development NGOs have not been largely cooperating when preparing and implementing bilateral projects among themselves. To enhance cooperation among the NGOs is thus desirable, taking into consideration the tendency of the major donors to focus on sustainable long-term projects that deliver complex impact; the smaller NGOs involved in larger consortia with the peer NGOs enjoy better access to funding and can contribute with their specific niche and know-how. Also the effort to achieve a cross-sectoral outreach should be taken further in order to find areas where civil society and business can well-cooperate and complement each other. The preparation of a joint input to the mid-term review of the Development Cooperation Strategy could be used in order to boost the internal discussion and engagement of the member organisations.

Also, some NGOs have more expectations from FORS in terms of advising on funding as well as providing concrete grants. They complain about enormous red-tape linked to especially to EU funding, which makes it almost inaccessible for them, compare to relatively simple and easy-going procedures with other (US inspired)

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<sup>17</sup> Available at [http://fors.cz/user\\_files/strategiefors\\_final19.12.2011.pdf](http://fors.cz/user_files/strategiefors_final19.12.2011.pdf)

foundations such as OSF. They would like FORS to offer capacity building and guidance on drafting EU project proposals, project evaluation and preparation for EU audit requirements.

## Development Cooperation – Conclusions

The Czech civil society actors are delivering significant part of the Czech development cooperation and are considered professionals in project implementation. Although there is a great number of NGOs in the area, many face low personal and structural capacity and only 3-5 NGOs are considered to have capacities to implement complex projects with significant long-term impact. Despite the increasing success rate of project proposal tabled for the EU funding and due to frozen domestic funding the sector is underfunded. At the higher political level, the civil society lacks systemic work and regular contact with the decision-makers.

## 2. Transformation cooperation

Unlike in most EU countries, the democracy and human rights promotion is not conclusive to development cooperation in the Czech Republic. There is separate institutional structure, specific budget line, and programing and policy documents. The field is governed by the *Human Rights and Transition Policy department* (H RTP) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>18</sup> The democracy assistance has been provided since the mid 1990s as part of the Czech development aid but later on, in 2005, became a self-standing policy area, as the so-called transition policy turned into one of the foreign policy priorities.<sup>19</sup> The breaking point came with the democracy assistance provided to Iraq in 2003, which targeted the local experts in addition to Czech involvement into the international efforts to stabilize the country economically. After the Iraq experience and as a result of heavy lobbying of *People in Need* (PIN), the programme was extended in 2005<sup>20</sup> to other countries and fully institutionalized in 2007. The approach is based on conviction that there is conditionality between human rights and democracy, as well as on the experience of the Czech transformation process from a totalitarian regime to democratic system of governance. The projects implemented under the transformation cooperation support the participation of the target countries citizens in good governance and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms with the aim to contribute to on-going or future changes leading to democracy and the rule of law.<sup>21</sup> Transformation cooperation complements the system of the Czech Republic's development cooperation as it works systematically with the civil society in the target countries while possibly omitting contacts with local authorities. It is mentioned in all concept documents of the development cooperation with the exception of the *Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid*. The *Transformation Cooperation Concept* of 2010 sets the following priorities: civil society, human rights defenders, e.g. support to free civil society; media and access to information; rule of law and good, democratic governance; electoral processes; equality and non-discrimination.

The CSOs<sup>22</sup> can carry out projects funded from the *Transition Promotion Programme*<sup>23</sup> that operates as of August 2007 under the H RTP Department. The envisaged budget for 2013 is CZK 50 million (app. € 1.93 million) out of which CZK 35 million (app. € 1.4 million) is spent on projects; the rest is used flexibly, including the

<sup>18</sup> There is also a programme "Transformation of Financial and Economic Cooperation" of the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic, which aims at sharing knowledge and experience of economic transformation processes, good governance, preparations for EU accession and the application of the EU *acquis* with foreign partners, with focus on EaP countries in the near future. The partners are foreign ministries of finance; the civil society is not involved.

<sup>19</sup> (Bartovic, 2011)

<sup>20</sup> (Bartovic, 2008)

<sup>21</sup> Transformation Cooperation Concept (2010), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign\\_relations/archiv/archives\\_2002\\_2005/transition\\_promotion\\_program\\_concept.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/archiv/archives_2002_2005/transition_promotion_program_concept.html), p.2

<sup>22</sup> The most of the projects is implemented by Czech civil society organisations in cooperation with a partner organization/s in the target countries; the target countries NGOs are also eligible under the sub-programme supporting Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum members.

<sup>23</sup> The funding provided between 2005-2007 was not institutionalized. The procedures, calls, priorities are defined in Transition Cooperation Programme, Annex 1 to the Transformation Cooperation Concept, [http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni\\_vztahy/lidska\\_prava/transformacni\\_spoluprace\\_1/koncepcie\\_transformacni\\_spoluprace.html](http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/lidska_prava/transformacni_spoluprace_1/koncepcie_transformacni_spoluprace.html) (in Czech). The overall budget reached CZK 43million (€ 1,790,000) in 2010 (Bartovic, 2010).



co-financing of the EU projects implemented by the Czech NGOs. The target countries include developing countries and countries in transition – post-Soviet countries (namely Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia), the Balkans (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo), and Iraq; and undemocratic countries where human rights are at risk – Cuba, Belarus, Myanmar/Burma.

The transformation cooperation and its programme involves a bit different mix of civil society actors. There are about 20 organisations that work in the field, out of which only *Civic Belarus* dedicates itself solely for this purpose. Unlike in development cooperation, there is far more think-tanks and research institutes engaged in the projects, such as the *Prague Security Studies Institute* (PSSI), *EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy*, *Association for International Affairs* (AMO), or *Democracy and Culture Studies Centre* (CDK), which use expertise generated during the transformation process and the EU accession process in order to transfer their know-how.<sup>24</sup> Most of these actors started working systematically in the field only with the emergence of the Transformation programme. Similarly to development cooperation, *People in Need* (PIN<sup>25</sup>) has been playing important role and has dominated the field with the experience gained systematically before the policy institutionalisation and separation from the development cooperation. A platform organisation aimed at bringing together Czech NGOs and think-tanks involved in democracy and human right promotion - *The Association for Democracy and Human Rights* (DEMAS) - was established in 2008.

The access of the civil society to the policy formulation and programming is rather informal. The H RTP Department works as policy-setter, programming point and implementing agency in one, and is generally open to ideas and initiatives coming from the civil society. The CSOs also widely commented on the 2010 *Transformation Cooperation Concept*, channelling their aggregated views via DEMAS (see below), and their understanding of the field and policy goals is mostly converging with the policy design. The CSOs are rather happy with informal channels of communication and do not consider any formalization of consultation mechanism beneficial but rather counterproductive. As it is relatively small group of actors; they enjoy good access that allows for individual lobbying for their interests.<sup>26</sup> The rather organic nature of the field, in comparison to the development cooperation, brings in flexibility and operational leeway. In case of the Arab Spring, for example, it allowed for accelerated pace of analysing the development, targeting, re-allocating the funding and grant-making in case of Egypt although it was not prioritized as a target country.<sup>27</sup> There is also an informal understanding on co-financing the successful Czech projects that received the EU funding, mostly from European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, EIDHR (to facilitate better access to the EU money due to demanding co-financing rate); however, it is subject to accessible budget allocations and there is no regular call for co-funding grants.

On the other hand, as perceived by the civil society actors, structured input from the civil society that would bring in ideas for policy review is missing. Some consider desirable to adjust list of target countries and, accordingly, the programme priorities, as the situation on the ground has been changing. It is suggested to narrow down the list of priorities while enlarge simultaneously the list of target countries. A mechanism for a regular policy review with well-defined actors is not in place, which would be desirable not only for delivering input, but also to minimize impact of political interferences with any change of political representation. Transformation cooperation, although declared as government's priority at the moment, is not, unlike the development cooperation, anchored by any law. The civil society actors active in the field consider the work with Czech political parties as one of their major priorities in order to sustain the cross-party support to transformation cooperation (with the exception of the Communist Party). However, it seems there is no clear strategy or goals defined and elaborated by the community towards the political parties that would suggest an effective advocacy takes place.

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<sup>24</sup> (Bartovic, 2010)

<sup>25</sup> Within the PIN itself, the transformation cooperation and development cooperation teams constitute two independent units, working under separated budgets.

<sup>26</sup> Most of the lobbying is done by individual organisations and is targeted to their needs, the platform (DEMAS) is not used so often.

<sup>27</sup> Some, on the other hand, consider the approach towards the Arab Spring rather conservative.

Funding of the civil society organisations working in the field is considered rather well-diversified, with growing success rate in the EU calls (especially *PIN*). The larger EU projects are, however, demanding due to co-financing rates and staff demands.<sup>28</sup> Re-granting is used when implementing the EU funded projects in less demanding milieus (Burma, etc.); it brings about closer relations with recipients allowing for transfer of know-how.<sup>29</sup> The other fundraising instruments are not widely used; *PIN* is successful in addressing individual donors via its *Club of PIN Friends* that provides funding that can be used freely for activities not covered by the grants. Other organisations do not employ this strategy as the transition cooperation projects work usually on significantly smaller budgets than development cooperation projects and to run individual sponsorship implies additional costs and workforce. The corporate donations (corporate social responsibility) have not been successfully fundraised so far, although some organisations have made attempts (*Forum 2000*). The *Transition Programme* of the Czech MFA is an important donor for the Czech organisations; it is essential its budget to be at least stabilized at current level during the time of on-going budget cuts.

The currently perceived conflict with the economic interests and derived foreign policy priorities is likely to endure at the time of economic slow-down and the civil society feels the arguments supporting the transformation cooperation should be voiced in a more structured way, targeting wider range of actors, including the general public. To “sell” the transformation cooperation is more complicated than in case of development cooperation. Also, the atmosphere in the society has been changing and it is not as open as five or ten years ago; to mention the fate of political prisoners in order to generate a response is not working any more. Although the message remains the same, the tools of delivery should change, using new technologies and concise messaging. An important tool for raising visibility is the regularly organised *One World* film festival that is dedicated to the human rights issues and human rights violations around the world. The organizer, *People in Need*, has been constantly developing the concept that now involves sub-festivals in the regions, activities at schools (*One World in Schools*), lectures and meetings with filmmakers and human right defenders, *Homo Homini* award, etc.

### **Platform organisation – DEMAS**

In order to avoid duplications in projects, a fact pointed out also by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to coordinate the activities, the transformation cooperation CSOs platform started working informally in summer 2008, and was registered in autumn 2008. The impulse came from the *People in Need* with the H RTP MFA Department agreeing to provide funding for the platform Secretariat.<sup>30</sup> *The Association for Democracy and Human Rights (DEMAS)* currently includes eleven organisations and it has been pursuing its main aims: advocacy, linking up the civil society organisations active in the field, networking and communication with other actors, acting namely as a focal point for the MFA. It has been active within the EU-wide Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) through which it mostly lobbies in Brussels, covering the issues related to the EU instruments of external action, namely the EIDHR, and balanced approach and support to the Eastern dimension (namely EaP countries). The engagement with Trialog, an organisation supporting emergence of national development platforms in the new EU member states, is not well-perceived as it a priori involves asymmetric pupil-mentor relation between “old” and “new” EU member states.

The Secretariat aims at building expert background and is often involved in projects in the target countries that include several member organisations. Besides its activities on the ground, it focuses on capacity building of the members, organising and co-organising conferences and events, and it also worked as a support to the emerging secretariat for the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum. It does not see its role in policy development, monitoring of the domestic policies or in developing innovative tools of funding or PR.

<sup>28</sup> Hiring new people, who have to be fired when the project ends.

<sup>29</sup> The current size of re-granting allowed within the EU funded projects (max EUR 100.000 per project, max EUR 10.000 per sub-grant recipient) is considered adequate.

<sup>30</sup> (Bartovic, 2010)



DEMAS has become a well-known actor in the field both domestically and internationally; however, it is rather loose platform for issues-sharing and joint projects implementation. Some members feel more structured approach with strategic considerations and visions that would allow for targeted advocacy is needed.

### **Transformation Cooperation - Conclusions**

The division of development and transformation cooperation is generally considered a good thing and a significant achievement of the Czech civil society. It mirrors two different expertise and approaches, and under existing structure allows for flexible and effective response capacity. In order to work effectively the system needs stable cross-party agreement and support of the political representation across the spectrum of relevant parties that keeps it relatively high on the list of foreign policy priorities. Thus as a model it is rather suitable for stabilized political milieu with predictable domestic foreign policy actors. The self-standing transformation cooperation is likely to enlarge the pool of civil society actors active in the field; it can also initiate a single-issue oriented actors. The communication channels are rather informal, and considered effective due to relatively low number of relevant civil society actors engaged in transformation cooperation activities. The civil society community working on transformation cooperation coordinates its work within DEMAS and joint efforts on ad hoc basis; however, it seems to lack strategy and well defined goals for successful and systematic advocacy. To underpin the policy sustainability from a long-term perspective should be one the major goals; the work with the Czech political parties is an evident priority that should be put to practice and pursued more systemically.

## **3. Recommendations**

### **Civil society level**

#### ***Development cooperation***

- To enhance cooperation among the NGOs, taking into consideration the tendency of the major donors to focus on sustainable long-term projects that deliver complex impact; the smaller NGOs involved in larger consortia with the peer NGOs enjoy better access to funding and can contribute with their specific niche and know-how.
- To work on a stronger FORS with tangible advocacy goals.
- FORS should provide more advisory and capacity building in relation to EU funding (drafting project proposals, evaluation or audit requirements, etc.)
- To continue the efforts in cross-sectoral cooperation with the business actors.

#### ***Transformation cooperation***

- To improve the strategic guidance and clarify joint goals (policy sustainability at the national level, Transformation Cooperation Programme budget sustainability) in order to deliver effective advocacy.
- To target the Czech politicians and political parties more effectively and systemically, especially with regard to the upcoming general elections and likely changes in power.
- To consider joint development of communication strategy and to consider using the platform (DEMAS) for delivering innovative public awareness campaigns.

## National level

### *Development cooperation*

- To narrow down the number of priorities and target countries and open new funding line with flexible programming and broader geographic focus facilitating the access to funding of those NGOs that do not work in target countries or on priority issues.
- To improve programming in order improve project impact, either allowing the civil society to come with complex strategies for a sector, or to enhance capacities of CDA that would define problems in selected sectors and actively look for implementing actors.
- To encourage project consortia of civil society and business actors.
- To enhance the budget line for trilateral projects after 2015 as co-funded projects of big donors (EU, etc.) multiply the visibility.

### *Transformation cooperation*

- To narrow down the list of priorities while enlarging simultaneously the list of target countries.
- To consider formal mechanism for a regular policy review.

### **For peers in the EU MS**

- Formal or informal agreement or programme providing co-funding for larger EU-funded projects (or to projects funded by other big donors), as it facilitates access to the EU grants and raises visibility of the country as a donor.
- To divide institutionally and budget-wise the development and transformation cooperation; a model suitable for stabilized political milieu with predictable domestic foreign policy actors.

## Appendix 1

### *Methodology note*

A joint project methodology was followed in order to prepare the paper; however, the implemented survey of civil society and a focus group have not delivered conclusive results for analysing fully the state of the sector.

### *Summary of the Survey Results*

Out of the 72 identified respondents, only 10 responded (5 questionnaires duly finished). The results of the polling are inconclusive.

- Most organizations seem to be concerned by the development cooperation issues and they claim to have rather good understanding of the subject and knowledge of relevant national, EU or international documents or strategies. Development aid is considered to be an outdated term, development cooperation emphasizing more equal relationship between donor and beneficiary seem should be more suitable notion regarding the current policy objectives.
- Most organizations express less positive attitudes towards Czech development policy and they perceive weak to average possibility to influence the government development policy. Nevertheless, they prove to be quite active in this respect, with only average efficiency according to their own judgment. They consider compliance between their activities and Czech development policy goals an average.

- For all organizations, there are number of crucial elements of their activities: cooperation with other stakeholders (NGOs/local organizations/IGOs and cooperation within PPP). Education and training seems to be the predominant content of their projects which usually last 1-3 or more years (without any re-granting).
- Their donors are rather various, both public and private at similar rate, and they often use new IT tools for fundraising, such as online sale of products, recruitment of volunteers or PR campaigns. Their raising awareness campaigns are usually focused on national audience, while good reputation of the organization is the most important asset for them.

## Appendix 2

### *Summary of the Focus Group*

Three NGOs representatives present

### **Capacities of NGOs**

Most NGOs in the area of development cooperation and humanitarian aid face low personal and structural capacity and depend on volunteers to the large extent, including those who have larger parent organisation, while acknowledging there is a great number of NGOs and general risk of duplicity. They also face the challenge of difficult self-promotion and raising awareness of the general public. They also have fundraising problems and lack specialised fundraisers.

### **Partnership with business development actors**

NGOs rather welcome the idea of cooperation with business sector and acknowledge advantages stemming from that cooperation. However, clear division of labour between them is important in order to avoid competition for public money or competition between local businesses (doing the job less costly) and those from the Czech Republic (supported for economic reasons under “pro-export policy”). Cooperation with Czech Invest was mentioned as a good example. Business could appreciate local contacts and knowledge of NGOs and – in exchange - could boost NGO’s capacity both in concrete projects and in terms of general operation.

#### *Recommendations:*

- *Using cooperation with business on projects in target countries under pre-defined conditions and respect for CSR*
- *As to self-promotion, social spots/advertising is an efficient way to do the job while there is demand by media for broadcasting them. Good quality and interactive web pages are also essential.*

### **Scope of Development Cooperation**

Czech Development Agency has a very narrow scope of action. Some areas related to development (such migration issues) are not covered. On the other hand, Czech focus on limited number of countries is logic and untreatable given limited resources even though some NGOs (working in other countries) are thus excluded from Czech public funding.

#### *Recommendation:*

*Re-define the Czech development policy goals in order to broaden their content scope. As to geographic scope, narrow focus should be maintained but re-shuffle of countries could be considered (some countries should not be priority any longer, whereas some others should be included because of new circumstances or NGOs already doing relevant projects there).*

## Funding

NGOs have more expectations from FORS notably in terms of funding opportunities. They complain about enormous red-tape linked to EU funding, which makes it almost inaccessible for them, compare to relatively simple and easy-going procedures with other (US inspired) foundations such as OSF.

*Recommendation:*

*FORS should provide more advisory in terms of EU funding (drafting project proposals, evaluation or audit requirements, etc.)*

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# ESTONIA

## Introduction

Estonia has officially been a donor of development assistance since 1998 when the parliament first dedicated funds from the national budget for this cause. The civil society organisations (CSOs) quickly became important agents for drafting the policies in this sector and one of the main implementers of development projects and their involvement has been growing over the years.

This policy brief describes the current role of CSOs in Estonian development cooperation, their perception of Estonian development policy and the challenges they face in their work. In addition, recommendations are offered for different stakeholders about ways to increase civil society's engagement in development matters on all levels.

The policy brief is written in the framework of the findings of research on the role of trade in development effectiveness as part of the project activities within the framework of the European Commission project entitled: *Update of the current status of implementation of international/bilateral trade regimes with ODA recipients and the current role of civil society and private sectors as development actors in the new EU Member states.*

## 1. Methodology

The analysis presented in this policy brief is based on an online survey and semi-structured interviews with five representatives of CSO representatives. Secondary data from reports and other writings on Estonian development cooperation were also used.

The respondents were invited to participate in the survey by direct invitations and through public announcements via mailing lists and social media channels. To boost the response rate, non-responders also received reminders. Data collection took place in November-December 2012. The web-based survey was hosted by an independent research company, Klaster. The questionnaire included different questions for policy makers, private sector people and the CSOs, which were assigned to the respondent by the category they assigned to themselves with the first answer. The survey invitation was sent to 592 emails and circulated through several mailing lists. A total of 49 people responded to the CSO survey, which indicates that a good portion of people active in Estonian development CSOs answered the questions. However, since the answers are anonymous and it is possible that several people from each organisation could have answered the questions, the results should be interpreted as general reflections of the civil society perceptions rather than factual data about their activities.

The criteria for selecting interviewees were their level of engagement in development cooperation issues, depth of knowledge of the subject matter, and position in their organisation. The objective was to interview

people who work on development cooperation on a daily basis and are able to represent the opinion of their organisation not just their personal views. The following people were interviewed:

- Johanna Helin, Member of Board and Director of the Global Education Centre of NGO Mondo
- Piret Hirv, Secretary-General of Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation (AKÜ)
- Mari-Helene Kaber, Information Manager of Humana Estonia; Chair of the Council of AKÜ
- Arvo Ott, Executive Director of e-Governance Academy
- Margit Säre, Executive Director of Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation; Member of Council of AKÜ

The policy brief is organised such that the first chapter summarises the general characteristics of Estonian CSOs working in the development cooperation and global education sectors. The following chapter describes the most common roles the Estonian CSOs have in development cooperation. The third chapter highlights four Estonian development organisations as good practices to learn from. The fourth chapter explains the challenges faced by development CSOs in Estonia. The final chapter offers concrete recommendations to the European Union (EU), Estonian government and the CSOs about how better to engage civil society into development policy making and implementation.

## 2. Background on Estonian Development Organisations (CSOs)

The historical development of development cooperation and the role of civil society organisations in the Baltic States have been described elsewhere in quite some detail<sup>1</sup>, so this policy brief will not describe that question in much detail. It should suffice to point out that the CSOs have been actively involved in development policy formation and implementation in Estonia since almost the very beginning of these activities at the end of 1990s. The cooperation with the government has had its ups and downs, but over the past two decades the relationship has grown to be quite professional and systematic (see also Box 1).

### BOX 1: CREATING THE NATIONAL CSO PLATFORM

"The Estonian development NGO roundtable first met in 2002 to present the consolidated opinion of civil society organizations about the development cooperation principles document being prepared by the MFA. This was an informal network of interested individuals and organizations, which continued implementing activities under the Open Estonia Foundation and, later, the European Movement Estonia until 2007, when an independent legal entity was established as a result of a successful EU-funded Estonian-Finnish-Swedish capacity building project, FEST (Finland, Estonia, Sweden Together for Development). After overcoming the self defining difficulties of any new organization, the Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation (AKÜ), which currently has 21 member organizations, has been involved in the making of development policy in Estonia, provided capacity building services for Estonian NGOs and worked actively on raising the awareness of the general public about global development challenges. AKÜ has a strong working relationship with the MFA." (Andrespok & Kasekamp 2012)

The national platform of non-governmental not-for-profit development organisations, called the Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation or Arengukoostöö Ümarlaud (AKÜ) in Estonian, currently has 21 member organisations that are active in either development cooperation projects in developing countries or raising the awareness of the Estonian public about global development-related issues. It is impossible to provide a definitive number of CSOs involved in development cooperation, but when estimating by the number of public events organised by different organisations and their participants, there are around 40-50 organisations that work on development cooperation issues in some capacity. The number of respondents to the online survey conducted for this project confirms the feasibility of this assumption.

<sup>1</sup> See Andrespok & Kasekamp (2012)



Most of the Estonian development CSOs are professional organisations in the sense that they have at least one full-time paid staff member - in some cases more than ten, but usually around two to six people. In addition, quite many have a couple of part-time paid staff and project-based experts. The practices of using volunteers vary, but about two-thirds of the survey respondents say that their organisation had voluntary workers in 2012. Usually, the volunteers help to organise events or do office chores; it is not common that the volunteers would work on advocacy, trainings, mentoring/consultation or fundraising. No Estonian organisation has recruited volunteers from developing countries and only a few send Estonians to work in developing countries.

It is probably no surprise that most of the funding for Estonian development cooperation and global education projects comes from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the European Commission. While the survey results suggest that the Estonian MFA and European Commission are equally important sources of funding for the CSOs, available statistics and empirical evidence show that very few Estonian CSOs have received project funding from the European Commission's development budget.

A fair number of organisations have also received support from the National Civil Society Foundation (KÜSK), although funding from private sector, individuals and other sources is marginal. Yet, for the sake of demonstrating the diversity of the funding sources it is worth mentioning some of the other funders: the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SIDA from Sweden, Open Society Institute, UNDP, UNESCO, USAID and the World Bank. A few organisations are providing paid services or sell products to fund their development-related projects.

Estonian CSOs do not often receive funding for their activities from the Estonian private sector, but there are such examples of cooperation where the CSOs offer consultation, trainings or information materials about development-related issues to companies. In a few cases, the CSOs and private sector institutions have presented joint applications for project funding or have implemented certain activities together. One organisation has organised private sector visits to developing countries to promote peer-to-peer learning and suggest new export markets for Estonian products.

### **3. CSO Role of Development Cooperation**

Of the organisations which responded to our survey, two thirds are active in at least one development activity. Most are active in several development-related activities, but declared to be engaged in all of them. Engaging in advocacy on development policies, implementing global education/awareness raising projects in Estonia or projects in developing countries by sending experts and consultants or engaging in other ways are all equally important activities for Estonian development CSOs, as 24-31% of all organisations work in each of these spheres. This chapter explains, more concretely, what is the role of CSOs in each type of activity.

#### **Implementing Development Cooperation Projects**

About a third of Estonian CSOs implement projects in developing countries and a little more than a half of them (57%) also send experts or consultants to developing countries, which suggests that technical assistance projects are quite popular. Only one CSO participates in humanitarian aid missions – NGO Mondo.

Thematically, the majority of development cooperation projects by Estonian CSOs have focused on strengthening the civil society in partner countries, promoting democratic practices (including use of information and communication technologies for good governance) and respect for human rights. Education is another theme the Estonian CSOs work on, but other "traditional" development areas like eliminating poverty and hunger, improving healthcare, empowering women or promoting (environmentally) sustainable development are not that popular among the CSOs. Still, quite a few organisations consider the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) important either as a concrete aim of their actions or as a broad concept that they always keep in mind.

Usually, the target groups of Estonian CSOs development cooperation projects are other CSOs, public sector or youth and teachers. The specific focus depends on the nature of the project, but it does not change much for each organisation – they either target several groups at the same time or no particular groups at all.

The priority partners for Estonian development cooperation according to the Estonian Strategy Plan for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2011-2015 are the six EU Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) plus Afghanistan. Out of these, the Estonian CSOs have implemented the most projects in Georgia and Moldova, but also some in Ukraine and Belarus. Armenia and Azerbaijan have not been quite as popular, probably because there have not been any calls for proposals from the MFA to invite organisations to work in these countries. Individual CSOs have additionally implemented projects in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Palestine, Tunisia, Nepal, Thailand, Mozambique, Angola, Malawi, Guinea-Bissau and some others. It has been noted before and was confirmed in the interviews conducted for this study that new projects usually emerge from personal contacts of CSO members who have travelled abroad and from contacts made through international networks.<sup>2</sup>

Most commonly, the main partners of Estonian organisations in developing countries are local non-governmental organisations (47%), but international organisations (33%) and national government and local state institutions (20%) are also quite important.

An overwhelming majority of the CSOs' projects have a duration of one to three years, some also less than a year. The organisations consulted for this study did not report any projects that would have lasted for four or more years, but some of them have had successful follow-up projects. The short-term nature and poor success with guaranteeing funding for follow-up projects was regarded as an obstacle for sustainable development impacts by some survey respondents and interviewees.

In recent years, the discussion about development effectiveness has become more prominent on the international scene and this debate is slowly but surely also growing in Estonia. However, based on the findings of the study at hand, the understanding of the concept of aid evaluation in Estonia is fairly different from the discourse of the EU or OECD. For Estonian CSOs, the measure or reflection of the impacts of their work is whether support (finances, volunteers, etc.) to their organisation increases or not. Socio-economic change in developing countries, which is the broadest internationally agreed indicator of success, is used by very few respondents. According to the interviews, this indicator is often impossible to measure by small Estonian CSOs, because their projects in the partner countries are very small, and it would be extremely difficult and expensive to collect adequate data. What is more, a fifth of the CSOs who responded to the survey do not evaluate the impact of their work in any way and this remains a shortcoming to be addressed by all relevant stakeholders.

## **Raising Public Awareness**

Global education and raising public awareness about global issues in Estonia is the most popular type of activity among the CSOs (31%) by a small margin. Primarily, the aims of this work are to inform the general public about development issues around the world and to increase understanding of and support to development cooperation, but some organisations also mentioned promoting volunteerism and introducing their own organisation as their motivation.

Less than a half (47%) of the organisations working on raising public awareness are also implementing development cooperation activities in developing countries themselves or have experts/consultants working there. It is noteworthy that all organisations that send volunteers to developing countries are also working with global education activities, which means that besides the benefits of such interactions to the developing countries, Estonian society also learns from the experiences of the volunteers, who often visit schools, organise photo exhibitions or even produce documentary movies after their return to Estonia.

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<sup>2</sup> Andrespok & Kasekamp 2012, 11

Organising public events and trainings for various target groups as well as publishing studies, newsletters or other materials are the most common tools with which the CSOs attempt to raise awareness of development issues. Social campaigns about global issues have been used by only a few organisations. Notably, only a few organisations cooperate with the media to propose topics and raise the awareness of general public through this. Limited work with journalists is both due to scepticism that the issues would be published and due to limited capacity to present topics in an appetising matter.

In terms of evaluating the effectiveness and impact of global education-related activities, the organisations are taking small steps like in the case of service providing organisations. According to the survey, a change in public discourse about development cooperation issues and the inclusion of global matters into school curricula are used as qualitative indicators by quite a few CSOs working on global education.

## **Advocacy and Policy Development**

Generally, the CSOs are quite aware of the development cooperation issues, but engagement in direct lobbying and advocacy on policy issues is not so common among the Estonian CSOs. Most organisations say that they engage in advocacy on global education or development cooperation issues to some extent, but some also have trouble understanding what the concept of “advocacy” means and how to position themselves in relation to it.

Out of the organisations that engage in advocacy activities at least in some capacity, practically all have regularly or sometimes targeted their message to politicians and civil servants in Estonia. Occasionally (Estonian) officials working in Brussels are also targeted, but only the national development CSOs’ platform AKÜ is working regularly with politicians or civil servants in Brussels. Hardly any organisation is working with Estonian officials in the United Nations.

However, regardless of the level of engagement in advocacy, more than a half of the respondents (55%) consider their organisation’s knowledge of development cooperation good or very good. Less than five per cent of the respondents consider their knowledge very poor. Most of the respondents (80%) of the survey are able to mention specific national and/or international development policies.

The majority of respondents (75%) who are aware of development policies say their organisation follows the Estonian Strategy Plan for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian aid 2011-2015 in their work. What is more, the CSOs consider their activities to be in line with the Estonian official development cooperation policy. Just under two-thirds (62%) are convinced of this and just under a third (31%) have difficulties evaluating it, but only seven per cent say their actions do not follow the governmental policies.

Regarding international treaties and policy documents, more than half (56%) of the CSOs use the MDGs as a basis of their work, a quarter takes into account the national strategies of the developing countries and every fifth organisation follows the Agenda for Change proposed by the European Commission in 2011.

Remarkably, almost none of the organisations (3%) take the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011) into account in their work. This is likely because there has been limited CSO advocacy on this topic at national level. The overall experiences with doing advocacy on policies of such high level are limited for Estonian CSOs and their capacity to follow the policy debates is highly limited due to financial and human resources reasons. Not to mention that often it is difficult for CSOs to see their link to the specific policies, which was also true for the Forum in Busan. What is more, the Estonian positions for the High Level Forum in Busan were mostly negotiated at civil servants’ level, closely following the European Commission’s joint position, while national level consultations with the CSOs were not organised. Therefore, the lack of interest towards the Busan Partnership is mostly a result of low awareness of the process.

## 4. Good Practices

This chapter highlights four Estonian development organisations that can be considered to use such good practices in their work that are worth learning from. This list is in no way conclusive and depending on the specific topic of interest there are other best practices, but these organisations do have unique characteristics that are worth outlining. It is also necessary to point out that evaluating the effectiveness of these organisations according to international policy agreements, such as the Busan Partnership criteria, is out of the scope of this policy brief even though such analysis would be a valuable contribution to the studies of Estonian development cooperation.

### Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation

The Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation (in Estonian: Arengukoostöö Ümarlaud, AKÜ)<sup>3</sup> is the nationally recognised independent coalition of development CSOs (see Box 1). AKÜ as an umbrella organisation is unique among the Estonian development CSOs in that its main role is to engage in advocacy for better Estonian and European development policy.

Evidence from the survey and interviews that was presented above demonstrates that engaging in policy discussions is not common among the Estonian CSOs, because most of them are too occupied with practicalities of implementing projects or lack the skills for this job. At the same time, it was emphasized in some of the interviews that while the members of AKÜ are not able to participate in designing policies on their own, they believe that AKÜ has the necessary expertise and have given the mandate to the network to speak on their behalf.

The capacity of AKÜ to do more policy work increased significantly after a policy officer was hired at the end of 2008. The policy officer is responsible for following the most relevant policy discussions at the national and European level, drafting AKÜ's policy positions and consulting with member organisations to reach a consensus that would satisfy all members. During the past few years, AKÜ has created the first Estonian multi-stakeholder strategy on global education, provided input to the national development cooperation strategies, contributed to several public consultations of the European Commission and established solid working relationships with key partners. Additionally, AKÜ has published reports on Estonian development cooperation, which have been well received by the MFA, the national parliament and European partners.

The Estonian Strategy Plan for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid 2011-2015 states that civil society is one of the most important actors in the sector. AKÜ as a representative of the Estonian development cooperation CSOs has been declared to be a 'strategic partner' by the MFA, but this relationship has not been defined in more detail. Nevertheless, MFA has supported the activities of AKÜ in the form of annual budget support since 2008. The organisation also receives funding from the National Civil Society Foundation (KÜSK), the European Commission and other donors.

AKÜ is a member of the European confederation for development and relief, CONCORD, and works closely with the TRIALOG V project for advancing development issues in the countries that have joined the EU after 2004.

### e-Governance Academy

The e-Governance Academy (eGA)<sup>4</sup> was established in 2002 by the United Nations Development Programme, Open Society Institute and the Government of Estonia with the mission to enhance ideas of e-governance and e-democracy at home and abroad via training, consultancy and research activities. Specifically, eGA sees as its mission to train and advise leaders and stakeholders in using information and communication technology to increase government efficiency and to improve democratic processes with the aim of building open

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<sup>3</sup> See more at [www.terveilm.ee](http://www.terveilm.ee).

<sup>4</sup> See more at [www.ega.ee](http://www.ega.ee).

information societies. So far, high level civil servants, CSO leaders and municipal leaders from more than 40 countries have been trained and advised.

The training programmes and trainers involved in eGA's work are constantly evaluated and updated. Quite uniquely among Estonian CSOs, eGA works closely with private sector companies and perceives creating business opportunities for Estonian companies as one objective of their work. Promoting effective public-private partnership is also an important mission.

eGA has received the most funding from the Estonian MFA for development cooperation projects and they are also one of the few who have implemented long-term projects or several follow-up projects. eGA is one of the founding members of AKÜ and has actively contributed to development policy making in Estonia.

## **Mondo**

Mondo<sup>5</sup> is quite young, founded in 2008, yet one of the most active Estonian development CSOs and the only one that has specialised exclusively to this sector. Mondo manages various development cooperation projects, is the leading force in global education activities and the only Estonian CSO that delivers humanitarian aid (including rescue missions, post-disaster reconstruction activities and transition to development cooperation).

In terms of geographic scope, Mondo drastically differs from most other Estonian development CSOs as their programmes take place in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and Afghanistan, not the post-Soviet countries. The types of activities Mondo implements (support-a-child educational programmes, ethical gifts to widows, friendship schools and micro loans) are also quite unique in the Estonian context. Most recently, a social entrepreneurship café was opened in Kampala, Uganda which serves as an internship and work place for disabled youth. All of these programmes have come into existence through personal contacts of the members of Mondo. Furthermore, these projects are primarily funded by donations from private persons in Estonia and not from national or European taxpayers' money.

Another outstanding element of Mondo's work is their Global Education Centre<sup>6</sup>, which provides teachers, young people, CSOs and all other interested parties materials about global issues by producing Estonian language materials, organising trainings for teachers, coordinating documentary film clubs for youth, and managing a library of documentaries and printed materials. Mondo is a member of AKÜ and chairs its global education working group. The Centre also supports the work of the Estonian UNESCO Associated School Network (ASPnet).

## **Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation**

The Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation (CTC)<sup>7</sup> is a non-profit institute that has been promoting balanced development of border areas, especially in Lake Peipsi/Chudskoe region since 1993. Peipsi CTC has been active in establishing International projects that encourage cooperation between Estonian, Russian and Latvian local governments, CSOs and other organisations – an experience that has now become the cornerstone of the organisation's development cooperation projects.

Over the past decade, Peipsi CTC has also implemented several successful development cooperation projects dealing with water management and public involvement in the Moldovan-Ukrainian, Kyrgyz-Kazakh, and Albanian-Macedonian transboundary water regions. Peipsi CTC is also a founding member of AKÜ.

Year by year, Peipsi CTC is putting more focus on raising Estonian public awareness of global environmental issues. Previously such activities were more focused on the national issues, but the participation in AKÜ's work

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<sup>5</sup> See more at [www.mondo.org.ee](http://www.mondo.org.ee).

<sup>6</sup> See more at [www.maailmakool.ee](http://www.maailmakool.ee).

<sup>7</sup> See more at [www.ctc.ee](http://www.ctc.ee).



and implementing development cooperation projects has broadened the scope of these activities – a sign that the organisation has developed through international cooperation.

## 5. Challenges of Civil Society Organisations

An overwhelming majority of the CSOs (80%) do not evaluate the Estonian development cooperation policy very positively. While less than a fifth considers it very poor, it is still an alarming indicator in terms of trust and the general feelings about the direction of the Estonian development cooperation sector. However, the interviews revealed that it is actually not the development policies like the national strategy for development cooperation that people are unhappy with, but the regulations on funding for CSOs, which are seen to be highly bureaucratic and not supportive enough of CSOs. In some cases, the Estonian regulations system seems to be much more rigid than even large donors' like the European Commission or SIDA in Sweden.

There is a feeling among the CSOs that the MFA, which is responsible for managing bilateral development cooperation funds in Estonia, is too focused on accounting every cent spent in a project and does not pay enough attention to the substantive aspects and real development impacts of the activities. Furthermore, while the national funding system is perceived to have improved over the past few years, the CSOs are critical of the fact that most projects are short term and that there are limited possibilities for follow-up projects.

Furthermore, echoing the situation of civil society as a whole in Estonia, several CSOs are worried about the unpredictability, instability and inaccessibility of the funding for development, particularly from the European Commission. Also, all donors have different requirements and criteria for CSOs and it is a considerable workload for organisations.

More broadly, the constant demand from donors for "innovative" activities is another obstacle for some CSOs. They often have to replace their familiar and effective tools and methods based on the demands of the donors. The interviewees explained that the CSOs have usually developed solid relationships with their partner countries and established effective practices to achieve certain development results, but the donors' desire to constantly see something "new" does not allow using those methods anymore. This is perceived as a violation of the ownership principle for the CSOs, because they cannot be fully in charge when planning their own activities.

There are also challenges related to capacity building. Based on the survey responses, it is evident that the knowledge, motivation and skills for participating in development policy-making could be improved. The interviews confirmed that even though policy making is seen as an important element in development cooperation, most organisations do not know how exactly they could participate in it. The national platform AKÜ is particularly concerned about this issue, because on the one hand, it is difficult to explain complex European policies to its member organisations, and on the other hand, forming good quality policy positions without members' participation is challenging.

Low public awareness of development issues and support for development cooperation is perceived as a challenge by some CSOs in terms of gaining support for their activities. According to the latest Eurobarometer published in October 2012, a total of 73% of Estonians consider helping people in developing countries important, which is lower than the EU average 85%. In addition, 26% of Estonians (twice as many as the EU average) do not consider it very important or think it is absolutely unimportant, which is what the CSOs are worried about. The CSOs believe that more global education activities would raise the public awareness.

## 6. Policy Recommendations

Based on the evidence and analysis presented above, this policy brief will outline concrete suggestions to elaborate a better model for the involvement of civil society representatives into development policy making and implementation. The recommendations are directed to the EU, the Estonian government and the CSOs.



## European Union

- Based on the study of Estonian CSOs, the most important policy recommendation for the EU is that its **policy development and funding processes should be more transparent and accessible to CSOs** from all Members States. The CSOs feel that the current systems are not easy to understand and funds are difficult to access. The policy making system is so complex and rigid that the Estonian CSOs have very limited interest to participate in it. Since CSOs are one of the key stakeholders in development cooperation, the EU should put more emphasis on enhancing their capacity to increase involvement in European development policy making and implementation.

## Estonian Government

- **Increasing effective and meaningful CSO participation** in development policy making and implementation is also a recommendation for the Estonian government. Primarily this means making efforts to include CSOs into the policy making both at the national and multilateral levels. This requires a pro-active attitude to invite the CSOs to comment on policy documents as well as demonstrating how those documents are relevant for the work of the CSOs. It is necessary to cooperate with the national development CSO platform AKÜ in this matter.
- In terms of finances, the CSOs mostly expect the government to **reduce bureaucracy in the development cooperation funding system**. The government regulation on development cooperation funding principles was updated in January 2013 and reduced some bureaucracy, but most changes were cosmetic and will probably not satisfy all of the CSO criticisms. Open discussion with the CSOs about how to reduce bureaucracy is a good idea.
- When looking at the projects funded from the Estonian tax-payers money, their eligibility and impacts, the MFA should **develop a system for assessing the real development impacts of all activities**. Currently, there is no formal mechanism for qualitative evaluation of projects or the overall development impacts of Estonian development cooperation programme. While developing a cost-effective model for evaluation is challenging, there is a clear demand for it. Having such a system at the government level would likely also be a motivation for CSOs and other development actors to better evaluate the impacts of their work.

## Civil Society Organisations

- The CSOs should **evaluate the impacts of their work to find out the real development impacts** on the final beneficiaries. Knowing the outcomes of the implemented projects and other activities is a prerequisite to planning any future activities. Being able to clearly demonstrate the impacts of their work will also increase possibilities for follow-up funding and be a good role-model for other development actors. AKÜ and the MFA should make efforts to explain the importance of evaluation and the available tools to the CSOs.
- Raising the awareness of the general public about development issues is an important concern for most CSOs. In order to achieve better results in this area, the CSOs should **work more actively and systematically with the media** to propose topics and offer expert opinions. Each CSO should seek opportunities to improve their media work skills and the AKÜ can offer more seminars on relevant topics.
- The CSOs should **engage more in advocacy on development policy making** to guarantee a better working environment. Even more importantly, this is a way to make sure that various national and multilateral policies support their work in developing countries and do not undermine the development goals.

## 7. Conclusions

To sum it up, the Estonian CSOs play an active role in Estonian development cooperation. About 40-50 organisations are active in either development cooperation or global education activities and most of them are professional organisations with at least one full-time paid staff member. The organisations are mostly funded by the Estonian MFA and the European Commission.

Implementing global education and awareness raising projects in Estonia or projects in developing countries by sending experts and consultants or engaging in other ways are all equally important activities for Estonian development CSOs. Thematically, the majority of development cooperation projects by Estonian CSOs have focused on strengthening the civil society in partner countries, promoting democratic practices and respect for human rights. Most of the CSO projects have been implemented in Georgia and Moldova, but also in Belarus, Ukraine, Afghanistan and some African countries. Global education is seen as an important tool for informing the general public about development issues around the world and to increase understanding of and support to development cooperation.

In terms of aid effectiveness, it seems that the CSOs working on global education understand quite well the need to evaluate the impact of their work in terms of societal changes like updated school curricula or support to development cooperation. Unfortunately, the CSOs implementing development cooperation projects are primarily measuring their effectiveness by increasing their own financial sustainability than on qualitative indicators like the socio-economic changes in partner countries. Low awareness of the importance of measuring real development impacts of activities is a challenge that should be addressed both by the CSOs themselves and the government.

The study highlighted four Estonian CSOs that can be considered to use such good practices in their work that are worth learning from. AKÜ as an umbrella organisation is unique among the Estonian development CSOs in that its main role is to engage in advocacy for better Estonian and European development policy. eGA is the one of the biggest Estonian development organisations, which has a very broad geographic scope and has also been successful in cooperating with the private sector. Mondo is the only Estonian CSO that has specialised exclusively to the development sector and stands out both with its projects in Africa and Afghanistan as well as with the pioneering work in the global education field. Peipsi CTC is an example of a CSO who is successfully sharing their own experiences of enhancing transboundary cooperation with the neighbouring countries with other regions of the world.

To summarise the main challenges faced by the CSOs, the keywords are bureaucracy and capacity building. There are expectations that the level of bureaucracy both in Estonia and the European Commission funding systems should be reduced to allow more CSOs to participate.

To overcome the challenges faced by CSOs thereby strengthen their role in development cooperation, we recommend that the EU should be more transparent and inclusive of the CSOs, that the Estonian government should focus more on the real development impacts of its programmes and less on bureaucracy, and that the CSOs seriously evaluate the effectiveness of their work to guarantee more legitimacy and better results for their activities.

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# HUNGARY

## 1. Introduction

Like most countries in the Central East European region, the trajectory and the current state of development and humanitarian aid activities in Hungary are largely determined by two considerations, on the one hand, the legacy of a heavily politicized donorship practice from the socialist era, and on other, a relatively swift transition from recipient to donor in the post-socialist period. After almost a decade of “new” donorship there is a stable sector of Nongovernmental Development Organizations (NGDOs) in Hungary. However, their participation in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and their contribution to aid effectiveness is constrained by a societal and policy context that still bears the imprint of this history.

This research found that a significant and, arguably, sufficient number of civil society organizations (CSOs) are ready to play a substantial role in within the official development aid activities. Certainly, with a relatively high number of NGDOs and an active NGDO platform, with up-to-date knowledge of international norms of aid practice and the Hungarian policy background, as well as membership and participation in EU-level NGDO platforms, the Hungarian NGDOs are on a par with other new member states (NMS) in the region, and a few can be compared to Western European donors as well. However, there does seem to be a perception amongst both NGDOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Hungary is falling behind Czech or Slovak ODA practices and that civil society involvement in ODA is more limited.<sup>1</sup> The present paper will trace the reasons for such limits and point to potential ways in which they could be overcome. In addition, the aim is to provide a comprehensive and up to date account of the sector in terms of size, activities, countries, and funding.

The paper draws on the various research tools. It used various public databases to compile a comprehensive list of CSOs currently engaged in international development and/or humanitarian aid. This was then used to distribute an online survey, followed by nine in-depth interviews with NGDO representatives, interviews conducted in writing, a Focus Group, and a Task Force meeting. The latter two provided the space for government representatives, NGDO staff, and academic experts to discuss the status and challenges within international development, as well as the preliminary findings of our research.

The first section offers a brief description of the prehistory and current context of Hungarian NGDOs’ operation. It then presents the different types of development organizations, their involvement in international development, and the findings from the survey of their financial and human resources. The penultimate section outlines the most prominent challenges whilst the final part outlines several suggestions to potentially counter these. Various additional supporting materials are attached as Annexes.

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<sup>1</sup> Focus Group meeting.

## 2. The context

### 2.1. Prehistory and its implications

One of the most constraining elements of the socialist legacy in the region is an apathy, or even negative public attitude towards international development (Grimm and Harmer 2005, Szent-Iványi 2009). This seems to be particularly valid for Hungary: according to a recent survey on Europeans' attitude toward development aid, the Hungarian public appears as one of the least supportive towards helping poor people in developing countries (Special Eurobarometer 2011a). The proportion of those who think it is "important" or "very important" to help poor people in developing countries is the lowest in Hungary, while significant minority thinks that in the present economic crisis, the EU should freeze development aid (43%) or should not increase its amount despite an earlier pledge to do so (23%). While the percentage of those in favor of providing development aid to worse off parts of the world is still relatively high (75%), the results seem to resonate with activists' and experts' view that people in Hungary prefer to focus on domestic issues and international aid is not a significant concern (see e.g. Vári 2007a).<sup>2</sup> According to one prominent NGDO, the African-Hungarian Union, the Hungarian public is uninterested in international issues generally and the plight of poor people in "distant" continents particularly. Another group, Baptist Aid, noted that in West-European countries, development aid has a longer history with higher public engagement, and an NGDO sector which is much more established than in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Although, like other countries of the Soviet bloc, Hungary was an active donor to several developing countries during the Cold War, as Sára Vári (2007a) notes, public awareness about international development issues was non-existent in this period.<sup>4</sup> While it supported developing countries in the name of international solidarity (North-Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Angola), scientific-technological cooperation (Brazil, Peru, India), or purely business-oriented considerations – according to ideological modulations – beyond the political-military aid provided to leftist decolonization movements, the country seldom engaged in development cooperation in the classic sense (Suha 2011). Despite the country's relatively short period as an aid-recipient country, Hungarian society still manifests a sentiment of aid-dependency (Vári 2007a). In the public view, EU-accession primarily meant access to new financial resources and the opportunity to approach old member states' living standard. At the same time, and perhaps due to the transitory recipient status, for most people Hungary has not yet reached the level of economic development where it can, or should, support other countries.<sup>5</sup> Coupled with decision-makers' convictions that the region still lags behind old member-states', the allocation of large funds for international development can appear difficult to justify (Szent-Iványi 2009; see also Paragi, Szent-Iványi, Vári 2007).

One additional explanation can be derived from immigration trends. Hungary is a transit rather than a target country, which means that people are less exposed to concerns of developing countries and their expatriates (Vári 2007a). Likewise, popular perception and often in the perception of decision-makers too, Hungary's geopolitical position spares it from many of the security risks emanating from the developing world's weak or failed states (Szent-Iványi 2009).

Symptomatic of all these characteristics is the absence of development issues from almost all levels of education (Vári 2007a). While a relatively high number of NGDOs specialize in global education, the integration of such

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<sup>2</sup> According to 23% of the respondents, providing aid to developing countries is "not important". Although support in 2009 was much higher: 86% (Special Eurobarometer 2011b, 20), the previous two surveys (2007 and 2009) seem to be largely in line with the findings of the most recent one, reaffirming the points above.

<sup>3</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>4</sup> According to Szent-Iványi (2009, 183), in the 1970s and 1980s Hungary's ODA spending exceeded the 0.7% of the national income on several occasions (see also Leiszen 2013).

<sup>5</sup> According to Szent-Iványi (2009), re-launching of Polish international aid activities was an important instrument of the government in demonstrating that the country had completed its transition to market economy. The Polish MFA's campaign of the period addressed the negative public sentiment toward international aid by emphasizing that Poland does indeed belong to the developed part of the world: "Poland is paradise for 1.2 billion people in the world" (Vári 2007a, see also Belgian Development Cooperation 2005, 8).

material into official curricula has not yet been achieved.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, despite a rather successful ODA module funded by EuropeAid,<sup>7</sup> an MFA-funded design of an ODA course and the publication of a corresponding textbook at Corvinus University, Budapest, there is no ODA program (BA or MA) available in higher education.<sup>8</sup> As for the general public, while there certainly are occasional TV-programs, news features, and even regular radio programs focusing on developing countries, these concerns remain marginal in the mainstream media. Several NGOs have taken up this challenge and design activities and events to bring the cultures of, among others, African countries closer to the Hungarian public.<sup>9</sup> However, as the coordinator for the Foundation for Africa's noted, most who attend such events are already open to questions of development or the African continent, while the uninterested majority is much harder to reach.<sup>10</sup> According to the Anthropolis Foundation which has a strong global education profile, these events and campaigns are often wasteful and even reaffirm stereotypes about developing countries and poverty.<sup>11</sup>

On the level of foreign policy and the selection of ODA target countries, these characteristics are compounded by the fact that, without a colonialist past, Hungary does not have the ties to developing countries that many older member states do and, correspondingly, both its political and economic relations with these countries are contingent and minimal (Szent-Iványi 2009; Suha 2011). As a consequence, there is an evident discrepancy between official priority countries and the focus of many Hungarian NGOs, with the latter apparently more in line with the common European aim to increase the support of the least developed countries and in particular that of Africa.<sup>12</sup> More generally too, as Judit Kiss (2008, 386) notes, the issue of ODA is not embedded within Hungary's foreign relations and, accordingly, lacks proper attention and position within the country's politics.

This is also reflected in an overly decentralized institutional structure formulated during EU-accession negotiations between 2001 and 2003 (Kiss 2007). Although the MFA and its Department of International Development and Humanitarian Aid (NEFE-FO) has the main responsibility of formulating and coordinating policy, a large proportion of ODA activities are managed by line ministries and the distribution of labor between these actors remains unclear. It is hardly a surprise that the ODA obligations of the OECD and the EU have continued to pose major challenges to the Hungarian foreign affairs administration.<sup>13</sup> Questions of development aid and candidate states' preparedness in this field did not feature prominently on the agenda of accession negotiations either. As Beáta Paragi notes, this lack of attention dawned on both Brussels and the new member states as a "mutual surprise" (Paragi, Szent-Iványi, Vári 2007, 157). By way of "compensation", the European Commission provided funds for knowledge transfer and capacity building programs, involving both governmental and civil society organizations (see Szent-Iványi and Tétényi 2012).

## 2.2. The emergence of the Hungarian NGO sector

Indeed, it is largely through such capacity building programs as the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Official Development Assistance to Central Europe (ODACE), that in the early 2000s there emerged a small but relatively stable sector of civic organizations engaged in international development and humanitarian aid (Paragi, Szent-Iványi, Vári 2007). Due to the very limited possibilities for civil organization during the socialist period, there was virtually no past experience to draw from, especially for those without

<sup>6</sup> In fact, according to the representative of one such NGO, during the past few years the prospect of introducing global education into primary school curricula has diminished further.

<sup>7</sup> The EuropeAid project was granted to the Hungarian Baptist Aid and realized by the Corvinus University (Beáta Paragi, co-designer and lecturer of the module, email correspondence).

<sup>8</sup> This is in spite of the fact that the launch of an ODA program was a more or less articulate element of the CIDA and UNDP capacity building projects provided to Hungary in the 2000s (Balázs Szent-Iványi, co-designer and lecturer of the module, email correspondence, 29 January 2012; see also MFA 2004, 6).

<sup>9</sup> See for example activities of the Foundation for Africa or the Ebony African Cultural, Art, and Human Rights Association.

<sup>10</sup> Foundation for Africa, interview.

<sup>11</sup> Anthropolis Foundation, interview.

<sup>12</sup> While the most recent foreign policy strategy articulates a governmental intention of "global opening", including an increased attention to sub-Saharan Africa, NGOs and experts with an African focus have been unsuccessful in pushing the continent more into the fore of ODA policies (but see HAND 2012b; Morenth and Tarrósy 2011).

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Leiszen (2013).



a church affiliation. During the decades of socialism, international charity activities in the “nongovernmental” sector were carried out by the Hungarian Solidarity Committee and its issue-specific funds created on the occasion of natural or man-made disasters, the Patriotic Popular Front (*Hazafias Népfront*), the National Council of Hungarian Women (*Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa*) or the National Association of Hungarian Journalists (*Magyar Újságírók Országos Szövetsége*). Their campaigns, however, were limited to occasional humanitarian aid provided to Vietnamese orphans, for example (Paragi, Szent-Iványi, Vári 2007).

EU-accession and generous funding programs promised to remove ODA activities from the sole purview of government. As an important step in fostering diversification of actors and roles, coalescing around efforts at raising public awareness about global development and making an impact on strategy and policy making, in 2002 the umbrella organization Hungarian Association for Development and Humanitarian Aid (HAND) was formed. While its founders and participants had great enthusiasm and willpower, the establishment of HAND’s was neither spontaneous nor a bottom up process. Instead, it was part and parcel of the above mentioned Canadian capacity building program.<sup>14</sup> There were 12 full and 5 observer founder members, currently there are 16 full members, while the BOCS Foundation (Brain Organization for Civilization of Sustainability) participates as an observer (see also Trialog 2005).

The membership of HAND is rather heterogeneous. Beyond environmental and volunteer sending organizations, associations fostering intercultural understanding, and NGOs promoting civic activism, there are “only” 5-6 member organizations whose primary focus is international development and humanitarian aid (see also Trialog 2005). To be sure, the overlap can enable cooperation and diversity need not turn into incoherence. Over the past decade, HAND has become the single most important civil society actor in the Hungarian development scene. Beyond representing many of the major NGDOs, the organization is active in regional and European NGDO platforms such as the Visegrad Four and CONCORD Europe. Their AidWatch Working Group prepares Hungary’s country pages in CONCORD’s yearly reports, as well as the Hungarian Aid Watch report since 2007. Yet, illustrating the limited influence of civil actors, the majority of the “12 points” that academic expert Judit Kiss recommended in the first report in 2007 linger on in 2012 (Hodosi 2012, 16-17).

### 3. Surveying the Hungarian NGDO sector

HAND and its member organizations do not encompass the whole of the NGDO sector in Hungary. Several major church-affiliated humanitarian organizations are not members although some were members in the past and others are in the process of becoming members. Furthermore, although there are some overlaps, there is a group of Africa-focused organizations that formulated their own platform, the Hungarian Africa Platform (Magyar Afrika Platform).<sup>15</sup> In addition, government reports of ODA funds allocated to CSOs list organizations that are members of neither platforms and do not appear to be active in the lobbying activities of the sector.

To the best of our knowledge a list of CSOs active in development and humanitarian aid had not been compiled, and it seemed useful to create a more comprehensive database. In compiling this, we used the following resources: the searchable online database of the Court of Registration, the list of 1% tax-pledge eligible CSOs maintained by the Nonprofit Foundation,<sup>16</sup> the Central Statistical Office’s list of nonprofit organizations, membership lists of platform organizations (HAND, MAP), the MFA’s yearly ODA reports, Trialog’s country-specific NGDO database, and the Hungary-chapter of a global directory of development organizations.<sup>17</sup> We identified nearly 70 organizations that engage in activities related to development or humanitarian aid.<sup>18</sup> Our aim was to include not only those organizations involved in ODA, but those whose activities are located beyond Hungary’s strictly understood ODA-activities, for example, those operating in Romania and those active in capacity building for Hungarian CSOs and others that are less integrated within existing NGDO networks.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Anthropolis Foundation representative, interview;; ICDT representative, Task Force meeting,. See also Trialog (2005).

<sup>15</sup> However, according to one of the member organizations, this platform is largely inactive today.

<sup>16</sup> Available at [www.nonprofit.hu](http://www.nonprofit.hu)

<sup>17</sup> Available at [www.devdir.org](http://www.devdir.org)

<sup>18</sup> See Annex 1.

<sup>19</sup> That is, in development and humanitarian activities provided to Development Assistance Countries as defined by OECD.



With around 10-13 percent of the database turning out to be inactive or irrelevant at the initial stage of making contact, our survey sample was reduced to around 60 organizations, out of which altogether 29 completed the survey.<sup>20</sup> While some declined to fill out the survey because they thought it irrelevant for their activities, others said they lacked time and capacity during the end-of-year crunch-time. However, a nearly 50 percent response rate still provides a good picture of the Hungarian NGDO sector.

### 3.1. The profile of Hungarian NGDOs

#### 3.1.1. Faith-based humanitarian organizations

As noted above, the composition of civil society organizations working in development and humanitarian aid is very diverse and the number of NGDOs *per se* is rather small. The most visible and relatively well-funded civil actors are faith-based organizations<sup>21</sup> whose development work is complemented with emergency humanitarian aid activities<sup>22</sup> and who also operate as in the domestic sphere. This provides one of the primary lines of fragmentation within the Hungarian NGDO-sector, with these large organizations on the one side, and a very heterogeneous group on the other.<sup>23</sup>

As representatives of these organizations themselves acknowledge, they are in a more advantageous position than the smaller NGDOs, for example, being able to participate in pre-given international networks.<sup>24</sup> According to one of Baptist Aid's coordinators, organizations of the same church in different countries build cooperative projects on the relationship of trust that the shared denomination provides.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, they are much more experienced in fundraising targeted at private individuals, as their primary audience is made up of the members of their respective religious communities.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, having garnered a substantial body of experience over the past couple of decades, organizations such as the Baptist Aid, the Hungarian Interchurch Aid or the Hungarian Maltese Charity Organization are very much in the forefront of the MFA's attention.<sup>27</sup> These NGDOs are able to carry out projects in many countries, which allow them to draw on active connections when designing and implementing further projects.<sup>28</sup> It is hardly surprising that these faith-based humanitarian organizations can secure EuropeAid funding, either as project leaders or as partners with old member states' development agencies.<sup>29</sup> Finally, illustrating their self-standing nature, while some of them are (active or less so) members of HAND (namely the Hungarian Maltese Charity Organization and Caritas Hungarica), others (e.g. Baptist Aid or Hungarian Interchurch Aid) do not find it essential to join the NGDO platform, partly because they are members of international umbrella organizations (such as CONCORD) through their mother organizations or networks (e.g. EU-CORD).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The questionnaire was conducted online with [www.surveymoz.com](http://www.surveymoz.com). It was open between 5 October and 20 December 2012.

<sup>21</sup> While these organizations are (closely or more loosely) institutionally affiliated to a particular church, their development and humanitarian aid activities are not religious in nature.

<sup>22</sup> 4 out of 7 organizations who responded in our survey that they have previously worked in the area of emergency relief and reconstruction were large faith-based organizations. (See also Annex 3).

<sup>23</sup> Péter Nizák, civil society expert, Open Society Institute, discussion notes, Task Force meeting. Importantly, the main line of division is not between faith-based and "secular" NGDOs, but those having a humanitarian profile and those lacking thereof.

<sup>24</sup> Interview, Baptist Aid coordinators and Task Force meeting.

<sup>25</sup> Discussion notes, Task Force meeting (31 January 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Péter Nizák, Open Society Institute, Discussion notes, Task Force meeting, Terre des Hommes representative; see also Trialog (2005). On NGDO-funding, see section 3.3. below.

<sup>27</sup> Focus Group meeting.

<sup>28</sup> Among our respondents, the average number of countries in which they have been active over the past five years is 8.5 in case of the four faith-based humanitarian organizations, where for the whole survey sample this average is 5.1.

<sup>29</sup> Baptist Aid and the Hungarian Interchurch Aid can be good examples here too.

<sup>30</sup> Baptist Aid coordinators, interview. Yet, according to the representative of a smaller HAND-member, without the major humanitarian organizations, HAND has much less legitimacy.

### 3.1.2. "Classical" NGOs?

If NGOs are civic organizations engaged primarily in activities related to international development (Trialog 2003), in Hungary this definition applies to only a handful of organizations operating in far fewer countries than the faith-based groups.<sup>31</sup> Signaling a regional characteristic of the CSO sector, members of Western NGOs are usually perplexed about the small international development segment of civil society in Central-East Europe relative to the plethora of domestically focused CSOs.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, there are development organizations that have been successfully operating for several years now. Most are present in two-three countries, where they typically have one or two projects run over an extended period. In our survey, such is the work of the Afrikáért Alapítvány (Foundation for Africa), the Mezőtláb Alapítvány (Barefoot Foundation), and the TAITA Foundation for African Children, each of which operates an orphanage or multiple orphanages and associated schools and kindergartens. Thus, theirs are ongoing undertakings instead of distinct development projects – a feature that, in turn, limits the extent to which they can secure ODA funding. This is particularly true for the Foundation for Africa, since – as opposed to TAITA's case where the allocated ODA projects were managed by the Hungarian Embassy in Nairobi – Hungary has no diplomatic mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo where the Foundation operates, and therefore the MFA does not include the country in its funding calls.<sup>33</sup>

While these three organizations approximate the characteristics of Western NGOs, there are others that engage in publically funded development projects, such as DemNet: Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights. There are additional small organizations that do not carry out development work in recipient countries themselves but allocate funds to affiliated individuals or organizations operating in the recipient country. One example is the Third World Foundation, a small faith-based organization that, since 1991, has been collecting donations in Hungary and among members of the Bokor [bush] Christian Base Community to support the charitable and educational activities of specific pastors in India and Argentina.<sup>34</sup> As former HAND-coordinator and NGO expert Réka Balogh noted when summarizing the findings of HAND's recent research on CSO development effectiveness, a significant proportion of the twenty NGOs that she interviewed do not effectively work abroad.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.1.3. Educational organizations

A relatively large number of those with a predominantly domestic focus are educational organizations; foundations that work towards intercultural understanding, changing perceptions of immigration and global poverty, and popularizing environmental consciousness. While rarely involved in development projects directly, NGOs such as the Artemisszió Foundation, Anthropolis, the BOCS Foundation or the National Society of Conservationists are, or could be, the principal actors of raising the profile of international development in Hungary. Demonstrating the significance of this activity area, with its 10-12 members, the Global Education Work Group is the largest of HAND's task forces. To be sure, this distribution of profiles is very much the product of the limited resources and scheme of public funding. According to several experts and NGO employees interviewed for this research, the available ODA funds are disproportionally geared towards awareness raising projects.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.1.4. On the margins of the Hungarian NGO sector

The final group within the Hungarian NGO sector are small-scale organizations that engage in international development or humanitarian aid, but are not integrated into the institutional structures and lobbying activities

<sup>31</sup> According to a Task Force participant, hardly any one of HAND's members could be characterized as a purely international development organization; many of them are much more active in awareness raising or education..

<sup>32</sup> Task Force meeting.

<sup>33</sup> Foundation for Africa coordinator, interview and TAITA coordinator, interview. While there is no written rule to this effect, in previous years the pattern has been to fund projects in countries where Hungary has diplomatic representation. However, the call for 2012 (published in February 2013) includes the Democratic Republic of Congo as well (MFA 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Third World Foundation representative.

<sup>35</sup> Task Force Meeting.

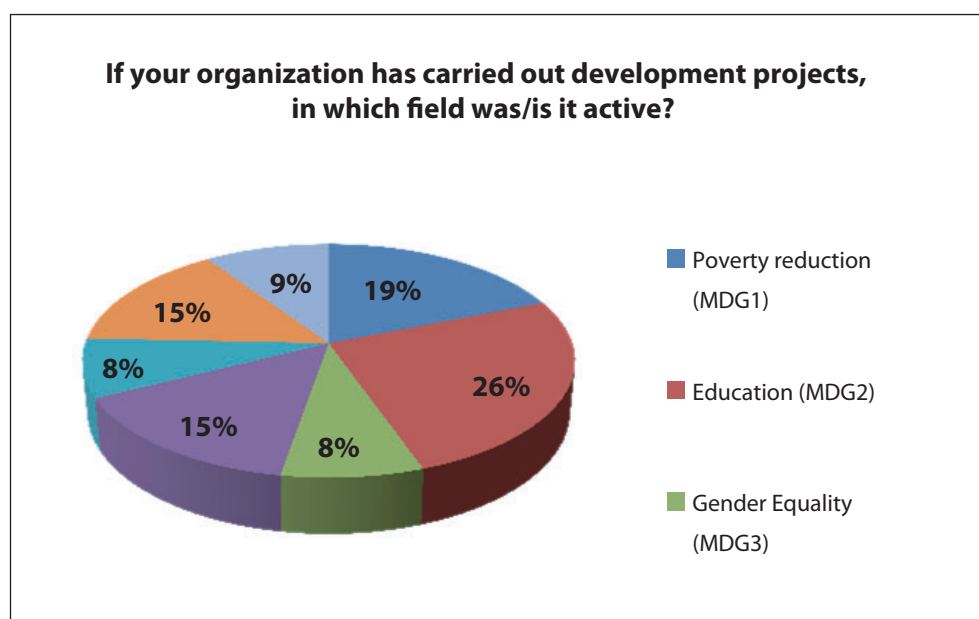
<sup>36</sup> Research notes, HAND Presidential meeting and Task Force meeting. Conversely, according to NGO expert Réka Balogh, such bias towards awareness raising is only characteristic of EuropeAid funding (see further below); this activity has not been featured among the MFA's calls for applications for several years now (email correspondence).

of the field. Some are CSOs that tend to work in Hungary, but have successfully applied for public funding for the occasional international projects. A case in point would be the Magosfa Foundation whose program of education for sustainability in Bosnia and Herzegovina has received both EuropeAid (in 2007) and governmental ODA funding (in 2011), or the Faipari Tudományos Egyesület (Scientific Association of Forestry), whose biomass project benefiting rural communities in Vietnam was twice allocated Hungarian ODA funds. Others include those whose work is directed at helping transborder Hungarian communities, most of whom now live within the European Union, thus placing such activities beyond the ODA framework. In our sample, a typical example of the latter is HELP Nemzetközi Orvosi Alapítvány (HELP International Medical Foundation), that regularly delivers humanitarian aid and medical equipment to poor communities in Transylvania, Romania. Finally, a different kind of marginality characterizes international organizations that have an office in Budapest. While the Hungarian Committee of the UNICEF is part of the NGDO platform, it clearly does not function as an NGDO. On the other hand, the Hungarian branch of Relief International operates the Human Resources activities of that organization, but there are no development activities carried out from Hungary.<sup>37</sup> A similar case is that of Terre des Hommes – an international NGO promoting children’s rights – for which the relevance of the Hungarian office is mostly administrative and as such, they are not integrated in the Hungarian NGDO field.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.2. Involvement in development activities

In what ways and to what extent do CSOs in Hungary take part in international development and related activities? To the question whether they participate or have previously participated in international development, 27 organizations answered positively and 22 respondents said that their organization is currently leading or has led a development project in the past.<sup>39</sup> In turn, when defining the nature of their work in terms of the Millennium Development Goals, the following distribution of activities takes shape:

**Figure 1. NGDOs’ activities defined in terms of the Millennium Development Goals**



Emphasizing the prevalence of awareness raising among NGDO profiles, the most frequent area of activity is that of education (MDG2), with 19 organizations placing their work in this category. The second most frequent

<sup>37</sup> Relief International representative, personal communication.

<sup>38</sup> Terre des Hommes representative, Skype interview.

<sup>39</sup> As our survey did not ask here whether leading a development project implied that the organization itself carried out a project in a recipient country, this response has to be qualified by the preliminary finding of HAND's cited above study: a significant proportion of Hungarian NGDOs do not effectively work abroad.

area of poverty reduction (14 respondents), includes all of the faith-based humanitarian organizations as well as the Africa-focused secular NGOs.

Regarding their **participation in** ODA activities, less than half of our sample, 14 organizations responded that their work has already been funded by the MFA. Most frequently, this refers to grants for autonomous realization of a development or humanitarian aid project (9 cases), while more than a third of the cases (5) involve contributions towards national ODA law or policy-making. More than a quarter of ODA-grantee organizations (4) received funding as project partners while around a fifth (3) provided consultancy work or carried out national public awareness raising campaigns (3). Except for the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (which received funding as a partner organization of a development project), all the major humanitarian organizations have cooperated with the MFA in the autonomous realization of a development project. Beyond them, BOCS Foundation, DemNet, the International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT), and TAITA Foundation for African Children reported to have received funding (including awareness raising, consultancy, as well as the realization of development projects), while the remaining positive responses come from three smaller organizations for individual projects.

In terms of **geographical location**, over the past five years Hungarian NGOs have carried out development or humanitarian aid work in 76 countries. As mentioned, while major humanitarian organizations are typically able to realize development or deliver humanitarian aid in ten or more countries, NGOs in Hungary have been active in between 2-4 countries. In our effort to generate and distribute a more comprehensive picture of the international development sector in Hungary, we created the following map of NGO's work.<sup>40</sup>

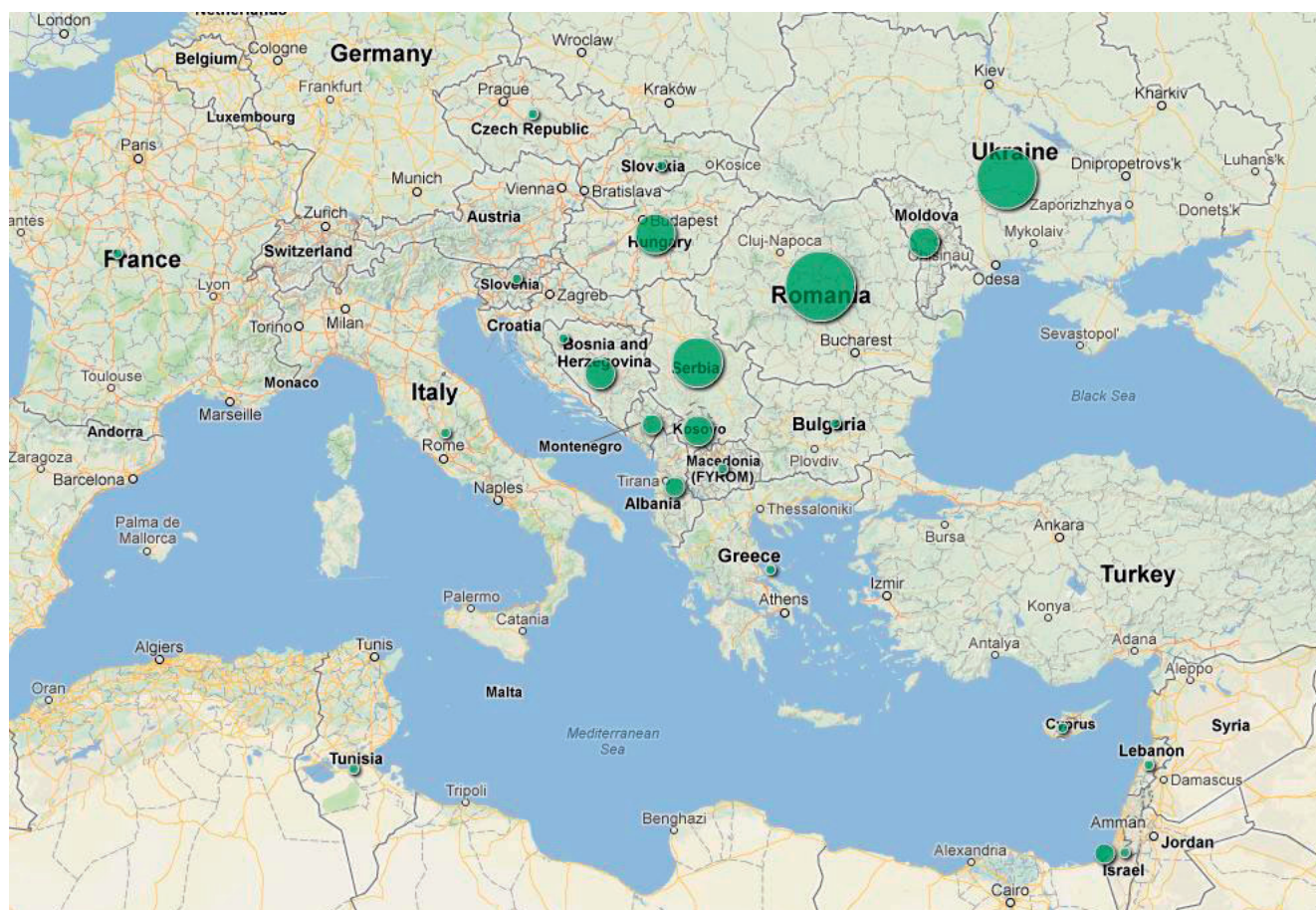
**Figure 2. Hungarian NGOs' work around the world**



<sup>40</sup> The interactive map will be available on the CPS website and the subsequently on the webpages of HAND. The green circles signal the presence of a Hungarian NGO. The larger the circle, the more projects were carried out in the particular country.



**Figure 3: Hungarian NGOs' work in Europe**



Although it may be the outcome of limited resources available to the sector, beyond their development and humanitarian work, most Hungarian NGOs engage seek to popularize the issue of international development among both the general public and decision-makers. The vast majority (26) of respondents take part in efforts to raise **public awareness** of the issue. The most frequent (65.4%) form that such efforts take are ad hoc, occasional events and media appearances, but regular press releases and newsletters also feature high among methods (50%). Most organizations (61.5%) target young people as the primary audience, but much of their efforts are also directed at opinion leaders, media personalities, educators, governmental representatives and politicians (34.6% respectively). Most organizations target their campaigns on the national level (73.1%) with local and county-level being the second most frequent (46.2%), but the European level is not much further behind it (42.3%). Just 30.8% of respondents focus their awareness raising efforts on the international level.

As the best indicator of their success in raising awareness, most respondents chose the transformation of the public opinion/debate (34.6%), although many thought the increase in the number of active NGOs was also a good indicator of increased awareness (26.9%), while the increase in the organization's material resources was the third most frequently cited indicator (15.4%). As reasons for not taking up awareness raising, a respondent from a small faith-based organization referred to the limited amount of money they are able to raise, and their wish to dedicate most to the supported project with the least amount of overhead expenses. On the other hand, the international aid coordinator of a much larger faith-based organization highlighted the controversial public attitude towards international aid: in times of economic crisis, people ask, why help abroad when there is enough poverty within the country?

Among those NGOs who do carry out development and humanitarian aid projects in a developing country, twelve organizations reported to have engaged in **awareness raising activities in recipient countries**.

Interestingly, the major humanitarian organizations did not generally do so.<sup>41</sup> Most often (11 cases), awareness raising takes the form of training and education, but regular or occasional publications are also popular means for spreading development related information (7 cases). Typically, awareness raising in recipient countries is targeted at governmental and municipal decision-makers as well as professional associations or occupational groups (8 responses respectively), but young people (5 responses) and the representatives of the business sector (4 responses) are also frequently targeted. According to our respondents, the best indicator of the success of their awareness raising work in recipient countries would be the increase in the number of local CSOs active in the area of development (5 responses), while an increase in their own resources (both human and financial), and the transformation of the public discourse around development would also signify the success of their efforts (3 responses). The majority of our respondents (17), however, do not carry out awareness raising activities in the countries they operate in. The main reason is that they lack sufficient resources and capacities (5 responses), others report that their local partners carry out this work (3), while according to a few other respondents, such campaigns are unnecessary and, in a sensitive political context, can even be dangerous. When asked whether they are planning to undertake awareness raising activities in the future, only one out of the 17 organizations responded positively, while seven could not tell for certain.

Most organizations acknowledge that the weak legitimacy of international development does not solely lie with the lack of popular commitment to helping people in developing countries. In order to counter such negative sentiments, much stronger political support needs to be garnered. However, when asked whether they participate in initiatives to change ODA policies, only a little more than half (16) of our respondents answered positively. The majority of these refer to their limited capacities or their marginal position in relation to ODA policies, while others said that they feel they are not being listened to. Many of these explanations frame advocacy and “actual” development work in terms of either-or: if one chooses to do development, advocacy is no longer available as an option. Such views might explain the reluctance to taking up advocacy work in the future: two respondents said their organization plans to engage in advocacy, three knew they would not, while eight respondents were undecided.

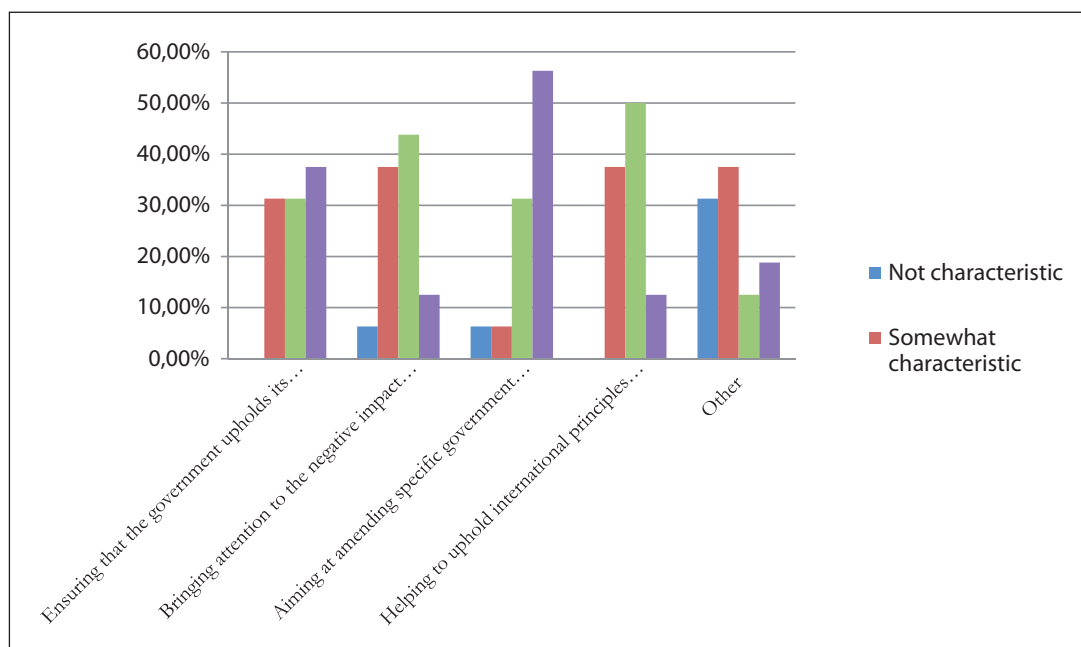
Those who do manage to direct resources at advocacy most typically characterize these efforts as occasional and targeted at the national level of policymaking (8 responses). DemNet, Partners Hungary Foundation, and, of course, the platform organization HAND define their advocacy work as regular and positioned on the national level, while three NGOs (BOCS Foundation, the National Society of Conservationists and the Hungarian Committee of UNICEF) focus their regular advocacy campaigns on the international level. As to the aim of their work, the responses show the following distribution:

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<sup>41</sup> Or do so only on occasion, when the funding scheme of the particular project requires (Baptist Aid coordinator, personal communication).

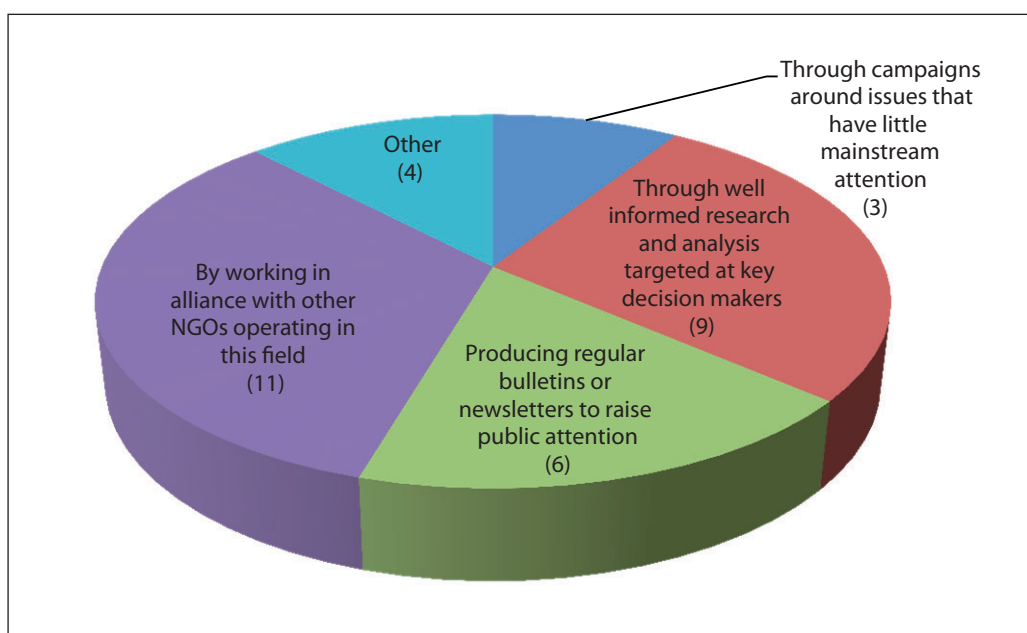


**Figure 4. How characteristic of your organization's advocacy work are the following goals?**



Signaling the central role of the NGDO platform, most respondents say they carry out advocacy work in cooperation with other organizations working in the field, however, communicating research and analysis towards key decision-makers also featured as a popular form of advocacy.

**Figure 5. How does your organization try to influence official policies related to international development?**



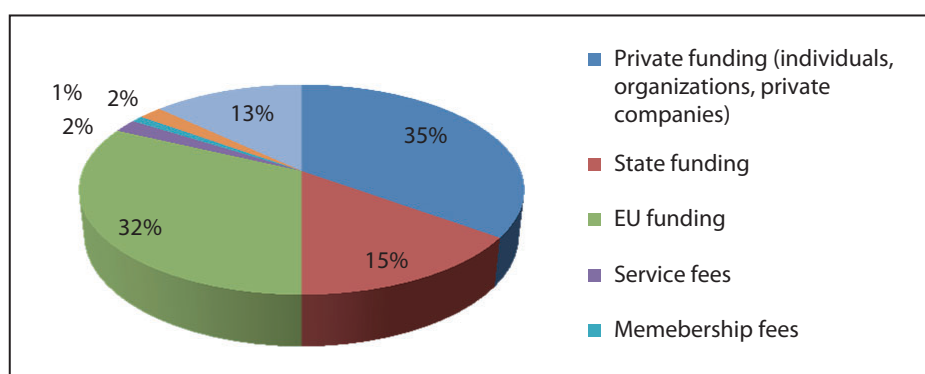
Among their chosen means of advocacy, media campaigns (9 responses), public awareness raising campaigns (9), scholarly publications (9), and presentations to governmental decision-makers (10) seem to be equally popular. As to the success of advocacy and lobbying, surveyed NGOs think the best indicators would be specific amendments of official ODA policies and the resetting of government priorities (5 responses respectively).

While scarcity of resources certainly limits this role, instead of realizing development projects themselves in recipient countries, many organizations provide aid through **grant-making**. In our survey sample, 12 out of 29 respondents reported that their organization has provided grants in the past five years. While for some NGOs this is a regular activity (once or twice a year typically), for others, particular needs or projects determine whether to employ grant-making, and thus there is no regularity to it.<sup>42</sup> According to our respondents' account, grantees are both individuals and organizations – many times it is local CSOs that benefit from financial aid; some organizations give grants to Hungarian CSOs as a form of capacity building, while others resort to this form when there is no other way to help poor families or individuals. As the frequency and the rationale for grant-making are so diverse, defining the portion of their budgets that was allocated to grants is not meaningful. It could, however, be telling of the marginality of this function that 11 out of 17 NGOs do not give out grants nor do they not wish to in the future.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.3. NGOs' financial and human resources

One of the most interesting findings was that the proportion of funding granted by individuals or private foundations to Hungarian NGOs forms the largest portion of their budget and relative to other resources, the share of private funding is significantly higher than for the Hungarian CSO sector in general.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 6.<sup>45</sup> What resources did your organization draw on to fund its development and humanitarian activities in the past five years?**



This distribution of resources is even more striking when we take into account that almost a third of the respondent organizations (9) do not collect private funds at all, while for seven of them, private funds have made up only between 1-25% of their budgets in the past five years. Yet, for another seven NGOs, 76-100% of their budget for development and humanitarian aid activities comes from this resource.

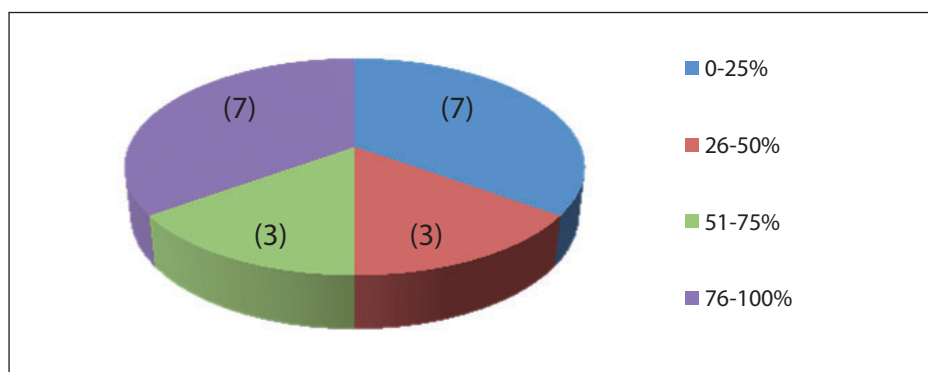
<sup>42</sup> One exception is the Hungarian Committee of UNICEF, where grant-making happens on continuous bases.

<sup>43</sup> Five were unsure about their plans and only one responded that making grants is among their future plans.

<sup>44</sup> In the latter, the proportion of private funding is under 20% (Péter Nizák, Open Society Institute, Task Force meeting).

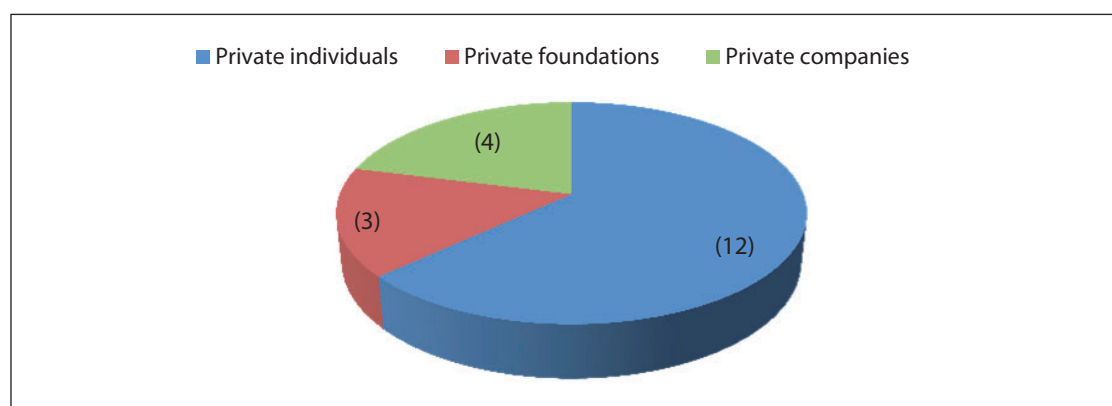
<sup>45</sup> Do to the technical limitations of the online survey tool, the specification of "Other" was not available for respondents under this question.

**Figure 7. Proportion of private funding in NGOs' past 5 years' budget (number of NGOs)**



Taking a closer look at who these private donors are, we see that the majority of the NGOs receives funding from private individuals, while less than a quarter of the 19 NGOs who collect private funds reported that their main private donors are companies or private foundations. The private foundations are rarely connected to Hungarian private companies or corporations. More typically they refer to grants made by philanthropic organizations or individuals in old member-states or other Western countries.<sup>46</sup> This underscores the claim articulated in other parts of our research, that cooperative relationships between NGOs and private companies are almost non-existent in Hungary.<sup>47</sup>

**Figure 8. If your organization fundraises from private sources, who are the main donors? (number of NGOs)**



Based on these responses, our data does not support the claim that the significantly high proportion of private funding is due to donations that faith-based humanitarian organizations raise from their respective religious communities. In fact, only one of the major faith-based organizations reported that all of their international development and humanitarian budget comes from private resources, among which the main donors are private individuals. For the other three, the proportion of private donations in their development budget remains below 50%, and for one of them, the main private donors consist of private companies and not individuals. Based on our survey data, private individuals are much more crucial for smaller faith-based organizations (e.g. Dorcas Aid Hungary and Third World Foundation), and for secular NGOs with a focus on the African continent (as well as for the Hungarian Committee of UNICEF).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Hoxtel, Preysing and Steets (2010); see further Bartha (2013).

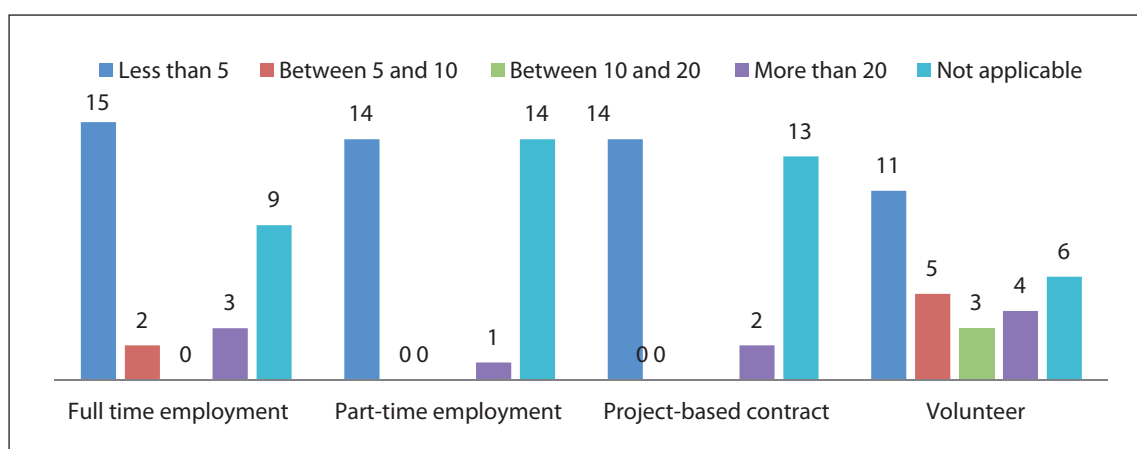
<sup>47</sup> An exception seems to be the African Hungarian Union (AHU), whose main supporter is its director, Sándor Balogh (AHU coordinator, email correspondence).

<sup>48</sup> In retrospect, one limitation of our survey is that it did not enquire about real sums of available funding, e.g. how much NGOs spend on development projects and what proportion of their resources cover overhead expenses, thus this data does not allow for a detailed analysis of Hungarian NGO's financial operation.

Among the most frequent methods of fundraising, respondents mention face to face encounters and personal contacts the most frequently (18 responses), but public fundraising events are also a popular tool (10). For those NGOs supporting orphanages and educational institutions, virtual adoption and/or student support programs are common schemes to collect private funding.<sup>49</sup> Raising funds in recipient countries is not very common. Only 5 out of our 29 respondents do so, while none of the others responded that they are planning to raise funds in developing countries in the future, 8 were undecided, and 16 were sure that they would not. For those who raise money or material support for their activities in recipient countries, such funds make up less than 25% of their overall budget for development and humanitarian aid activities.

In terms of available human resources, capacities are rather limited among Hungarian NGOs. While a large majority have full-time employees, their number is typically lower than 5, only in two cases does it go higher. Volunteers are relied upon by an equally high number (19) of organizations, and in five cases the whole staff is made up by volunteers. Where four organizations have more than 20 volunteers, in the majority of cases (11) their number remains below 5. Part-time employment and project-based contracts are deployed by around half of the organizations respectively, and it is only at UNICEF that their number exceeds 20. Otherwise both types of employment provide below 5 staff members of the respondent organizations.

**Figure 9. Which of the following employment relations do your organization's development and humanitarian activities operate with? (number of NGOs)**



## 4. Understanding the challenges

Having outlined the general profile of the sector, this section enumerates the main challenges that prevent it from becoming a more significant agent of Hungary ODA activities.

### 4.1. Lack of political support

One of the most evident challenges to greater NGO involvement – one that was unanimously articulated by our interviewees and survey respondents– is the lack of support from government and the political elite in general. The general perception of NGO representatives is, and has been throughout the past decade, that the issue of international development carries no weight within political circles. Correspondingly, according to several of our informants, politicians lack even a basic knowledge about the function and the operation

<sup>49</sup> The Baptist Aid also runs such programs in 11 countries (Romania, Haiti, India, Cambodia, Congo, Malawi, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Serbia, and Vietnam).

of ODA.<sup>50</sup> Resonating also with a point mentioned earlier – that international aid is hard to justify to voters in times of economic crisis – according to our respondents bilateral aid is among the “first victims” of budget cuts.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, as one of HAND’s presidency members put it: “[The ODA] sector is still struggling for its survival, just like twenty years ago”.<sup>52</sup> Making the already difficult situation worse, according to a leading development expert participating in our Task Force meeting, the current political atmosphere in Hungary does not favor forms of civic action pursued by NGOs in general.<sup>53</sup>

Despite an unsupportive political context, however, in terms of dedication we have to distinguish between the political elite or government institutions in general, and the MFA’s Department of International Development and Humanitarian Aid. In reference to the latter, and especially with regards to the most recent past, interviewees recognize an increasing openness towards the civil sector, manifesting mostly in the growing number of fora where NGOs can articulate their concerns and share their expertise.<sup>54</sup> Thus, to qualify our diagnosis, the ODA sector’s struggle for survival applies to the responsible MFA department as well.<sup>55</sup> Hence respondents’ argued that many of the efforts of the International Development and Humanitarian Aid Department are thwarted by an unfavorable operational context where politicians and other MFA agencies do not recognize ODA as a legitimate means of foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> Illustrating this state of affairs is the fact that Hungary still does not have an official ODA strategy or a basic law that could integrate the topic into the framework of foreign policymaking.<sup>57</sup> However, in December 2012 the Hungarian Parliament’s Foreign Policy Committee finally adopted a resolution that sets a deadline for the formulation of a development strategy.<sup>58</sup> Whether that will be accompanied with an increase in the funds available for NGOs’ involvement in ODA activities is, of course, difficult to predict.

## 4.2. Lack of public awareness

A second commonly cited obstacle to greater involvement in Hungary’s international development activities is the absence of popular interest in and support for NGO activities. As discussed above, this condition is generally characteristic of the post-socialist region. NGO representatives stressed the lingering sense of aid dependency and the impact of the current economic and financial crisis undermined their efforts to sensitize the public about poverty abroad. While representatives of humanitarian organizations report successful fundraising campaigns to support victims of natural or man-made disasters (e.g. the 2010 earthquake in Haiti or the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami), according to our respondents it is much more difficult to collect donations for development projects.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> One of our Task Force participants recounted that following a speech she gave in the European Parliament as then board member of CONCORD, none of the politicians that came up to her to discuss the topic was Hungarian. As a member of the NGO delegate to the Hungarian Parliament’s Committee of Foreign Affairs committee added, at a recent meeting, MPs demonstrated a complete lack of information about ODA and how it works (Task Force meeting).

<sup>51</sup> Terre des Hommes representative, Skype interview . On a related note, the MFA’s 2012 call for CSO’s participation in Official Development Assistance was only published in February 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Research notes, 28 August 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Task Force meeting.

<sup>54</sup> HAND interview. According to another interviewee, this increasing openness is valid also in relation to NGOs and experts focusing their work on Africa (AHU coordinator, email correspondence).

<sup>55</sup> Focus Group meeting.

<sup>56</sup> According to a Task Force participant this neglect is further sustained by the fact that Hungarian ODA never had “a face”, a personality that could raise the sector’s legitimacy. In addition, as in many other countries, there is a very high turnover in the NEFE Department’s staff.

<sup>57</sup> See also Leiszen (2013).

<sup>58</sup> See HAND (2012c). [Update: since the drafting of this report, on March 4th, 2013, the Resolution has been adopted by the Hungarian Parliament.]

<sup>59</sup> In response to a related question about the problem of resource drivenness, the coordinator of Dorcas Aid Hungary recounted a story about their 1% tax pledge campaign for a water provision project in an Ethiopian village. At one of their campaign events, a member of the audience asked if the money s/he donates would benefit “these black children”. Receiving an affirmative answer s/he said “Then I’ll give it to Loki [the local football team] instead!” While this campaign turned out to be unsuccessful, previous campaigns in support of solitary elderly people in Transylvania were much better supported.

Combined with low state funding for development projects,<sup>60</sup> the lack of public awareness in Hungary directly materializes in the scarcity of financial resources. In light of this, it is interesting that only 16 from 29 respondents thought that the aim of awareness raising was “very important” (while 12 thought it was rather important). This attitude could reflect previously mentioned experiences with awareness raising campaigns such as high costs and moderate returns. In addition, many believe less in short term awareness raising campaigns and more in long term investment into transforming the way people think about Hungary’s place in the world. Thus, global education, in providing the framework for opening up young citizens towards concerns of people in different parts of the world, seems to be a more attractive route to take.<sup>61</sup> Yet, as lack of interests translates into NGOs’ financial constraints, in the short term it might be compensated by more inventive fundraising mechanisms – something that many organizations lack the capacity for at present.<sup>62</sup>

### 4.3. Unequal relations with “Old” donors’ NGOs

A significant challenge that emerges mostly on the European level is the gap between old and new member-states’ NGOs’ capacities and possibilities. While Hungarian NGOs recognize that they are several years, or even decades, behind Western development organizations in terms of experience and achievement, when interacting or cooperating with their counterparts in old member-states, they often find that this gap is exacerbated by the latter’s patronizing attitude. Although several large humanitarian organizations have recurring partnerships with Western NGOs or development agencies (e.g. the Hungarian Interchurch Aid regularly cooperates with the DanChurchAid),<sup>63</sup> our respondents often believe that they are not being dealt with on an equal basis when it comes to planning or executing joint projects.<sup>64</sup>

While such perceptions can reinforce existing inequalities, these differences have certainly come to be sharper during the recent economic downturn. With ODA budgets curtailed in almost all member-states, according to many respondents, competition for EU resources palpably intensified.<sup>65</sup> Under these circumstances, the weaker position of NGOs from new donor states is likely to increase. Most prominently, this applies to the difficulties of generating own funds as required by EuropeAid tenders.<sup>66</sup> As our respondent from Terre des Hommes – speaking also as the leader of a CONCORD Task Force – notes, NGOs from old member states’ are no longer receptive to the positive discrimination of new donors; they believe the distinction between old and new is no longer valid and the same conditions should apply to all.<sup>67</sup> The challenge of new member-states’ NGOs’ articulating a firm stance countering this one already takes us to the last point of this section.

### 4.4. Difficulties of supranational interest representation

The final challenge to be addressed is the lack of financial and human resources. Material differences and attitudinal patterns still structure the relations between old and new member-states’ NGOs, and while such inequalities could be countered by successful interest representation within European platform organizations, most Hungarian organizations lack the resources to be actively present in such *fora*. Just like with EU-funding,

<sup>60</sup> The amount of ODA-funding that CSOs can apply for through the yearly calls of the MFA varies between HUF 120 and 200 million (cc. EUR 400 000 and 667 000). Individual organizations can usually apply for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 20 million Forints (cc. EUR 17 000 and 67 000). See also Leiszen (2013).

<sup>61</sup> E. g. AHU coordinator, email correspondence;; Dorcas Aid Hungary coordinator, email correspondence.

<sup>62</sup> Terre des Hommes representative, Skype interview.

<sup>63</sup> Focus Group meeting.

<sup>64</sup> According to a Baptist Aid coordinator, during cooperative projects, the majority of her energies is wasted on trying to convince Western partners that “this is not the Netherlands”. What she finds puzzling is that these NGOs have been present in the developing world for decades, they cannot seem to manage differences within Europe; neither can they accept that although with a shorter history behind their back, this region’s NGOs also have achievements (Task Force meeting).

<sup>65</sup> Task Force meeting.

<sup>66</sup> In recent years a certain portion of MFA funds allocated to CSOs is earmarked for covering the requirement of own contribution within EuropeAid tenders.

<sup>67</sup> Terres des Hommes representative, Skype interview. Contributing to the mentioned overrepresentation of awareness raising activities, with a lower percentage of own funds required of NGOs from new member-states, cooperation between old and new is facilitated by EuropeAid applications in this area.



the key to successful interest articulation seems to be constant presence in Brussels,<sup>68</sup> or, to be able to closely follow the activities of platforms such as CONCORD. As such are generally not available to Hungarian NGOs, they are routinely underrepresented in both the expert groups and the leadership.<sup>69</sup> Due to increased competition for funding, organizations from old member-states are not so interested in dismantling the status quo which can impede new member-states' organizations' lobbying for application schemes that could compensate for their deficient resources.<sup>70</sup> However, beyond the financial implications, it also obstructs the promotion of practices and ideas that could provide viable alternatives to a predominantly Western framework of civil society participation in international development.<sup>71</sup>

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1. Increasing the political profile of ODA through policy coherence**

Although deploying development aid to promote foreign policy is not an ethically unquestionable practice, at the current state of Hungary's ODA activities, framing it as such could arguably benefit the area. Creating coherence between the country's foreign policy and foreign trade strategies, and harmonizing the forthcoming ODA strategy would render development aid more visible and thereby garner greater support among politicians. Heeding a frequent plea from NGOs and academic experts, greater coherence between these strategies might also decrease the number of initiatives and recipient countries, leading to a more concentrated and efficient funding schemes (see e.g. Hodosi 2012). While HAND representatives recount recent positive experiences with winning individual politicians for the issue of development through organizing field trips,<sup>72</sup> at this point in time, strengthening ODA's foreign policy aspect might be more sustainable an approach.

### **5.2. Increasing public support for international development activities**

The severely low level of public support for international development needs to be addressed more holistically than via costly and short-term sensitizing campaigns. As described above, the Hungarian NGO sector possesses sufficient capacities to facilitate the integration of global education programs into curricula at different levels of public education. In addition, catering for increasing interest,<sup>73</sup> greater awareness could be fostered through introducing development and humanitarian aid degree programs into higher education. In turn, such programs would gradually develop NGOs' and governmental institutions' capacities by providing qualified workforce.<sup>74</sup>

### **5.3. Leveling the relationship between NGOs in old and new member-states**

As suggested above, the intensifying competition for EU-resources among development organizations of both old and new donor-states contributes to sustaining the inequality between the two. On the one hand, further capacity building programs (such as the ones Trialog has been providing since 2000) and incentives for cooperation between experienced Western NGOs and those of the EU12 (such as the lower own funding requirement applied for cooperation in awareness raising projects) should be put into place. On the other hand, for such measures to gain greater legitimacy, new member states' NGOs need to be equipped with the capacities and resources to be active and able to represent their interests in EU-level NGO platforms

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<sup>68</sup> Focus Group meeting.

<sup>69</sup> This state of affairs was underlined by an international aid coordinator of Baptist Aid. It was, however, qualified by former HAND-coordinator and NGO expert Réka Balogh: during the "high point" of HAND's operation, 7-8 members were regularly attending CONCORD Work Group meetings, and other new member states' national platforms are even more active.

<sup>70</sup> Terre des Hommes representative.

<sup>71</sup> For example, as Baptist Aid's representative argued, NGOs in NMS can realize development and humanitarian aid projects much more cost efficiently, simply because, among other conditioning factors, they are not accustomed to high rates of staff remuneration (Task Force meeting).

<sup>72</sup> HAND representative interview; Focus Group meeting.

<sup>73</sup> Task Force meeting.

<sup>74</sup> AHU coordinator, email correspondence.

and related institutions. Among others, financial means to support operational expenses of new donor's organizations should be provided by government and/or EU-institutions.

Another option that emerged throughout this research was the institutionalization of a strong framework of cooperation between development actors of this region, building on the positive experiences of the Visegrad Four partnership. While such cooperation already exists among NGOs of this region,<sup>75</sup> our respondents agreed that it could be strengthened by the involvement of governmental agencies and the private sector. Thus, development actors of the Central-East European region would form an entity with the potential to mutually strengthen the capacities of countries with very similar ODA profiles, at the same time rendering them more visible as donors.<sup>76</sup>

#### **5.4. Fostering cooperation with the private sector**

Although the economic and financial crisis clearly has a negative impact on Hungarian private companies, encouraging cooperation with the NGO sector can be mutually beneficial.<sup>77</sup> Through partnership, NGOs would gain access to financial resources, while private companies could expand their activities to new markets. In order to enable this interaction, actors – including governmental agencies – should create possibilities for discussion, so as business actors' lack of information about international development, as well as the civil sector's possible suspicions about the interest-driven approach of private companies can be addressed.

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<sup>75</sup> See primarily the V4Aid project. The Hungarian participant of the cooperation is DemNet.

<sup>76</sup> Such a regional entity could lobby for receiving a portion of all member-states' contributions towards the European Development Funds, thus gaining more resources for bilateral as opposed to multilateral aid, and hence larger control over the allocation of resources.

<sup>77</sup> See further Bartha (2013).

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# LATVIA

## Introduction

Activity by Latvian civil society organizations (CSOs) has been increasing since 2004 when Latvia joined the EU, the country started planning development cooperation activities<sup>1</sup> and the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS) was established.<sup>2</sup>

LAPAS' goal is to ensure a favourable environment for Latvian CSOs active in the field of development cooperation on a national or international level. LAPAS cooperates closely with the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the responsible committees in the national parliament in shaping Latvian development cooperation policy. One of the issues that LAPAS has been advocating is a sustainable increase of national funding for bilateral development cooperation activities – having clear priorities and a gradual but moderate increase in official development assistance (ODA) so that institutions and other stakeholders can acquire expertise and use funding more efficiently.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Development cooperation policy guidelines for 2011- 2015, available (in Latvian) at <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/AttistibasSadarbiba/asppamtnostadnes.pdf> (last visited on 20 January 2013)

<sup>2</sup> LAPAS currently has 30 members and is a member of CONCORD, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development. The organization represents the interests of its members in national and international decision-making on development cooperation; engages in awareness raising activities in Latvia; enhances exchange of experience between Latvian NGOs and NGOs in transition and developing countries; enhances the involvement of Latvia's NGOs in national and international initiatives; provides information on fundraising opportunities; enhances development of NGOs in other (transition and developing) countries.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Interview with LAPAS director Mara Simane in August 2007 from the Latvian country report for "The Challenge of the EU Development Co-operation Policy for New Member States", Policy Association for an Open Society, 2007 <http://www.providus.lv/public/27142.html>

In 2005 the Latvian government made commitments to increase ODA to 0.1% of GNP in 2010, with the biggest increase for planned bilateral ODA. However, currently Latvia is lagging behind its commitments, with ODA reaching only 0.06% of GNP.<sup>4</sup> Approximately 80-90% of Latvia's official development aid is in the form of payments to international organizations.

Until 2008 the responsible ministry – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – conducted open calls for project proposals where CSOs could also take part. But the economic crisis put an end to these efforts as the government allocated only 9000 LVL (12 000 Euro) for planned bilateral development cooperation projects in 2009, a mere 807 LVL (1150 Euro) in 2010 and 269 LVL (380 Euro) in 2011. In 2012 the government allocated 50 269 LVL (71 000 Euro) and the same amount has been secured in 2013.<sup>5</sup>

In the period 2004-2010 most of Latvia's development cooperation activities were conducted in the following priority countries: Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and Afghanistan. Work focused on enhancing the market economy, sustainable development, environment and education.<sup>6</sup>

LAPAS has also been recommending to the Latvian government to include development cooperation among the priorities of Latvia's EU presidency in 2015, when the UN Millennium Goals expire and new commitments will have to be worked out. Having the foresight to see this as an opportunity, LAPAS and several of its members campaigned to establish 2015 as the European Year for Development Cooperation. This has been supported by the European Parliament and the EU Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs.<sup>7</sup>

## 1. Analysis of civil society role as development actor. Good practices

This brief analyses the role of Latvian civil society as development actors based on data acquired via a survey, interviews and a focus group.<sup>8</sup>

Among the organizations surveyed only 3 specifically focus on development cooperation: the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation, Seiba – Support for Children in Guatemala – which supports families and schoolchildren – and Development Bulb which is involved in development education and evaluation of development education projects. All have been established since 2004, when Latvia began work on development cooperation. Other organizations (mostly established after Latvia regained independence) work on development cooperation issues among other activities. For example, the European Movement in Latvia focuses on improving representation of Latvia's interests in the EU, fostering European awareness in Latvia and supporting civil society in Latvia and other countries. Within these domains the organization takes part in decision-making on development cooperation issues and provides information on the situation in developing countries (focusing on EU neighbours).

Most of the CSOs surveyed (75%) provide services. Among them 10 organizations manage development projects, seven recruit volunteers, but none offer technical support for disaster relief and/ or reconstruction. The lack of involvement in disaster relief or reconstruction could be explained by the specific expertise available in Latvian CSOs (transition and European integration experience) and available funding for activities in priority countries. The same factors explain the list of countries where CSOs have worked in the past 5 years (see graph below).

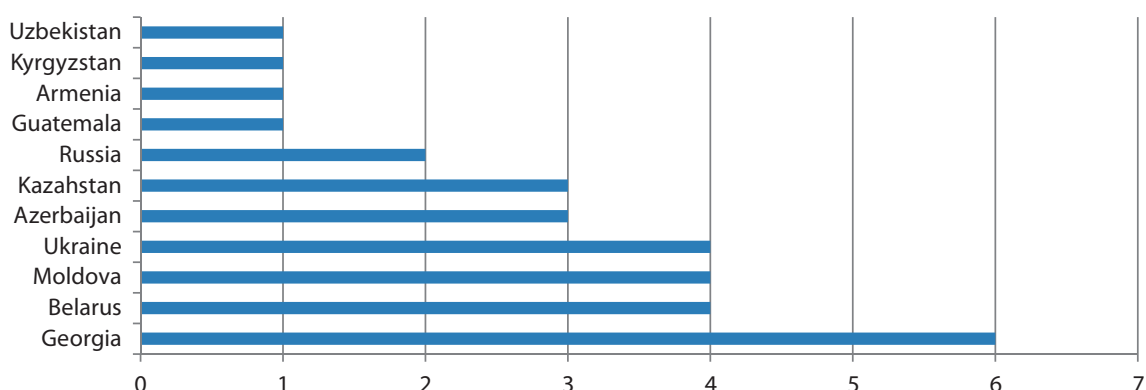
<sup>4</sup> Development cooperation policy guidelines for 2011- 2015, available (in Latvian) at <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/AttistibasSadarbiba/asppamtnostadnes.pdf> (last visited on 20 January 2013)

<sup>5</sup> Annual report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the work and planned activities in the field of foreign and EU policies, 2012 [http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/Arpolitikas\\_zinojuma\\_projekts.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/Arpolitikas_zinojuma_projekts.pdf) (last visited on 20 January 2013)

<sup>6</sup> Development cooperation policy guidelines for 2011- 2015, available (in Latvian) at <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/AttistibasSadarbiba/asppamtnostadnes.pdf> (last visited on 20 January 2013)

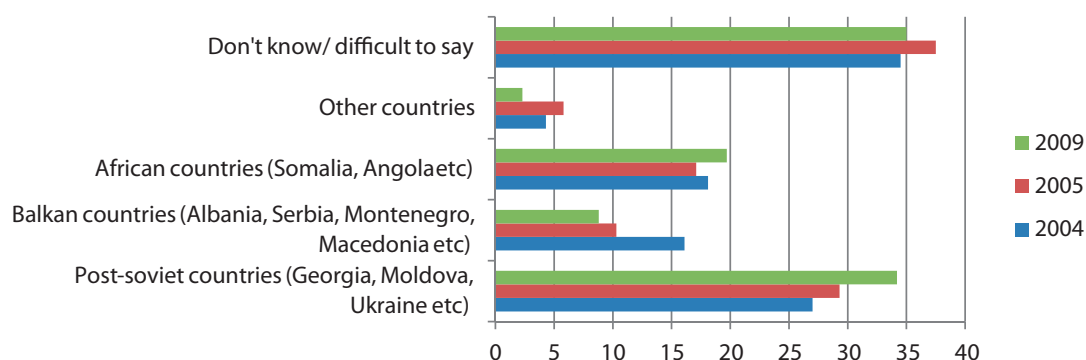
<sup>7</sup> In October 2012 the European Parliament voted in favour of the idea. For more information, please see the CONCORD website.

<sup>8</sup> The research was conducted between October 2012 and January 2013. The survey gathered 19 responses (10 linked to LAPAS either as members or representing LAPAS). Interviews were conducted with 6 NGOs (5 of them LAPAS members), and the focus group involved 4 NGOs (2 of these linked to LAPAS). For more detailed information, please see the annex.



The list of countries where Latvian CSOs mostly work correlates to public opinion<sup>9</sup> on countries that should be provided most help (see graph below), as well as priority countries of Latvian development cooperation policy. But most CSOs interviewed said that official policy had a limited impact on their choice to work in these countries, although existing funding (from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the network of embassies was valued as a resource to enhance cooperation and also raise awareness on issues such as gender equality. Existing contacts and long-term cooperation, a common language (knowledge of Russian), ease of travel (visa free regime with Georgia and Moldova), as well as the specific experience of Latvian CSOs being appreciated in these countries were considered more important. These criteria also create a comparative advantage for Latvian CSOs to succeed in international calls for proposals to work in Eastern Partnership countries. Very few (if any) Latvian NGOs can prove sufficient experience with African or Latin American countries. As a member of the focus group said, “We can’t share experience we don’t have like relief after earthquakes, but we can share our experience with democracy building and European integration”. But interviewees said, “We have a sense of the problems and possible solutions” and “Our competence is in demand” in these countries. For example, Green Liberty shared its experience from Latvia on environmental and energy issues with colleagues in Ukraine and Belarus, while the Workshop of Solutions worked on education projects in Moldova, as it has had contacts there country since the 1990s. In contrast, the Latvian Portage Association was invited to work in Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, demonstrating the needs of these countries to develop pre-school training and an educational system for children with arrested development.

### To which countries would you support providing most help? Public opinion poll results



Source: SKDS polls

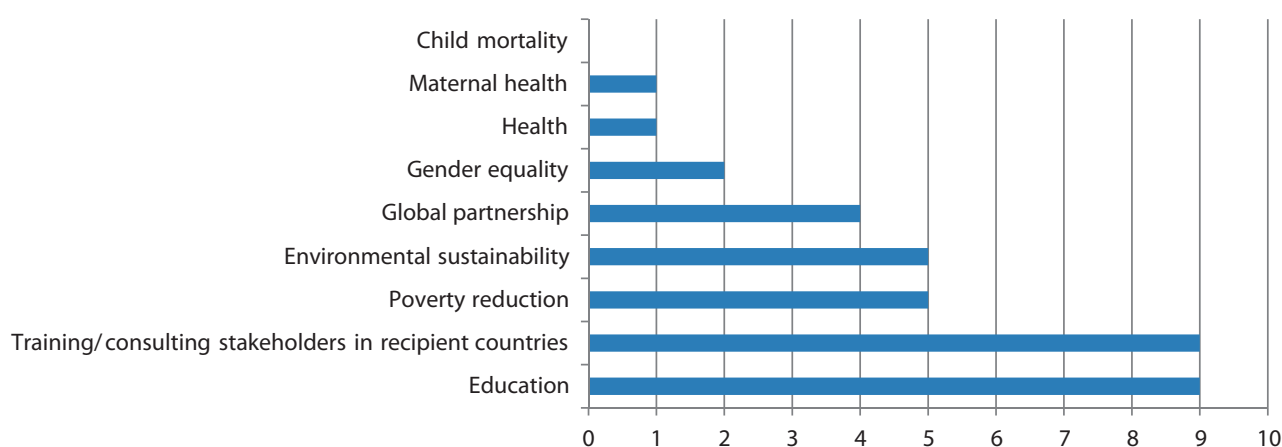
<sup>9</sup> “Attitudes towards development cooperation. Latvian public opinion survey” („Attieksme pret attīstības sadarbību. Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja”), February 2009, SKDS [http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/petijumi/sadarbiba\\_02\\_2009.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/petijumi/sadarbiba_02_2009.pdf)



CSOs mostly work with education, as well as consulting stakeholders in recipient countries (see graph below). This could be explained by the focus of CSOs. Most of them work on development education - not only education projects in recipient countries but also awareness-raising on development issues in Latvia. For example, Development Bulb worked on improving computer literacy in Georgian municipalities or ways to modernize and make Georgian universities more accessible to students. But the Latvian Adult Education Association trained teachers in Latvia so that Latvian children could learn about different countries and problems, present their findings and discuss development issues with pupils from other schools via video conference calls.<sup>10</sup>

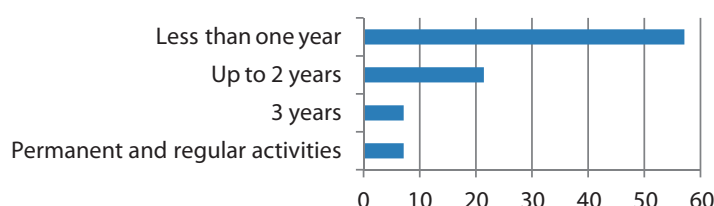
Another factor illustrating the focus of Latvian CSOs on education, consultation and awareness raising about development cooperation (work that can be conducted in Latvia, instead of actual work in developing countries) is the 2012 call for proposals administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to let organizations apply for co-funding for international projects: only one application focused on development cooperation.

### Fields of development projects (multiple answers possible)



Most CSOs worked on projects lasting up to one year (see graph below). At the same time a few CSOs emphasized that they work on development cooperation on a permanent basis, without specific projects or initiatives but in the form of voluntary work or participation in meetings; for example, trade union representatives from all EU countries and some African countries meet in Brussels or visit Azerbaijan and Moldova to share the experience of social dialogue, or CSOs consult their colleagues in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan on how to achieve favourable conditions for non-governmental organizations. Most CSOs cooperated with colleagues in recipient countries, local authorities and international relief agencies.

### If NGOs manage development projects, average length of projects is (%):



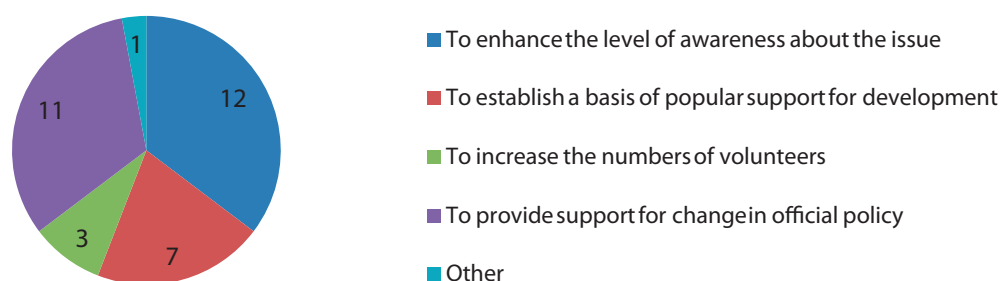
<sup>10</sup> The project was conducted in 2009-2010, involving approximately 150 persons and was co-financed by the European Commission. This year the organization will work on integrating development issues in school programmes (the project involves training teachers and creating methodological materials on development issues). The project involves a partner from the United Kingdom and is co-financed by the European Commission.

The Latvian Portage Association could be an example of effective and sustainable development cooperation as it works in a country until a local NGO is able to maintain the services on its own. "We prepare experts who work with children with mental disabilities. We help to establish a national association to coordinate work in the country. We also help them in their work with state and municipal institutions to lobby for support of our programme and ensure its sustainability. In principle, we work approximately 2-3 years in each country, resulting in certification of experts who are then able to continue their work without our involvement."

## Raising awareness and influencing policy

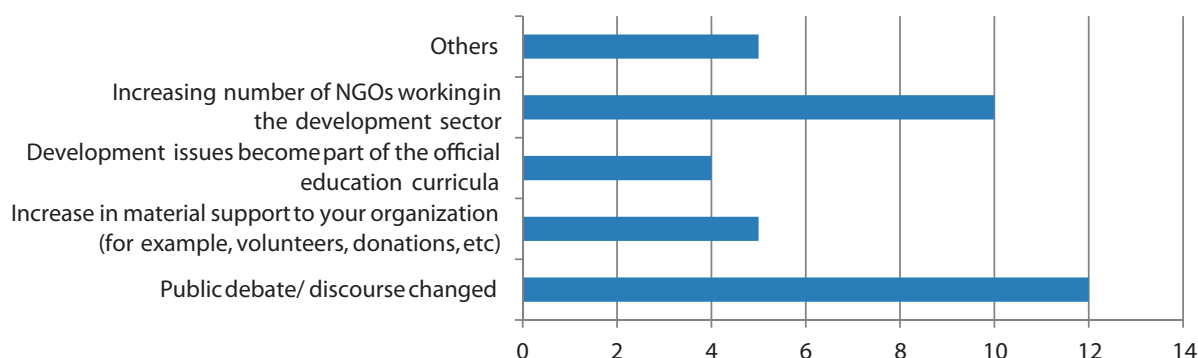
Most CSOs are active in raising awareness on development issues, emphasizing both general and more specific goals as the main reasons for this work (see graph below). Most CSOs (11 out of 19) focus on the national level, providing occasional ad hoc contributions, organizing public events and engaging with the media, with government or local officials and educators as the top target audiences. A good example for occasional contributions is the work of Green Liberty promoting fair trade via Riga food fair or publications when they have sufficient funding or human resources in the form of voluntary work, as they cannot include fair trade among their permanent long-term activities. CSOs also regularly provide the media with contacts to people in Georgia or Kyrgyzstan, "as the group of people who are regularly going to these countries and know their environment is quite limited".

### What is the main goal of your public awareness work? (multiple answers possible)



When asked how CSOs saw that their work had made an impact, most of them looked at the quality of public debate or change of public discourse. Many also thought that the increasing number of NGOs working in the sector was an important measure.

### By what measure would you rate the success or impact of your work? (multiple answers possible)



CSOs also mostly work on an ad hoc and case by case basis when influencing public policy on development issues, targeting national audiences. The main goal of this work is to help uphold international principles of development cooperation on a national or EU level, as well as bringing attention to the negative impact of national or international public policies on development and the need for reform. The following examples were provided by CSOs:

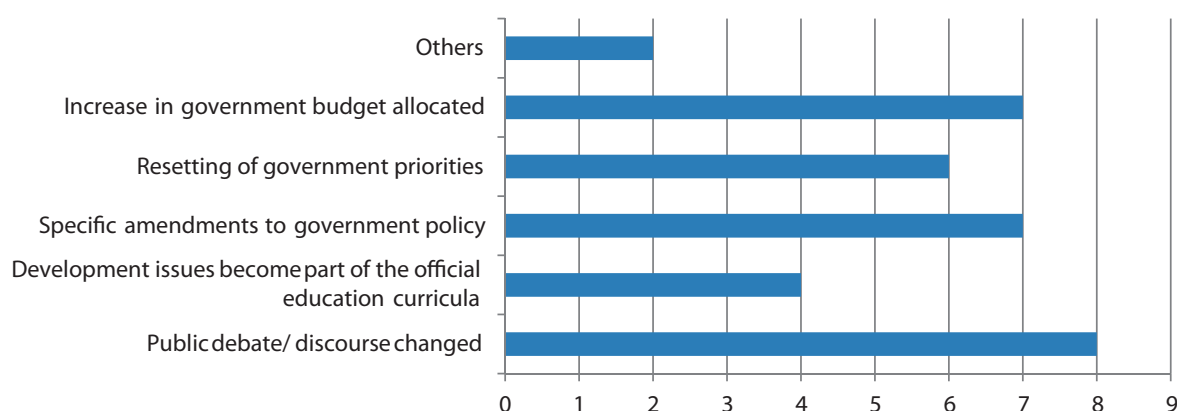
- CSOs pointed to the negative consequences of EU agricultural subsidies or international trade conditions on opportunities for farmers in developing countries operating without government support.
- Workshop of Solutions helped students in Moldova to start a dialogue with Moldovan decision-makers and also influenced immigration regulation in Latvia increasing the number of persons that a foreign student from a developing country is allowed to invite to his graduation party at a Latvian university.
- The Women's NGO Cooperation Network in Latvia contributed towards ensuring that gender equality principles are included not only in policy declarations, but also in action plans, financial programmes, and calls for proposals on both a Latvian and a EU level.

CSOs also admitted that due to lack of national funding for bilateral development cooperation there was also a lack of specific policies to influence other than the need to increase funding. However, CSOs not only cooperate with sectoral ministries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: several CSOs are also members of the Consultative Council on development cooperation issues established in 2003.<sup>11</sup> One of the CSOs surveyed is also actively involved in UN Economic and Social Council events, e.g. discussions on the need to set post-Millennium Development Goals.

In their policy work CSOs mostly cooperate in alliance with other NGOs operating in this field – either on a national or international level – and organize public awareness raising events targeting young people, professional associations and government officials as their main supporters in advocating policy changes. The importance of youth as a target group can be explained by the impact of education, exchange and international volunteer programmes, as well as use of new technologies that help young people become more aware of global issues.

The graph below shows that changing public debates, specific changes to government policy as well as increased budget allocated to development issues are the main criteria used by CSOs to evaluate the results of their work. Asked to assess their work on a scale from one to five (where 1 is the best grade), 7 out of 15 CSOs active in policy work said they deserved the best grade. At the same time, a few CSOs were highly critical of their work results (assessing their work with the worst grade).

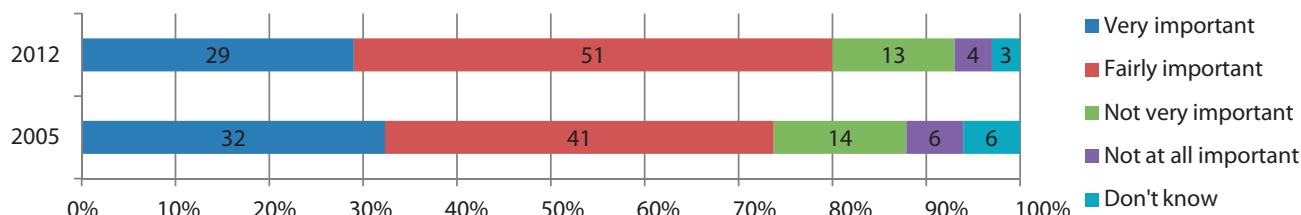
#### By what measure would you rate the success or the impact of your work? (multiple answers possible)



<sup>11</sup> Currently the council involves representatives from the following non-governmental institutions: LAPAS, the Latvian Employers' Confederation, the Latvian Free Trade Union Confederation, as well as the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The full list of current members of the council is available here (in Latvian) <http://www.am.gov.lv/kp%20personalsastavs%202012.pdf> (last visited on 20 January 2013).

Although no interviewees specifically pointed to public opinion data as their source of evidence that their work has a positive impact, increasing understanding about the importance of development cooperation policy is visible in Eurobarometer data (see the graph below).<sup>12</sup>

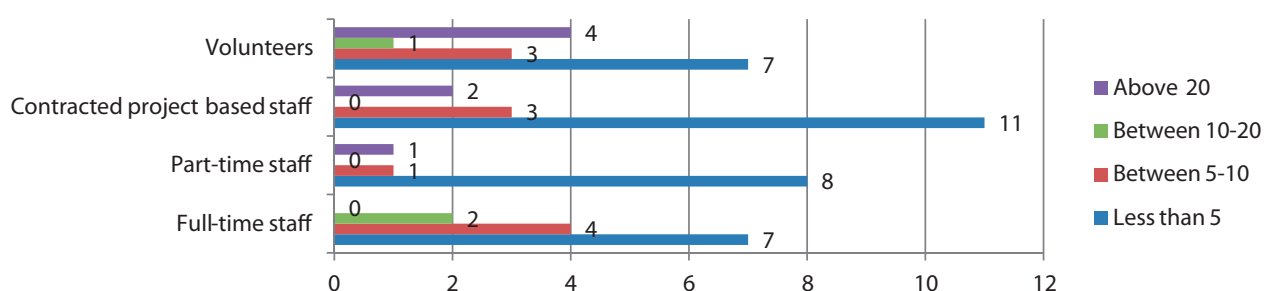
**In your opinion, is it very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important to help people in developing countries? Data for Latvia in 2005 and 2012**



## Personnel and funding

Out of the 19 organizations surveyed only 13 have full-time staff and 10 organizations have part-time staff. At the same time 16 organizations have contracted project-based staff, and volunteers are engaged in 15 organizations. Reliance on project-based and voluntary work is also evident from the graph below. While none of the organizations surveyed have more than 20 full-time staff, four engage more than 20 volunteers.

**How many people does your organization employ in each group?**



Volunteers are engaged in all kinds of activities ranging from fundraising, advocacy work or informing the public to providing services, training, mentoring and counselling. For example, Workshop of Solutions involved Latvian students in assessing the needs of students in Moldova and then engaged them as volunteers to help each other. Interviews revealed that in some cases volunteering also meant provision in kind of knowledge and time, adding visibility to an initiative, providing a venue for meetings, contacts to donors, or covering such costs as international work calls from private phones. Five CSOs also engage volunteers in developing countries.

In practice, reliance on volunteers, part-time employed or project-based staff means that CSOs' abilities to participate in policy work or manage extensive project applications are limited, e.g. people cannot take time off from their permanent jobs in order to participate in meetings with state institutions, manage to comment on official documents or put together detailed fundraising proposals.

Out of the 19 organizations surveyed, only 14 provided detailed data on their funding sources. This information leads to the following conclusions:

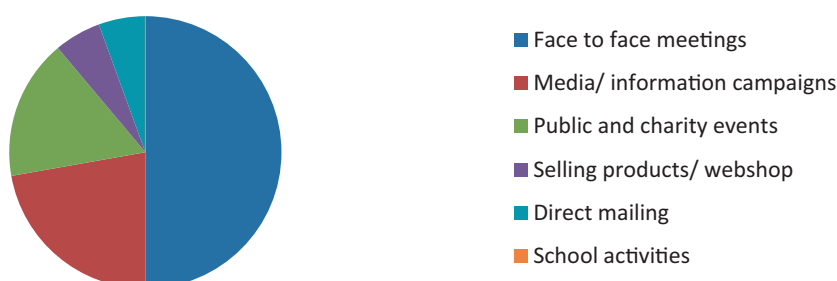
<sup>12</sup> Special Eurobarometer 392 "Europeans and development aid", October 2012 (fieldwork conducted in June 2012). [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_392\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_392_en.pdf)

- CSOs rely on government or EU grants: out of the 11 organizations that use this source of funding 7 organizations said the proportion of grants in their budget exceeded 75%.
- For most CSOs payment for services or membership fees covers up to 25% of their budget (6 out of the 8 organizations that use payment for services; all 8 CSOs use membership fees).
- Only 2 organizations rely mainly on private (individual or group) donations (1 of them has no other income), while for most organizations this source of funding covers less than 25% of their expenses.
- Only 2 CSOs give grants to others, with one organization using more than 50% of its funds to support individuals (school children so that they can attend school). But both organizations foresee grant giving as increasing significantly in the near future.

Seiba – Support for Children in Guatemala – campaigns to attract private donations financing 100% of its activities: laying hens for families and providing study scholarships for children (grants to families). For example, 47 Guatemalan families received 92 laying hens in 2009, and 104 families received 208 hens in 2008.<sup>13</sup>

Asked to identify the most important methods used to attract private funding (from individuals, groups or private companies), 75% of the CSOs surveyed said they rely on face to face meetings (see graph below). This is also the main method for the 5 organizations that fundraise in the countries they work in (e.g. Georgia). Most organizations see their good public image or reputation as a strong point in fundraising (75% of the CSOs surveyed agreed with this statement), but being a strong partner for other stakeholders was also important (according to 60% of CSOs surveyed). At the same time only one fifth of those surveyed said that a large volunteer base was important to attract private donations. A few organizations also mentioned the high quality of their work, a qualified team, a valuable programme and information sources on the non-governmental sector as other important aspects.

**Methods used to fundraise (multiple answers possible)**



## 2. Civil society's challenges when implementing development aid project

CSOs identified two main challenges that they face in their development cooperation work - insufficient finances and insufficient capacity of CSOs, as well as low awareness about development cooperation among state institutions and the general public.

Most organizations involved in the research agreed that CSOs lack financial support from the state or the private sector. This was not only a serious obstacle to expanding their work on development cooperation issues, but also limited their abilities to use existing opportunities. CSOs have had to refuse work on large international projects due to inability to secure local co-funding or to pre-finance their activities before they receive reimbursement for their work. For example, the Women's NGO Cooperation network in Latvia won

<sup>13</sup> For more information, please see the website of the organization at <http://seiba.wordpress.com/en/>

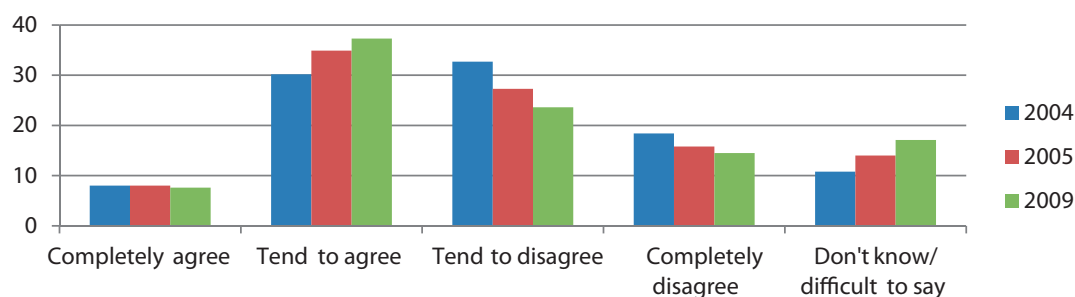
an international call for proposals together with their German partners to enhance women entrepreneurs' capacity in Belarus, but they could not proceed with their work due to lack of co-funding. Several CSOs also had problems securing membership fees to their international organizations (such as Eurochild or the European Disability forum) which meant that their ability to be active in these structures was limited (no voting rights), and it also meant that they would not be able to take part in international projects managed by these organizations.

Although this aspect was mentioned less frequently, a few CSOs also said organizations lacked capacity in the shape of human resources to manage work and fundraising, educate themselves on development issues and devote more time to development cooperation work, including building partnerships with organizations from other countries. Some CSOs also said that weak capacity of organizations in developing countries was affecting their work, for example, when partners do not keep documentation for accounting.

A specific capacity issue is that LAPAS is one of the very few organizations involved in CONCORD that are not financially supported by the Ministry of Foreign affairs. Moreover, LAPAS competes with its member organizations for funding from the ministry. This lack of support for LAPAS results in weaker ability of LAPAS to support its member organizations, which has been a lower priority than LAPAS' international work and lobbying in Latvia.

Lack of funding for development cooperation is closely linked to the second main challenge - low awareness about development cooperation among state institutions and the general public. As interviewees said, "People think that development cooperation is absolutely the last issue for Latvia to invest in, as people believe that the situation in Latvia itself is so difficult" and "People think that Latvia is the poorest country in the world, and that the rest of the world should help us". This is also evident in public opinion polls (see graph below).

#### **To what extent do you agree with the statement that Latvia should help developing countries with lower income levels?**



Source: SKDS polls

Asked to define - without pre-set answers - why Latvia should help developing countries, respondents mentioned moral, human and ethical duty, and solidarity between countries (approximately 20% of those who support Latvia's development cooperation policy mentioned these aspects). Among reasons why Latvia should not help developing countries respondents said that Latvia is a poor country that still requires the help of others, and that Latvia should first take care of its own people (65% of those who oppose Latvia's development cooperation policy mentioned these aspects).<sup>14</sup>

Although public opinion data show that awareness and support for development cooperation is slightly increasing, CSOs felt that it is still insufficient. One interviewee gave an example on how low awareness about development cooperation and inability to look at issues in a more global context resulted in waste of

<sup>14</sup> "Attitudes towards development cooperation. Latvian public opinion survey" („Attieksme pret attīstības sadarbību. Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja”), February 2009, SKDS [http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/petijumi/sadarbiba\\_02\\_2009.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/petijumi/sadarbiba_02_2009.pdf)



resources invested in development education: “In a project that focused on global education in schools one of the teachers told us that the reason why she was satisfied with her training was that she could now explain to Latvian girls why they should not marry Muslim men – as they all have 100 wives.” CSOs also remembered a specific occasion when a parliamentarian from the Foreign Affairs Committee had wondered why Latvia should invest in helping other countries when it could invest the money in the Latvian countryside.

CSOs also felt that there was a misunderstanding on what development cooperation really means. As one CSO said, it is not “informative friendship or provision of information [to people in developing countries] of our knowledge and skills”. Development cooperation means being involved in long-term projects where both sides learn something from each other, instead of one side sharing its experience and the other learning.

One interviewee said: “On the background of developing countries we start to see our achievements and the value of our knowledge, and we can increase our self-esteem. We now think that compared to ‘old’ Europe we are absolute orphans that no one cares about. But there are many countries in the world that are very interested in the unique experience that we have acquired since the 1990s. When we work with other countries, we stop believing that we are so unfortunate. We can see that other countries are taking over Latvia’s experience, for example, in Azerbaijan in the social and education sector. So we start to comprehend the wealth of our resources that we can share with others. Maybe we don’t have millions of paper bills, but we have our knowledge.”

### 3. Suggestions for problem decisions and recommendations

#### Conclusions

The focus of Latvian CSOs active in development cooperation is on development education, awareness-raising, consultation and participation in decision-making. Fewer CSOs work in developing countries.

The list of countries that Latvian CSOs mostly work with strongly correlates with the priority countries of Latvian development cooperation policy, as well as the countries for which Latvian society supports providing help.

While some CSOs specifically focus on development cooperation, for most organizations this work is just one of their many topics. Some CSOs are ‘professional’ (employing permanent personnel), while others are ‘hobby’ CSOs, with people engaging in organizations’ activities in addition to their permanent jobs in other institutions or sectors. Many rely on project-based personnel and volunteers. This also influences their ability to provide regular services or be engaged in decision-making on development cooperation.

CSO capacities to use existing opportunities and expand their development cooperation work have been negatively influenced by the economic crisis in Latvia, which led to a dramatic decrease in the amount of funding committed to bilateral development cooperation. CSO capacity problems may be one of the explanations why so few organizations work in this area – organizations need first to establish themselves in their own country to be able to work internationally, secure international funding, share their experience and learn from others. Lack of funding may also be one of the explanations why most CSOs are involved in development education (e.g. educating people in Latvia) instead of development cooperation (e.g. improving schools in Georgia). While development education may be provided on a voluntary basis, development cooperation cannot be achieved only via Skype conversations.

The need to compete for very limited national funding leads to limited cooperation among CSOs, which contradicts data from the survey saying that CSOs build alliances to influence policy. This could be explained by the fact that CSOs cooperate in lobbying with the objective of securing funding for development cooperation,

but – once funding is secured – they do not work on common proposals to work together. Some also said that not all organizations are willing to praise the work of other CSOs in developing countries where they had started to work because CSOs are seen as competitors.

The main challenges for CSOs are lack of funding and low support for development cooperation in institutions and the general public. These issues are closely linked – low support for development results in low support for investing in developing countries, which leads to fewer opportunities for CSOs to gather experience on development issues and limits their ability to explain to the general public what development cooperation really is and why Latvia should be involved in it. According to the focus group, this is a magic triangle that needs to be broken to let CSOs fulfil their potential in development cooperation.

## Recommendations

### CSO capacity:

- Increasing funding and support for CSOs from the state, for example, securing membership fees that Latvian CSOs need to pay to their international platforms, allowing CSOs to compete with businesses in calls for proposals or procurements, decreasing administrative burdens in project and procurement application and implementation, engaging CSOs in projects implemented by state institutions as well as including CSOs (not only businesses) in events focused on cooperation with specific developing countries. One CSO suggested shifting part of the funds currently allocated to development cooperation via payments to international organizations to increase the bilateral development cooperation budget part of which would also be accessible to CSOs (also as co-funding for internationally funded projects).
- Supporting LAPAS by reaching an agreement among CSOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that part of the available funding for bilateral development cooperation (co-funding competition that was re-opened in 2012 and will continue in 2013) would secure the basic functioning of LAPAS.
- Improving cooperation among CSOs in Latvia and internationally by truly sharing experiences and contacts, building networks and partnerships. CSOs should look beyond cooperation with organizations in developing countries, but also work with 'Western' CSOs which would be beneficial to both sides – Latvian organizations would be able to teach them about the situation in the post-Soviet region, while 'Western' CSOs would be able to share their more extensive development cooperation experience.

### Support for development cooperation among the public and institutions:

- Making development cooperation more understandable to the general public by explaining via work in schools and the media what development cooperation really means, involving EU Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs (who comes from Latvia) in this work.
- Increasing opportunities for people to go to developing countries so that they can see the situation on the ground, compare it with Latvia (coming to the conclusion that life in Latvia is good!) and start 'emotionally understanding' the needs of other people.
- Working with parliamentarians to help them see Latvia in the global context, understand the need to invest in development cooperation and mutual gains from this work.

### Development cooperation policy:

- Improving consistency between policies as xenophobia, intolerance towards immigrants and income inequality in Latvia also negatively influence development cooperation (maximizing our benefits instead of helping others).
- Involving CSOs in planning and implementing development work that should also include measurable deliverables and results for all stakeholders.

## Appendix 1

The following NGOs provided data in the survey:

1. Development Bulb (Attīstības Kolba)
2. The European Movement in Latvia (Eiropas Kustība Latvijā)
3. The Women's NGO Cooperation network in Latvia (Latvijas Sieviešu nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības tīkls)
4. The Latvian Conservative Youth Union (Latvijas Konservatīvā jaunatnes apvienība)
5. The Latvian Adult Education association (Latvijas Pieaugušo izglītības apvienība)
6. The Latvian Portage Association (Latvijas Portidžas mācībsistēmas asociācija)
7. Solutions Workshop (Risinājumu darbnīca)
8. Seiba – support for Children in Guatemala (Seiba – atbalsts Gvatemalas bērniem)
9. *Transparency International-Latvia* (Sabiedrība par atklātību – Delna)
10. Shelter "Safe House" (Patvērums "Drošā māja")
11. Green Liberty (Zaļā brīvība)
12. The Latvian *Employers' Confederation* (Latvijas Darba devēju konfederācija)
13. The Latvian *Traders' association* (Latvijas Tirgotāju Asociācija)
14. The Latvian *Free Trade Union* Confederation (Latvijas Brīvo arodbiedrību savienība)
15. The Latvian *Civic Alliance* (Latvijas Pilsoniskā Alianse)
16. *The Women Rights* Institute (Sieviešu tiesību institūts)
17. School for All (Skola visiem)
18. Baltā pils Craft Education and Culture Centre (Amatu izglītības un kultūras centrs Baltā Pils)
19. The Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (**Latvijas Platforma attīstības sadarbībai**)

NGOs interviewed:

1. Development Bulb (Attīstības Kolba)
2. The Women's NGO Cooperation network in Latvia (Latvijas Sieviešu nevalstisko organizāciju sadarbības tīkls)
3. The Latvian Adult Education association (Latvijas Pieaugušo izglītības apvienība)
4. Solutions Workshop (Risinājumu darbnīca)
5. The Latvian Portage Association (Latvijas Portidžas mācībsistēmas asociācija)
6. Green Liberty (Zaļā brīvība)

NGOs involved in the focus group:

1. *Transparency International-Latvia* (Sabiedrība par atklātību – Delna)
2. The Latvian Free *Trade Union* Confederation (Latvijas Brīvo arodbiedrību savienība)
3. The Latvian *Civic Alliance* (*Latvijas Pilsoniskā Alianse*)
4. The Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (**Latvijas Platforma attīstības sadarbībai**)

# POLAND

## Introduction

This policy brief was developed as part of the international project “Update of the current status of implementation of international/bilateral trade regimes with ODA recipients and the current role of civil society and private sectors as development actors in the new EU Member states”, financed by the European Union. It provides an overview of the strengths and challenges, facing Polish non-governmental organizations active in development aid. The following facets of NGOs’ activity are considered: relationship with the state, organization of resources (financing, personnel), experience in implementation of projects abroad, influencing national development policy and contributing to the expert and public debate. The brief starts by analyzing the internal assets and limitations of NGOs and then considers the extent to which the third sector has been able to apply their resources for influencing state policy and raising public awareness of global issues.

The conclusions were drawn on the basis of a variety of sources. Firstly, annual monitoring reports, produced by Zagranica Group NGO platform were consulted in September-October 2012 and views of the authors and reactions of government officials were taken into account. This gave the author insight into the key issues of the agenda for NGO-state cooperation. Next, surveys were circulated in October- November 2012 among most members of the NGO platform, which helped identify in a preliminary fashion the organizations’ internal strengths and problems as well as narrow down issues that would be tackled in in-depth interviews, which were carried out with 12 NGO respondents in February 2013. The conclusions were verified and elaborated at the discussion, held on 26 February 2013, attended by 9 NGO representatives.

## 1. Non-governmental organizations and the state: redefining the relations

*Small group of veterans.* Polish NGOs have a decisive role in shaping the national development assistance efforts. Over the years their staff have managed to build a unique set of skills, which became their primary asset. This was acknowledged both by the Polish MFA and by foreign donors, which continue to provide *continuous funding* for their project activities. The ability to secure project funding from year to year has enabled a relatively small number of experienced organizations to emerge as a stable set of NGO actors in the Polish development assistance.

At the same time, lack of institutional funding and absence of multiannual funding from MFA puts a lot of pressure on the NGOs to seek grant funding and stand for competitions throughout the year. Uncertainty of continued funding puts limits on the growth of permanent staff, and the necessity to handle paperwork related

*Uncertain funding limits institutional growth of Polish NGOs working in development.*

to project application and reporting forces organizations to allocate more time than they would desire to administrative duties rather than their core activities.

It is somewhat a paradox that the MFA acknowledges non-governmental partners as the primary actors in the delivery of bilateral assistance yet fails to provide any institutional (core) support. This is particularly striking given the fact that a number of organizations are awarded project assistance from year to year and in both public forum and in direct communication ministry officials admit that they tend to reward those organizations that have shown to be capable of meeting technical and formal criteria. Nonetheless, there is resistance to awarding non-project-related funds as a representative of a large, established NGO pointed to the persistence of the “let the best one win” philosophy. In his view, this laissez-faire approach produced an unhealthy climate of “dog-eat-dog” competition, resulting in a pressure to cut project costs, especially those of staff. As an independent expert noted, another obstacle to the launch of an institutional support scheme is the state officials’ tendency to avoid making distinctions between organizations, evident in grant competitions, in which the notion of “key players” is missing.

*Relationship with the state.* Introduction of some form of core support would require a change of attitudes on the part of many organizations as the community of development NGOs is divided on the larger question of the extent to which the organizations are willing to subscribe to the government objectives and strategy. Two marked positions were voiced. On the one hand, a group of NGOs that is interested in introducing certain aspects of the global agenda (e.g. Busan Partnership, environmental protection, gender issues or democratization) affirms the need to maintain a distance and asserts its “autonomy”. From their point of view, the clear delineation of roles—with NGOs involved not only in implementing aid but also in monitoring the government’s compliance with its commitments—is necessary for ensuring the effectiveness of assistance. This group of organizations has resisted tying themselves down to the Polish state aid as this could relegate them to the position of mere subcontractors. Moreover, these NGOs are anxious that the Polish assistance not become too closely tied to the country’s foreign policies.

*Introducing core funding to some organizations would require rethinking model of relations between the state and NGOs on both sides of the divide.*

On the other hand, some organizations put stress on visibility and impact that could be achieved if development aid became an even higher priority for the Polish diplomacy and if the MFA recognized among assets the competencies and international position of some of the NGOs that are “past the infancy stage”. Representatives of some larger organizations, capable of running infrastructural projects, noted that contrary to the opinion widespread in the public debate, Poland has already developed significant “implementation capital” that sets it apart from many other new EU Member States. Head of a large organization pointed to another gap in the MFA’s activities—while the ministry acknowledges the need to build Poland’s image as an emerging donor (e.g. by launching dedicated grant competitions for activities promoting the country’s visibility), a strategic plan is missing for linking various aid activities, carried out by non-state and state actors, in a way as to maximize their visibility.

Analysis of statements made by both the officials and non-governmental representatives reveals a general consensus. Both sides are interested in ensuring that the assistance benefits Poland’s image abroad and that the Polish aid is implemented “under a national umbrella”. However, non-governmental organizations point to the limited understanding of the term “visibility” as it is often realized within projects. Some respondents see the need to go beyond mere inclusion of logos and notes on the source of funding, suggesting that activities serving to consolidate visibility of actions should be given a greater share of project budgets. Other areas of need named in this context were: giving preference to the use of Polish products and technologies in implementation of projects and creating opportunities for co-financing of the involvement of Polish NGOs in international multi-year projects.



## 2. Staff and volunteers: dealing with the crisis

*Lean organizations with horizontal structure.* In view of precarious funding base, none of the organizations is able to maintain large bureaucratic structures. This is turned to their advantage as compared to foreign counterparts, Polish organizations at times advertise themselves as small dedicated teams of versatile professionals, who often take on the entire scope of project management, starting from conceiving the idea through submitting the application to work in the field and reporting to the donor. This model, which is characteristic of small organizations, has the advantage of letting the personnel “own” the project, allowing them to commit to it while at the same time ensure coherence between planned, executed and reported actions. The clear disadvantage is the high workload per person, and possible frustration over inability to focus and develop certain specific skills. In turn, reliance on a small number of staff members for the entire range of activities may result in their “burnout”, especially at times of higher workload (e.g. at the end of the financial year). Unclear division of responsibilities, low pay levels and high workload may eventually lead to departure, and high staff turnover could disrupt the workflow and diminish the organization’s credibility as a beneficiary.

Organizations have adopted some effective strategies to counter potential staff attrition. Three principles, which could be observed, are: the use of such incentives that would match the specific characteristics of the staff, the clear distinction being made between permanent staff and collaborators, and the tendency to maintain a horizontal pay scheme with elements of insurance against temporary loss of financing. Such a scheme requires that all the employees are engaged in revenue generation: this is often ensured by involving all the staff in conceiving project ideas and submitting proposals, which are then peer-reviewed. This horizontal setup ensures balancing the workload as well as makes the employees’ welfare directly tied to the performance of the entire organization.

Regardless of the size or turnover of the organization, the respondents stressed that the staff remuneration schemes were adopted voluntarily in such a way as to best match the specific needs of the team members. Moreover, the establishment of such a scheme was cited as the top reason for staying with the organization. Two long-standing organizations have been able to retain staff of ca. 10 persons each by guaranteeing upon a short trial period to all its employees permanent work contracts with a flat basic salary at a decent rate (above market average). Both organizations recognized the paramount need for financial stability for its staff, composed mainly of persons at the age of 30 and above with families. For that reason, they introduced some mechanisms on their own which would ensure financial sustainability of their organizations while providing protection for employees in downtime.

*Remuneration schemes were developed to deal with potential staff rotation.*

One method is the introduction of a “solidarity bag”—the fund to which all contribute so that they may be paid out basic salary in case they fail to win any projects in a given year. The establishment of such a fund is a necessary compensatory mechanism in the system in which salaries are directly tied to project revenue. The other scheme consists of a uniform salary rate for all the employees, which is adjusted by 20 per cent for the staff that temporarily take on more or fewer commitments. This solution again underscores the link between organizational performance and personal welfare while allowing for reduced personal cost in times when a given team member has not been able to secure project funding.

All the respondents stressed that shared values, personal commitment to the organizational objectives were a determining factor for the staff to remain on board. This is particularly evident in cases of those NGOs that are composed of part-time volunteers who are unremunerated. It is striking that nearly all the organizations were developed by persons who decided to continue aid activities that they had previously done as employees of international organizations (UN), interns or volunteers on foreign missions (e.g. with the church) or as workers of larger NGOs. This *focus on aid activity* regardless of the institutional umbrella is a characteristic of many respondents who cited it as the primary drive for establishing and sustaining the organization.

*Power of attraction.* The fact that many organizations persevere in seeking opportunities for aid out of the inner drive found among their members is first of all a symptom of general *health* of the sector. This conclusion is

also borne out by observation of the factors at play when organizations seek funding for their activities. When asked whether donor priorities (e.g. of the Polish MFA) played a decisive role in spurring the organization to apply for support for specific activities, the respondents denied that, pointing primarily to their own assessment of needs on the ground as well as to the demand expressed by local partners in the target country. They chose not to apply when seeing that the priorities of their choice were not listed in a given year.

The genuine commitment to helping those in need is also the biggest draw for potential Polish volunteers as they are as a rule not compensated. The primary forms of recruitment are direct informal contacts, public events and advertisements placed on own websites. One respondent stressed that openness to volunteers was as much motivated by the need to share the responsibilities (10 volunteers doing one-third of the total workload on top of the permanent staff of 10) as by the organizational mission. He noted that attracting volunteers along with collecting contributions and generating support for advocacy efforts testified to the “civil” character of the organization, which draws its legitimacy from support expressed by members of the community.

*Few committed volunteers are available and lack of dedicated funding prevents delegating them to the field.*

Respondents were not satisfied with the supply of volunteers, noting that while they continue to receive many inquiries from persons vaguely interested in cooperation, the interest in undertaking serious commitment is scarce. Another barrier to greater involvement of volunteers is general lack of dedicated funding for expenses related to dispatching volunteers to target countries. Some organizations pointed out that in the absence of continued funding for activities in a given country they cannot afford to establish permanent arrangements for sending their own employees there, let alone volunteers, outside of project-related activities. As a result, half of all the Polish volunteers bound for Africa make use of international Catholic missions, operated by the Salesian order.

Dissatisfaction was expressed with inflexible policies of the MFA aid competitions, regarding the acceptable forms of employment in the funded projects. Requirement to conclude service or volunteer contracts was seen as an additional burden and a symptom of growing red tape. The cap placed on administrative costs (15%) was criticized, especially in conjunction with growing expectations from state donors (such as the dedicated Solidarity Fund, established recently for pro-democracy actions) as to the quality of personnel. Some respondents concluded that the cuts of administrative costs, regularly applied by MFA officials, did not take into account realistic assessment of market conditions, limiting the pool of available experts and specialists.

### 3. Implementation of projects: NGOs’ comparative advantages

*Models of delivering assistance abroad.* Another paradox in the relations between the MFA and Polish development NGOs is the apparent misunderstanding of the comparative advantage that the Polish organizations have relative to larger foreign organizations. In both the post-Soviet space and in Africa, the two key regions to which Polish assistance is directed, the challenge is low visibility and limited impact that is characteristic of low volume of aid.

The *modus operandi* of Polish NGOs varies by size of the organization and type of operations. In the CIS, assistance often takes the form of transfer of experience and is on the whole carried out by relatively small organizations, which must ensure that they independently *locate, manage and verify partners in the country of origin* and thus *gauge local needs* thanks to close engagement with the partner and own staff presence on the ground. In view of this, rapport with the local partners was named as the success factor, enabling Polish NGOs correctly name the current priorities, adapt to changing circumstances and as a result continue to operate long term in these countries. This “staying power” was cited by many organizations, operating in either of the regions.

This approach of “working from a distance” is of limited use when applied in Africa, as was noted by a representative of a larger organization with extensive experience in several countries of the continent. In his view, carrying out projects by coordinators located for the bulk of the time in the Polish office who merely oversee the progress of work, carried out by

*Smaller NGOs must rely on local partners and investing in partnerships is essential to effectiveness of aid activities.*

local partners, does not provide sufficient visibility to the Polish aid nor does it allow for demonstrating the value added by the involvement of the Polish organization. This is particularly relevant for humanitarian aid or “classic development” projects, which require on the one hand significant investment in own facilities (setting up own base, organizing a convoy) and on the other hand delegation of own staff for the duration of the project in the field. However, only a few organizations possess either the required financial and organizational capacities (Polish Humanitarian Action, Polish Center for International Assistance) or the staff that can be delegated to the target country (Foundation for Somalia).

This unique knowledge of local conditions and ability to assess unique needs as well as foresee opportunities makes Polish NGOs essential to ensuring aid effectiveness as it helps address fundamental problems facing Polish assistance in the two target regions. In the post-Soviet space among problems facing donors are the difficulties in extending funding to informal initiatives that are out of favor with the authorities and in recognizing the government-sponsored organizations that lack genuine social legitimacy. Here step in Polish organizations that have long experience of working in the complex environment of Belarus or Central Asia, which makes them a credible partner to genuine local initiatives so that the Polish NGOs are able to take natural lead in the project. As representatives of an organization with record of two decades of pro-democracy activities throughout the CIS stressed, the hands-on knowledge of local realities enables them to assess independently whether the activities proposed by the local partner are justified. In case the Polish partner believes the local proposal is missing the mark, it is able and willing to propose an alternative. This expertise is particularly valuable given the fact that even though the Polish consular network in the CIS is among the most extensive few among the embassies and consulates are staffed with persons who deal with development issues in their everyday work.

This issue is even more acute in Sub-Saharan Africa where Poland has only five embassies (Abuja, Addis Ababa, Luanda, Nairobi and Pretoria), making it the continent with the lowest density of Polish diplomatic missions. It is particularly telling that another five embassies had been closed in 2008 as part of the reorganization of the diplomatic network: Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Harare, Kinshasa and Lagos. Respondents from the Polish organizations active in this region revealed that they did not receive assistance (logistical, information) from the embassies even in those countries where the posts were located. One expert noted that the fundamental problem is very severe understaffing of the embassies, suggesting that to ensure good knowledge of local conditions, two dedicated posts would need to be set up *per country*.

*Polish NGOs and official assistance priorities.* The relationship between the MFA and Polish NGOs in delivery of assistance varies by region, reflecting tensions between development assistance and foreign policy priorities. NGOs working in Africa appear to be in the “driver’s seat” as they often initiate engagement in certain locations since traditionally Poland has limited the number of priority countries in Africa to only one (currently Angola). Their strategies for drawing attention to local needs vary: from combining activities of a similar type in Poland and in Africa (Foundation “Hear Africa”) through study visits for Polish business leaders and use of public figures in campaigns (Foundation for Somalia) to information campaigns and professional-grade publications, featuring results of humanitarian and infrastructural projects (Polish Centre for International Aid, Polish Humanitarian Action).

*Polish NGOs blaze the trail for national aid in Africa. While they receive little support on the ground, they are free to develop own approaches.*

In turn, in the CIS where Poland pursues active policies of neighbourhood and pro-democratization, strategies and activities of Polish government bodies and non-governmental organizations may come into conflict. The organizations complain of being treated as “subcontractors” of assistance while they seek to influence the priorities of Polish development and democratization actions. Moreover, uncoordinated or sloppy actions by some officials may in fact jeopardize the security and welfare of local partners, exposing them to risk of persecution. In the most famous case, Polish Foreign Minister offered apology following the arrest of Belarusian human rights activist Ales Bialiatski in 2011 upon release by Poland of financial records leading to his indictment.

## 4. Influencing state policy: what has worked?

*Building partnership through independent monitoring.* Years 2011 and 2012 marked a turning point for the Polish non-governmental organizations' efforts to monitor and offer recommendations for the government development efforts. Representatives of NGOs stated during the discussion, held in late February 2013 that in the previous two years, the NGO platform had concentrated on contributing to the shape and contents of the legal and strategic documents, prepared by the MFA. The entry into force of the Act on Development Cooperation, the elaboration of multi-year plan on development activities and the establishment of permanent consultation mechanisms were all important landmarks for non-governmental organizations' access to the system of planning development aid. NGOs managed to secure such strong presence in the process of laying systemic foundations through structured dialogue with the key government departments, responsible for planning and programming aid, which had the form of regular monitoring of progress toward meeting Poland's international commitments and ensuring greater aid effectiveness.

Between 2006 and 2011, six annual reports monitoring the official Polish development aid were released by a dedicated monitoring subgroup, established within the Zagranica Group, a platform of 61 NGOs carrying out assistance, humanitarian aid, democracy support and global education. The initiative to monitor Polish aid was informally launched in 2004 by several major NGOs, which had been partners to the government in implementation of projects as well as in consultations on the organization of state development aid.

The rationale for independent monitoring of state assistance was laid out in the first report, covering 2005 and 2006. While the volume of Polish assistance to developing countries grew, the existing evaluations, carried out by foreign institutions and few domestic experts, relied on the MFA official reports alone. Non-governmental reports aimed to fill the gap, viewing the quality of aid from the perspective of beneficiaries, which was to pinpoint weaknesses and strengths in the organization of assistance and thus help build positive image of the Polish aid in the target countries. From the outset, the reports aimed not only to evaluate assistance at the level of projects, but also help set objectives and priorities of the national aid system as a whole.

The reports, published annually, are developed by a team of experts, who investigate particular areas of aid through analysis of official reports as well as exchange of letters and meetings with officials at the key ministries, involved in planning and/or organization of assistance: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education as well as Ministry of Interior. Undoubtedly, the reports have been useful tools for tracking Poland's progress in meeting its own commitments as to the volume of aid and in building the necessary legal and strategic framework. Consecutive reports propose specific recommendations, taking notice of the extent to which last year's proposals were carried out.

*Annual monitoring reports by NGOs parallel official MFA publications, showing strengths and weaknesses of adopted solutions.*

The reports' strengths lie in their standard organization—featuring annually quantitative analysis of actual outlays in bilateral aid to priority countries, clear presentation of strengths and weaknesses of government proposals as well as in-depth treatment of specific aspects of assistance from year to year. Another asset is the fact that the reports are products of a relatively stable team of authors whose names are public and who represent organizations with proven track record of implementing assistance and in some cases national networks, interested in highlighting certain aspects of aid (gender, environment, global education or democratization).

*Assessing effectiveness of monitoring.* The annual publication and presentation of independent reports for six years ushered in a process that justifies the question as to the extent to which the monitoring efforts were effective. The answer is not simple. From the outset, NGO reports identified some structural problems in the aid system: low overall volume, insufficient concentration of aid on declared priorities and a small share of aid disbursed by MFA as the coordinating body. Recognizing lack of progress toward these broad objectives by 2007, reports in the following years included some concrete indicators of success, suggesting specific measures to be taken by a specified date. Thus, regarding the ODA volume it was recommended in 2008 that the Polish



government fulfill its declaration made at EU forum in 2005 of raising the volume to 0.17% of GDP by 2010, and the recommendation was reiterated in 2010 with the commitment of reaching the ODA levels of 0.33% of GDP by 2015. However, these items as well as other specific recommendations mirroring those found in the 2010 DAC report were not realized. As of early 2013, Poland is still not member of DAC (another recommendation of the Group, repeatedly voiced since 2008), and the DAC suggestions on untying aid and concentrating bilateral assistance on a smaller number of thematic and geographic priorities were brought up in successive reports of the Group, which concluded that the progress toward these objectives was slow.

The barriers to achieving overall progress toward DAC objectives on aid effectiveness were recognized early on by Polish NGOs. In the report covering Polish aid in 2009, the organizations acknowledged limits to raising the volume and undertaking actions toward greater effectiveness of aid. In their view:

The greatest barrier consists in the lack of common understanding of global challenges among decision-makers (...). Redefining our country's global role requires that members of parliament and government officials demonstrate much higher awareness, and Polish NGOs are engaged in dialogue with decision-makers and in educational activities.<sup>1</sup>

It was concluded, however, that “strong support from the minister of foreign affairs” who is in charge of coordinating state development activities and initiating strategic changes in the organization of aid is a preeminent condition of jump-starting the process of making the assistance system more effective. Thus, the report published in 2010 treated the question of aid effectiveness in greater depth, dedicating a separate section, in which

*NGO reports were targeted at two MFA departments, responsible for planning and programming of aid.*

detailed recommendations were drawn up and allocated to specific government bodies, most notably to two departments of the MFA, responsible for planning and programming aid—Dept. of Development Cooperation and Dept. of Implementation of Development Programs. It is worth noting that the recommendations were assessed as to their potential impact on overall effectiveness and the ministry's capacity for initiating change in given areas.

Between 2010 and 2012 consultations between the MFA and the Zagranica Group intensified as the government proceeded to submit for review several strategic documents, the move that was long awaited. In line with the framework Strategy of Polish Cooperation for Development released in 2003, the government vowed to adopt the sectoral law, which would set the principles, forms, methods of implementation and basis of financing for development activities. A major step towards this objective was making the draft principles of the Act public in 2010, which were positively assessed as reflecting “the general consensus worked out between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and non-governmental organizations” in the course of consultations on successive drafts of the Act itself. In the report published in 2010 the Group offered specific suggestions as to the issues that the final version of the Act should tackle, and a year later it welcomed the adoption of the Act in September 2011 as realization of one of its recurring and long-standing recommendations. Nonetheless, it continued to press for improvements, highlighting apart from undeniable achievements a number of shortcomings of the law, which called for amendments to the Act.

*Current framework for consultations.* In late September 2012 the sixth monitoring report of the Group was publicly presented, and the rank of the event was marked by the fact that the launch coincided with the presentation of the MFA official report. The public presentation was followed by comments by the undersecretary of state for development assistance at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the report continued to include the quantitative analysis of the volume and composition of Polish ODA, its analytical part was greatly expanded. This was officially welcomed by the MFA, which reasserted the role of the Group as “a partner for discussion”. However, despite efforts by the presenters to balance the positive developments (such as the adoption of multi-year aid programming, the establishment of the dedicated agency in charge of democratization efforts and the entry into force of the Act), the Ministry failed to acknowledge many of the specific criticisms of the new legal and institutional arrangements. The Group's postulates aired in 2012 largely built on those included in

<sup>1</sup> Grupa Zagranica, Polska pomoc zagraniczna 2009, p. 31.

earlier reports, but this edition was much more explicit in describing the blocks to progress and the dynamics of the consultation process.

Many of the respondents stressed that the new legal framework (the Act) provided a permanent basis for policy consultations, consolidating on the long experience of cooperation between the Zagranica Group and the MFA. The Act established the Programme Council for Development Assistance, on which apart from representatives of ministries, parliamentary clubs and the academia, four representatives of non-governmental organizations (including two from the board of the Zagranica Group) were guaranteed membership. According a representative of the Group, no discussion has been held within the NGO platform on the effectiveness of this format.

*MFA published principles for consulting development documents and for holding meetings with NGOs.*

In addition to this formal body, which holds sessions twice a year, approving government annual plans and other strategic documents, the MFA at the initiative of under secretary Katarzyna Pełczyńska-Nałęcz has proposed a code of good practice for consultations with social partners. The principles of cooperation were placed online, covering (1) the procedure for consulting drafts of legal amendments to the Act and other pertinent legal acts, multi-annual program of development assistance as well as official positions on EU documents, (2) consultation meetings with the under secretary and (3) expert consultations. Both types of meetings are potentially open to representatives of non-governmental organizations, and expert consultations may be convened *ad hoc* at the request of one or several social partners.

At the same time, the experience of consultations and of monitoring the state development aid revealed some limits to the process. During interviews, several respondents questioned whether the transparent and public formula of annual review had not proved to be too “confrontational” for the officials when it went beyond outlining principles and directions of change to detailed evaluating of the adopted solutions. At the same time, representative of a key member of the Group admitted that the opposition had more to do with the context, and that adapting the tone of the assessment to take note of the target audience’s expectations could help make recommendations more palatable. A good example is the critique of Poland’s EU Presidency, which prior to inclusion in the report had been communicated successfully in a direct way by one of the Group members. Many NGO respondents raised the point that in future efforts at raising certain sensitive points, attention must be paid to the setting and context of these actions so as to minimize the damage to MFA’s image as a leader of the change process.

Quality of consultations has been attributed by the NGO respondents to the level of officials’ knowledge of the topic. It is therefore recommended that the ministry would do best by delegating to consultations of documents and initiatives as well as to reviewing NGOs’ substantial policy proposals personnel specialized in a pertinent aspect of aid. The utility of such an approach was demonstrated by the case of consultations on inclusion of gender issues into the multi-year plan of development activities. According to a representative of a coalition of organizations working toward empowering women in development, while not all the coalition’s proposals were included in the plan, the process was still a success thanks to structured quarterly meetings as well as individual talks with the knowledgeable ministry representative. Delegating for talks with NGOs on a permanent basis an official specialized in issues under discussion was seen as essential for achieving progress in consultations.

## 5. Best practices in advocacy and global education

As W. Tworkowski noted in his study of development and democracy in activities of Polish NGOs, there is a gap between the level of engagement in global education efforts between the organizations, involved in classic development and those focused on democratization activities. He suggests that the latter should “learn” from the former “how to promote their activities in the society” and that they should give up on the belief that “since Poles believe in democracy, they necessarily support democratization actions, for instance in Ukraine”. This research indeed corroborates this general finding, noting that the organizations working in areas such



as humanitarian aid, poverty reduction, environment or women's rights indeed place significant emphasis on informing the public of the needs of target countries, stirring interest in greater activity and support for development in the society and working with key groups such as politicians, officials, businesspeople or academics and students.

Large NGOs implementing assistance have developed their own arrangements for advocacy that would match their target groups and work specificity. One instance is the Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), which has been undertaking dedicated advocacy efforts for six years, and to organize them a position of *advocacy officer* was set up. Educational activities aimed in particular at the Polish society were enumerated in the organization's strategy for 2010-2014, listing the following priority target groups: politicians and officials (securing compliance with Poland's commitments and improving state policies), mass media (nationwide campaigns raising awareness and stimulating activism), children and youth (mainstreaming humanitarian and global education in the school system) and academia (featuring development in curricula). The strategy is disaggregated into annual plans for advocacy activities, breaking general goals into detailed objectives, which are then the basis for the advocacy officer to report to the Board of the Foundation and modify plans for the next year.

*Larger NGOs structure their advocacy work by including it in multi-year strategy and annual plans.*

In addition, PAH continues to produce publications, tailored to various groups, such as experts and policy-makers. Noteworthy in particular are policy briefs, developed in collaboration with international partners, such as Oxfam, People in Need, Globopolis or ECDPM as well as with Polish development NGOs, covering aspects of development, such as democracy, combating hunger, sustainable development, gender equality or transparency of aid. The Polish Presidency of the EU, which took place in the second half of 2011 was an opportunity to highlight the role that the country could play in shaping EU's policy as well as in familiarizing Polish politicians with EU development policy framework. For this reason, PAX and Oxfam released a list of recommendations for the Presidency while members of the Polish Parliament and interested officials received a comprehensive book publication. The 222-page guide outlines the basic norms and institutional foundations of EU development policy, provides in-depth treatment of current issues facing the EU and includes recommendations for the Polish government. It is notable that PAH also produced a bulletin, presenting all its advocacy activities in 2011, the year of the Presidency, ranging from efforts to influence the law and government strategy through public events to publications.

The NGO platform and key civil society actors are increasingly aware of the potential that generating and transferring specialist knowledge holds for reaching out to officials and other stakeholders. Hence their interest in producing materials that systematize the understanding of development, provoke expert discussions and offer lessons from international experience. Such materials are often produced in series so as to address current issues and to feature contributions from various circles. One such initiative is the series of the Zagranica Group Opinions, Debates, Analyses policy briefs, developed as part of the project "Raising the competence of the Group members in advocacy activities targeting public administration". Eight briefs were published so far, providing not only expert analyses of the current government initiatives (adoption of the Act, establishment of the pro-democratization Solidarity Fund) but also introducing discussion of international experience in such issues as relationship between development and democracy support or economic development.

*Organizations working on specific aspects of aid target key audiences with publications, often in international context.*

Another instance is the publication by the Polish Center for International Aid (PCPM) of the *Pomoc rozwojowa* (Development Aid) quarterly that targets officials, NGO activists and academics interested in the expert discussion of issues of global development as well as in presentation of practical experience from projects implemented abroad. For instance, the issues in 2012 featured extensive discussion of the challenge of Arab Spring transformation for delivery of humanitarian aid, aspects of providing medical aid in Africa, crisis management in emergencies or the scourge of drought and famine.

Organizations concentrating on specific issues have pointed to the importance of joining transnational initiatives, which serve to strengthen their efforts at raising public awareness. The case in point is the KARAT coalition, which has worked on mainstreaming the question of the position of women in target countries and overcoming stereotypes related to trafficking by engaging in activities of cross-border development platforms. An example of such actions is the "Through Their Eyes, Through Ours" project in which exhibitions and publications were featured in three other European countries apart from Poland (Belgium, Germany and Slovakia). The secretariat of the coalition serves as a partner for international projects as well as communicates positions of local members to the national and European level for advocacy purposes.

In general, it may be concluded that the organizations recognize the need to tailor their message and adapt the instruments for its delivery to specific audiences. As the general public comes to recognize the value of engaging in dealing with global issues, development actors choose to target influential groups (business, officials, academia) so as to promote deepened understanding of specific assistance needs.

# ROMANIA

## 1. General Introduction

The main trade-related target of MDG 8A, calls for the further development of an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading system. In order for trade to serve as an engine of growth, improvements to the current global trading system are required both on the demand and supply sides. Developing countries need assistance on the supply side to improve capacity and build new skills to produce goods and services and to more efficiently reach global markets. One of the indicators used to measure progress towards MDG 8 is the proportion of ODA allocated to building the supply side and productive capacity of the developing countries, including through Aid for Trade.

Promoting sustainable development in developing countries is a core objective of the Official Development Assistance (ODA), representing the flows of official financing. The EU is the largest ODA contributor but it does not function as a unitary actor on ODA policy, as it does in trade policy. Each member state still fields its own aid management structures, personnel and preferences. Therefore, bilateral development policies co-exist with community policies managed by the EC. In order to increase aid effectiveness and implement the requirements of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness a better coordination of policies and actions is necessary. Upon accession to the EU new member states (NMS) have made a commitment to meet the specific targets of ODA. Referring to their comparative advantages through the experience of transition to democracy and a market economy NMS put the emphasis on the transfer of transition experience to other post-communist countries, especially on the EU's Eastern and South-Eastern borders, boosting bilateral development cooperation. It is a fact that our countries tend towards development co-operation with countries with which they have either geographical or historical ties, combined with deploying comparative advantages, such as transition know-how, or limiting co-operation to a narrow range of sectors.

To implement and benefit from WTO agreements and to expand foreign trade, developing countries need to develop necessary trade-related skills and infrastructure. The Aid for Trade (AfT) initiative aims to help developing countries formulate and implement trade policies and practices (so called "Trade Related Assistance"), and support developing a wider economic capacity to trade (building trade related infrastructure and productive capacity). Donor countries' activities are considered as Aid for Trade only if they have been identified as trade-related development priorities in the recipient countries' national development strategies.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are seen as distinct development actors, different from donors and governments. Sound economic policies involve a rational balance of responsibilities between the private sector, civil society and the public sector to secure sustained and widespread economic progress. CSOs can help design national strategies, deliver services, defend human rights, participate more actively in development aid.

The 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, South Korea (29 November - 1 December 2011) agreed on Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation through which governments, civil society organizations, private sector, local and regional organizations decided to get “united by a new partnership that is broader and more inclusive, founded on shared principles, common goals and differential commitments for effective international development.” Article 32 stipulates the **“central role of the private sector in advancing innovation, creating wealth, income and jobs, mobilizing domestic resources and in turn contributing to poverty reduction”**<sup>1</sup>.

The 3 researches on CSOs, private sector and Aid for Trade are part of the international project *Update of the current status of implementation of international/bilateral trade regimes with ODA recipients and the current role of civil society and private sector as development players in the new EU Member states* coordinated by the Center for Economic Development Foundation (CED) from Sofia – Bulgaria during January 2012 – June 2013. The project approaches are based on the needs and potential of the CED, its network partners based in the new EU member states and also other related to development national and EU stakeholders to run more effective and structured dialogue on the current status of implementation of MDGs, the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action and the 2011 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation just 3 years prior the agreed end period of their fulfillment.

The goal of the project is to build transnational alliances between 9 new EU member States so as to capitalize and disseminate their best network and advocacy practices on the occasion of the existent international trade systems with ODA recipients and the role of private and civil society actors as development actors. The project is simultaneous implemented in 9 NMS such as Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania.

The main research objective is to analyze the current state of the participation of the civil society in development assistance following the specific goals:

- To define the role of civil society in developing aid activities through studying the history of civil society's involvement, its level and forms of contribution and current participation in the national development policy making and aid effectiveness;
- To identify and to formulate the most obvious problems of CSOs in the process of delivering development aid ;
- To propose recommendations and policy measures decisions for the civil society sector to participate more actively and effectively in the development aid process.

## 2. Methodology

As part of an international team that also includes countries such as Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria coordinated by the Center for Economic Development Foundation (CED) from Sofia - Bulgaria, the Institute for Public Policy from Romania has followed a common research methodology elaborated by the Coordinator with some adjustments to reflect the local particularities.

Three such policy briefs have been elaborated by a reputed team of experts coordinated by the Institute for Public Policy in Romania, one of these approaching the private sector's challenges in the context of the Development Assistance' goals. The main approach of the methodology included desk research and information collected from the public authorities by disseminating a complex questionnaire elaborated at the international level, translated in Romanian and sent to all 16 Ministries during August – October 2012. Based on the Romanian legislation allowing citizens to access public data (Law no. 544/2001), the Ministries sent us the information requested. The official data inquired referred to the years of 2010 and 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm>

Also, the National Institute for Statistics represented an important source of information, as IPP purchased a set of information related to the scope of the research.

Nevertheless, the current analysis has also been drafted based on the NGOs' answers (over 25 that were received by the research team during August – October 2012) to a standardized questionnaire regarding their involvement including their projects implemented under in the priority countries such as *Moldova, Georgia and Serbia*.

The information provided by the NGO respondents helped the project team in drafting the current analysis, including the conclusions and recommendations directly aimed at improving ODA implementation. Preliminary conclusions have been finalized by the research team by organizing consultations with the relevant government officials. In addition, IPP organized a focus group on November 6<sup>th</sup> 2012 where the active involvement of NGOs working/aiming to work on ODA projects has been extremely helpful in shaping the current status and challenges of the ODA implementation in relation to NGOs contribution.

### **3. Facts and figures about ODA in Romania and relation with CSOs**

The Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Romania is highly promoted by the non-governmental sector through individual various projects financed by different international donors as well as by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) from Romania that officially coordinates and implements the ODA funds. In 2005, MFA initiated the *policy for development cooperation* by creating the Unit for development Assistance.

At the non - governmental level, an NGO Federation, aimed at supporting Development policies in Romania (known as *FOND*), has been created, the organization working towards promoting the concept and directly helping CSOs in the process of delivering development aid.<sup>2</sup> The Federation consists of 33 active NGOs and 13 observers (the list of members is available in *Appendix no. 1*). The history of FOND<sup>3</sup> dates back in 2007 when 34 non-governmental organizations, most of them constantly involved in consultations and informative activities carried out by Trialog and the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, decided to set up the national development cooperation Platform - FOND. The sectors of interest for most of the members within development cooperation are related to Development Education, Education and professional training, Democracy and Good Governance (including Human Rights and Child Protection) and Health, all addressed to neighboring countries (Moldova, Georgia, Serbia, Ukraine).

In what concerns the nongovernmental organizations contribution, unfortunately the late decision of the Romanian authorities of allowing NGOs to be the beneficiaries of the ODA resources starting with only 2011, had a negative impact upon both the number of developed projects and the impact of the allocated resources. A rather small progress has been achieved so far by Romania, as donor within the development assistance during 2007 – 2011, due to the limited role that has been given to the civil society.

The advantage of the NGOs' participation in this field is the actual experience gained within projects' already developed in Romania, their willingness of transferring the expertise gained in transition period of similar developing countries. Most of them are at this moment part of cross-border and regional projects in the Balkans, as well as in Moldova or Ukraine. Some of the most important Romanian NGOs involved in Development work (such as Caritas - Romania, Save the Children - Romania and World Vision - Romania) are all members of FOND while also acting as active members of various well established sectorial European NGO networks.

Although Romania became a donor within the Development Policy in 2007, the opportunity of implementing projects in the framework of the Aid for development program has not been properly acknowledged by the NGOs, mostly by those working at local level. Thus, the main actions for development have been carried out

<sup>2</sup> Examples as the Romanian School for Development held in 2010, 2011 and 2012, the Black Sea NGO Forum with 3 editions in 2010, 2011 and 2012, the NGO Forum Romania – Moldova organized in 2010 and 2011, etc.

<sup>3</sup> For further details is available FOND website: <http://www.fondromania.org/eng/pagini/index.php>

by the organizations from Bucharest. The main role of the civil society in development aid policies has been of acting as a serious partner for public authorities in implementing the National Strategy for Development Cooperation Policy. At the same time it has also been acting as an unbiased and fair analyst who pointed out at every moment the problems and involutions within this field. Hereinafter, there is room for further progress in this respect as it will be concluded through the present analysis.

At the official level, between 2007 – 2011, Romania decided upon 3 priority countries to acquire development assistance with financial support from Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' budget namely:

- the Republic of Moldova,
- Serbia, and
- Georgia.<sup>4</sup>

In 2011, alongside Moldova, Serbia and Georgia, some projects were financed in countries such as: Tunis, Belarus and Egypt the contribution being seen as a rapidly provided answer to the problems and evolutions in the North Africa. In what concerns the period between 2012 and 2015, Romania decided to support development processes in more countries namely:

- the Republic of Moldova,
- Ukraine,
- Belarus,
- Georgia,
- Armenia,
- Azerbaijan,
- Egypt,
- Tunis,
- Libya,
- Iraq,
- Palestine
- Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup>

As regards the projects for development implemented by Romanian NGOs during the last years, their number and impact at national level is, unfortunately, still of small relevance and the reasons for this situation derive from the mechanism of financing projects for development adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Until 2012, the funding policies allowed for no NGO to apply for such projects. Thus, from 2007 to 2012, the civil society' projects, within aid for development, were financially supported by international donors, the European Commission and other European institutions.

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<sup>4</sup> On the ground of the *Memorandum for Romanian Government's Strategy for National Policy of International Cooperation for Development 2007 - 2010* and *Memorandum for ODA recipient countries for 2011*

<sup>5</sup> On the ground of the *Memorandum for ODA recipient countries for 2012 - 2015*



## 4. Civil society's role as a development player

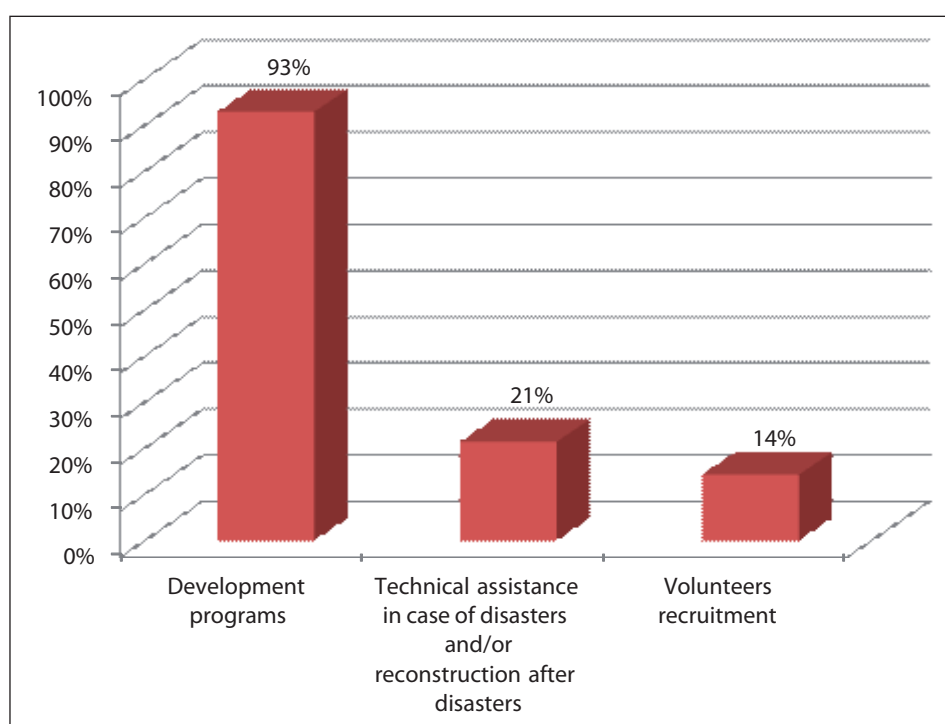
The Romanian National Strategy on International Development Cooperation points out that NGOs are assumed as strategic partners in achieving its objectives: *the Romanian government is willing to strengthen its partnership with Romanian civil society organizations. Such cooperation is also useful for Romania, having very limited human resources in state administration in the area of Development Assistance. NGOs have specific experience of activities in Romania, which they can apply in developing countries, mainly in the area "experience within the transition process," in the social sphere, education and work with volunteers (article 8).*<sup>6</sup>

Disseminating the questionnaire with the relevant questions about the concrete sectoral projects targeting the priority countries, the research team was able to find out the following interesting information:

### 4.1 Aspects regarding the NGOs projects within ODA policy

First of all, an interesting topic about the CSOs profile is related to their specific activities in the area of assistance for development, namely whether they are working on assistance for natural disasters or, conversely, they are transferring their expertise on transition to other developing countries. As the next Graphic indicates, Romanian NGOs undertake specific actions and organize thematic events within the Development Programs (93%), more than offering technical assistance in case of disasters (21%). The programs aiming Development especially target education, trainings and know-how exchanges, health and reproduction, etc. Also, they are directly involving volunteers in specific activities on the field (14%).

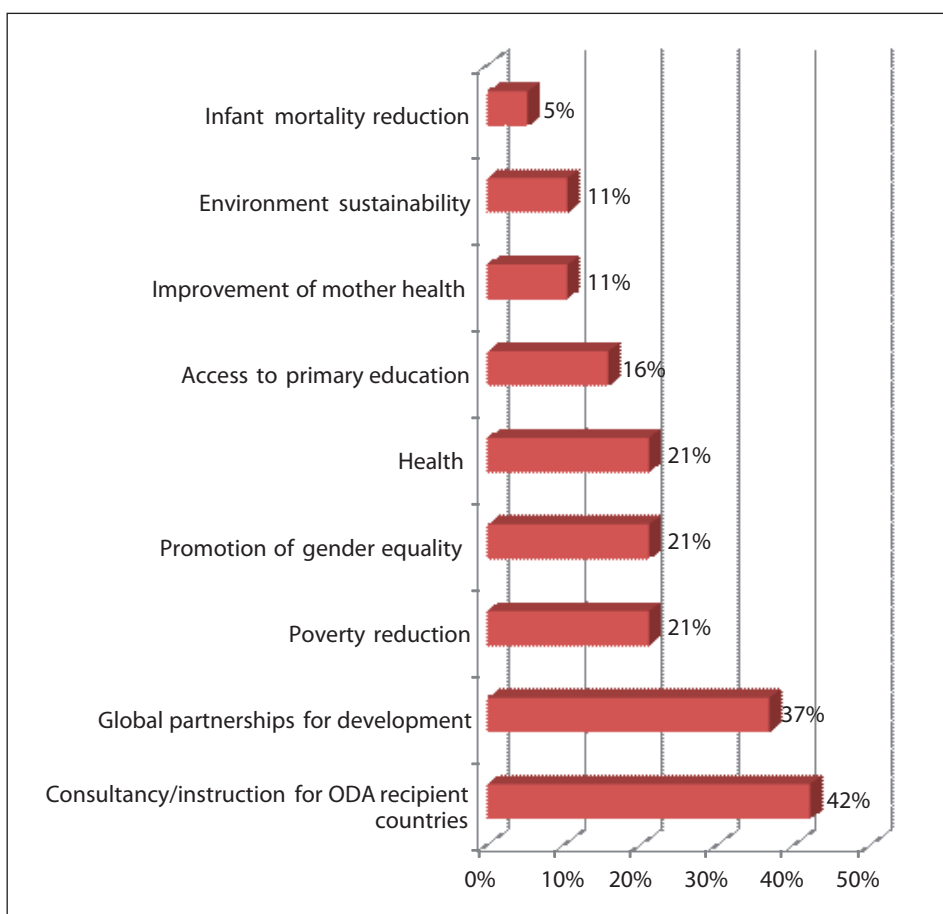
**Chart 1. CSOs specific field of activities within ODA field**



The CSOs activities for Development in priority countries aim at providing consultancy and offering expertise in transition for the Developing countries (42%), at creating partnerships for development (37%) or at reducing poverty (21%). Less importance is given to environment sustainability (11%) or to infant mortality reduction (5%), for example.

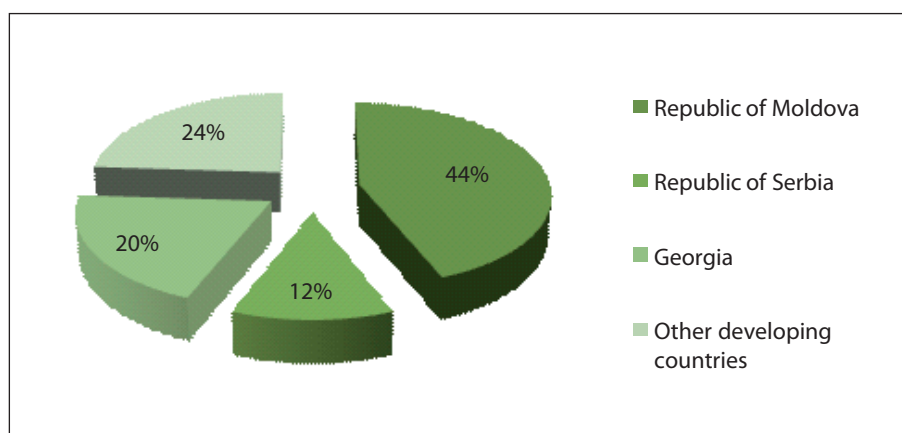
<sup>6</sup> The Romanian National Strategy on ODA is available at [http://www.aod.ro/resurse/strategie\\_pcd\\_forma\\_finala-eng.pdf](http://www.aod.ro/resurse/strategie_pcd_forma_finala-eng.pdf)

**Chart 2. Fields of activity approached within ODA projects**



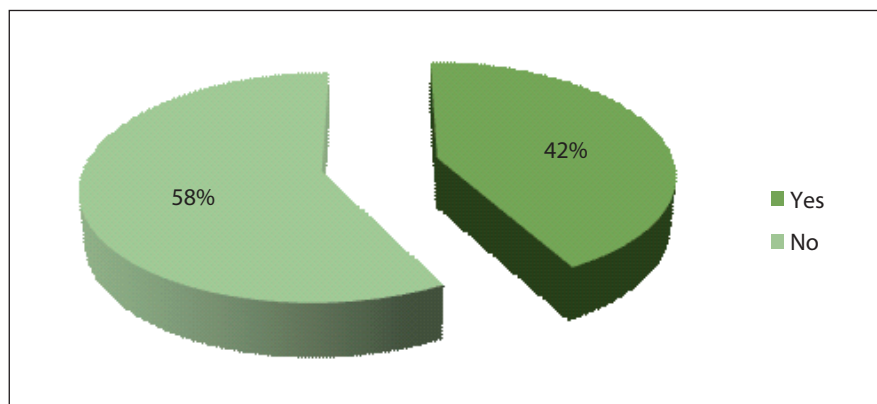
It is well known that the geographical proximity offers better opportunities for partnerships and successful projects and thus countries like Moldova or Serbia are preferred when implementing projects in the area of Aid for development. For technical and cultural considerations, Republic of Moldova (44%) is the country most of the Romanian NGOs' projects targeted in this context, during the past years. The next one is Georgia (20%).

**Chart 3. Countries where Romanian NGOs implement projects for aid for development**



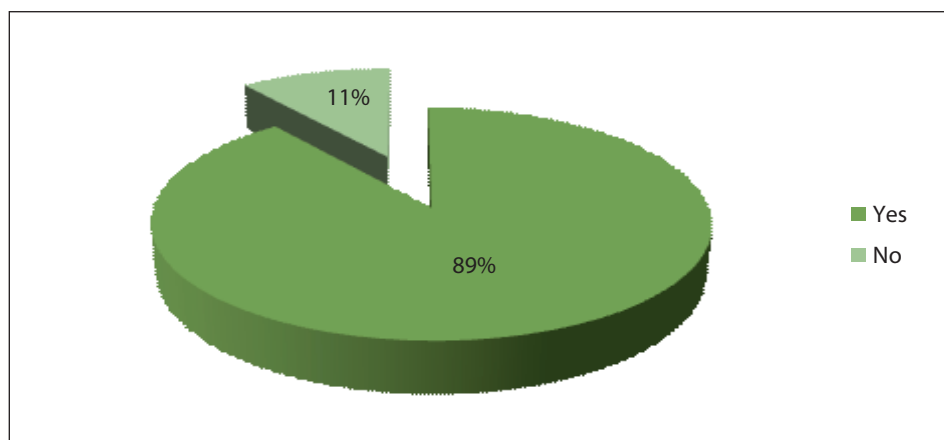
In order to meet the projects' objectives on development in the envisaged country, one needs to cooperate with the public administration and constantly advocate for improving the overall situation of the communities. Unfortunately, most of the Romanian NGOs working in aid for development do not necessarily cooperate with the local authorities (58%).

**Chart 4. Percentage of Romanian NGOs working with local public authorities within ODA recipient countries**



On the other hand, the cooperation between Romanian NGOs and local NGOs within ODA countries is significant (89%).

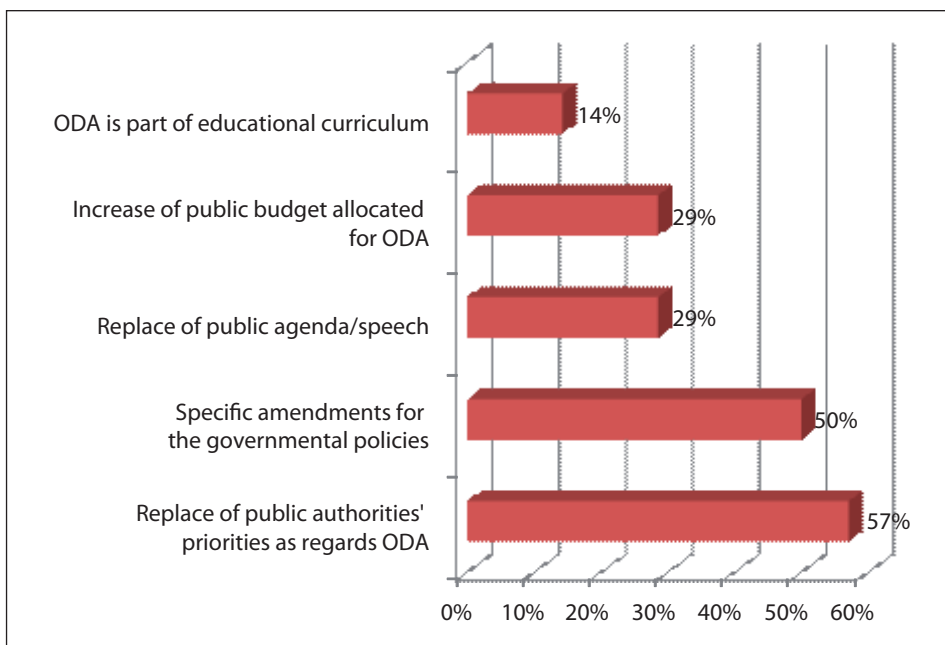
**Chart 5. Percentage of Romanian NGOs working with local NGOs within ODA recipient countries**



As for the results of the ODA projects, Romanian CSOs are concerned with the governmental priorities regarding ODA budget. As it was mentioned especially during the focus group, the public authorities' priorities are more or less inadequate in comparison to the problems and challenges of ODA mechanism of funding.

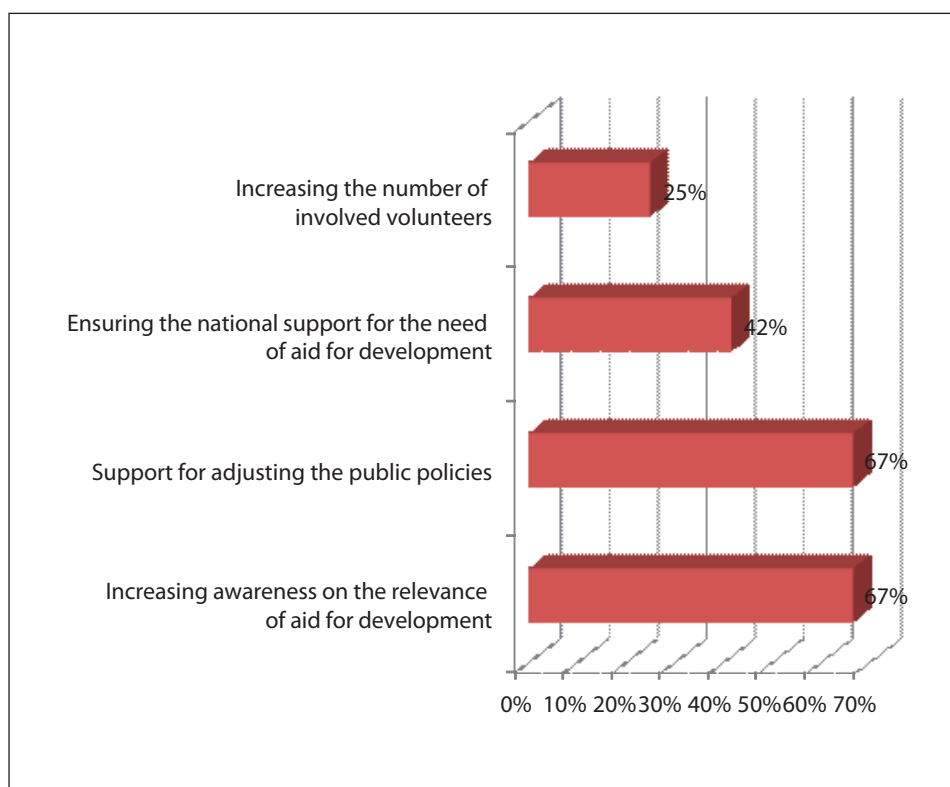
57% of the interviewed NGOs said that they aim at modifying the public authorities' priorities with regards to ODA, 50% targets to drafting specific amendments for the public policies and only 29% aim at increasing the MFA budget allocated to ODA projects.

**Chart 6. The ODA projects' impact**



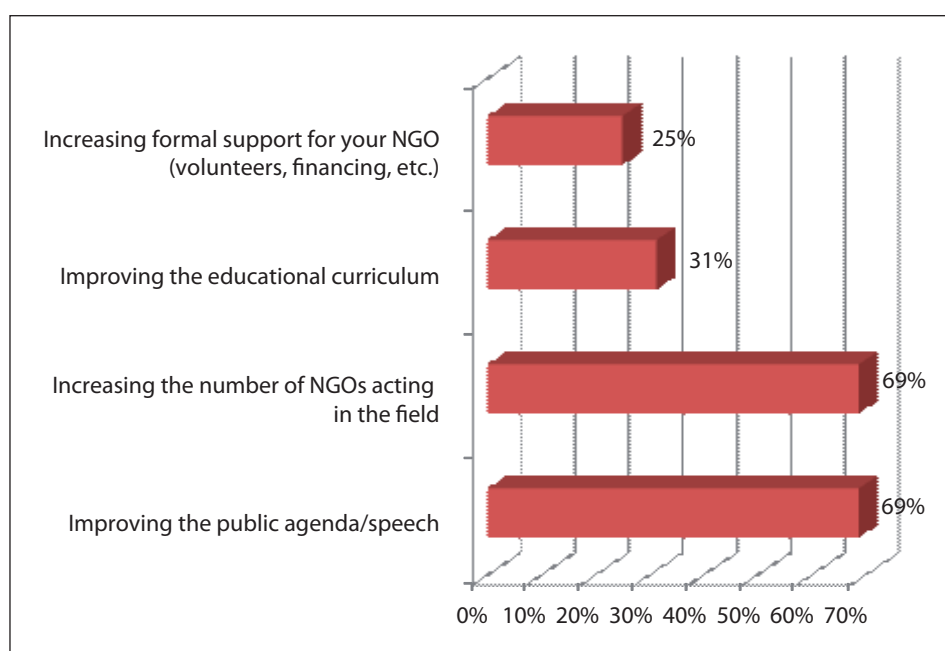
The public discourse in Romania makes no reference to ODA funds/priorities etc. as if the topic is only accessible to some initiated specialists. Nor is the media interested to this important resource of strengthening ties with potential partners in the targeted countries. Some journalists explained IPP that citizens will not understand the importance of supporting other countries' transition process since Romania currently has its own financial challenges. The advantages and benefits on a medium and long run at international level should unquestionably be additionally explained when contributing as an ODA donor. That is why CSOs must assume this explanation role at the public level. Thus, the main purpose of the CSOs' advocacy campaigns is to increase awareness on the relevance of Aid for Development (67%), to improve public policies on ODA funding (67%) as well as to ensure the national support for the ODA projects (42%).

**Chart 7. Purpose of NGOs' advocacy campaigns within ODA projects**



At the same time, CSOs' projects aim at improving the public discourse on ODA mechanism on the ground of the benefits provided (69%) and also to increase the number of active NGOs in the field of aid for development (69%).

**Chart 8. Activities promoted by NGOs within the ODA projects**



In addition to all conclusions that were already mentioned, the NGOs' representatives mentioned the following main challenges for the ODA projects implementation in Romania:

- Insufficient funds, in their opinion, that are allocated to ODA;
- Lack of proper information and action at the level of the civil society sector within aid for development;
- Lack of assumed priorities for ODA in Romania as well as lack of strategy for investment within ODA countries;
- Lack of a vision and mission for ODA funds;
- Lack of NGOs expertise in relation to project implemented through ODA - during the past years, ODA funds were not directly distributed to national NGOs but to intermediaries such as UNDP;
- Lack of transparency in administration and distribution of ODA funds;
- Lack of awareness-raising programs/campaigns for the need to have ODA funds;

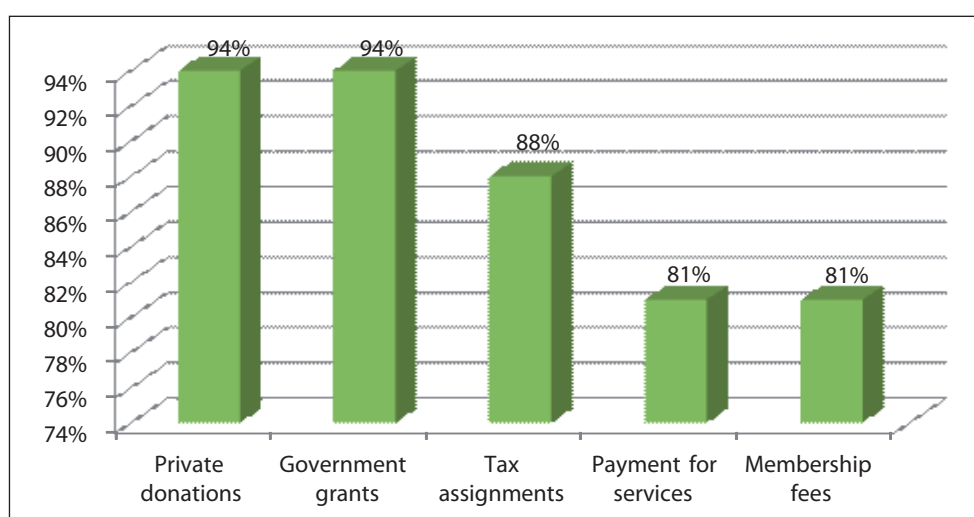
As a response to all above weaknesses and challenges, the interviewed NGOs are also proposing a set of recommendations in order to stimulate the civil society to become more involved in ODA projects/partnerships/activities:

- A proper and transparent mechanism for NGOs oriented to increasing the access to ODA funds;
- Designing a partnership between the Government and the with national NGOs in order to accomplish the envisaged results in ODA actions;
- Including the ODA priorities on the public agenda along with the adequate importance for Romania's image at the European and international level;
- Direct support for NGOs in accessing ODA funds;
- Stimulating the private sector to contributing with expertise and further investment to the economical development of ODA recipients.

#### 4.2. Aspects regarding the NGOs profile within ODA field

Most of the NGOs' financing sources for work on aid for development in other countries come from private donors on the grounds of submitted calls for proposals (94%) or from governmental resources (94%) namely the Ministries' budget, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the ODA budget, or the Ministry of Education for scholarships. Also, there is a significant financial support from the members of the organizations (81%). Nonetheless, NGOs provide services on a payment basis (81%) which helps them promote their activities and raise awareness on ODA relevance in the public space.

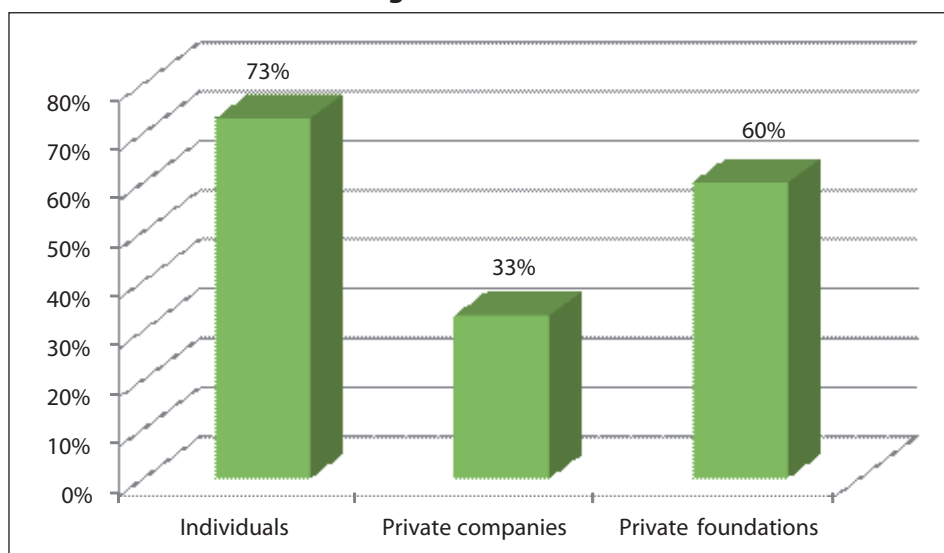
**Chart 9. Percentage of financing sources within the NGOs' overall budget**





When it comes to fundraising in order to accomplish development objectives, NGOs are supported especially by individuals (73%) or by private foundations (60%).

**Chart 10. Percentage of the main donors for NGOs**



## 5. Good practices of NGOs' activity within development sector

There are a number of good practices encountered in the field of Aid for Development at the level of the nongovernmental sector. The *National Platform* (a coalition of NGOs) is the most representative when it comes to organizing conferences and meetings attended by NGOs and the development stakeholders both from Romania and from ODA beneficiary countries (Moldova, Serbia, Georgia, etc). *The Black Sea NGO Forum* or the *Romanian School for Development* – projects financed by the Romanian MFA – are other examples of activities where governmental officials and civil society had the opportunity of discussing common issues and areas of concerns such as social entrepreneurship and community development in rural areas, transparency and public integrity, youth policies and youth development.<sup>7</sup> In 2011, the Romanian NGO Platform – FOND became a full member of the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development – CONCORD.

The most recent projects of FOND are as follows:

- The 5th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum Participation and inclusion for responsible development” 24th – 25th of October 2012, Bucharest (financed by Romanian MFA);
- The Romanian Development Camp, 5th Edition, 11-13 July 2012, Predeal - 2015 and Beyond: the Roadmap for Effectiveness (financed by Romanian MFA)
- The Romanian-Georgian Civil Society Initiative, 23rd – 24th of February, 2012, Tbilisi-Georgia (financed by Romanian MFA);
- Together: Romania - The Republic of Moldova Civil Society Forum, 27th – 28th of May 2011, Chisinau, The Republic of Moldova (financed by Romanian MFA)
- FOND Seminar on Initiating a National Multi-Stakeholder Group on Development/Global Education, 13th of May 2011, Bucharest;
- AidWatch Report 2011 - EU self interest inflates aid by over 5bn Euro, say NGOs.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.trialog-information-service.blogspot.co.at/2012/11/the-black-sea-ngo-forum-2012.html>

<sup>8</sup> Information accessed on the official website available at <http://www.fondromania.org/eng/pagini/index.php>

Some other projects were implemented in 2007 – 2011 within the ODA budget by the United Nations Development Program, the most recent ones being the following:

- Technical assistance project to the Government of the Republic of Moldova in the process of harmonization of the national legislation with the 'acquis communautaire', 2011 – UNDP Chisinau;
- Technical assistance project aimed at supporting the drafting of a research and innovation strategy within the project 'FOR Moldova', 2011;
- Support for the development of registry for small arms at the benefit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Republic of Moldova – UNDP Chisinau;
- Strengthening of trust and post-conflict reconstruction in Abkhazia, Georgia, 2011 – UNDP Tbilisi;
- The first edition of the European Cooperation Initiative devoted to civil society representatives from Romania and Georgia, 2011.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the above mentioned important actors, local NGOs have also implemented specific projects within ODA policy which contributed to civic and democratic development of low-income countries. Here are few examples of such good practices:<sup>10</sup>

- **Close to You Foundation** from Iasi has implemented, as partner, the project *Transfer of good practices in volunteering between NGOs from Romania and The Republic of Moldova* which aimed at increasing organizational and administrative capacity of NGOs in volunteer work, in order to create a stable group of volunteers, 2011
- **Save the children - Romania** has undertaken the national campaign *It is a right! Education for girls and women, now!* within the Global Campaign for Education, 2011
- **World Vision - Romania** has coordinated the project *Civic education and community participation for the youth!* in partnership with World Vision - Georgia, financially financed from the ODA budget in Romania, 2011
- **Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania** based in Cluj Napoca implemented, in 2010, the project *Play!* which was intended to increase students', scholars', teachers', NGO members' awareness of the education for development in order to involve them in initiatives for the local and global community development.

Based on the information summarized in the Chapter, it is obvious that Romanian NGOs have a lot of good practices to transfer in the developing countries but they encounter specific barriers when it comes to financial support or allocations' transparency and accuracy. That is why we will hereinafter introduce the NGOs' main opinions with regards to the challenges they face within the ODA approach, based on a comprehensive interviewing activity that the project team carried out in 2012.

## 6. Civil society's challenges when implementing development aid projects

One significant problem identified by the representatives of NGOs is the frequent personnel rotations at the level of the Governmental Unit for Official Development Assistance within the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As it is considered a technical field of action, the experts and employees are really concerned about the frequent rotations, according to the interviews that have been organized by the project team within the current documentation. The arguments for being regarded as the "Cinderella" of the Romanian foreign relations are linked to the priorities and significance invested by the Ministry in the ODA activities. Hereinafter, the main conclusions of the NGOs pointed out that Romanian diplomacy has developed no strategy or concrete measures to really benefit from the ODA activities, identified and promoted no priority, as any donor State would do in the current circumstances. Romania seems not to be aware of the great visibility and advantages

<sup>9</sup> Information accessed on the official website available at <http://www.fondromania.org/eng/pagini/member-announcements.php>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.fondromania.org/pagini/proiecte-derulate-in-anul-2011.php>

it could gain both at European and international level for making the action/the results in the ODA field more visible. In this respect, according to the latest information collected as part of the documentation phase of the project, the ODA Unit is preparing to initiate a communication strategy and a coherent promotion campaign in the upcoming future.

The real problem Romania is facing when talking about ODA is related to the lack or scarcity of information that NGOs and ultimately the citizens have about the decisions and macro-directions in the field. The civil society sector feels it is not taken into consideration as the main partner within the ODA projects but merely as an incidental player involved in this field. Despite FOND and other NGOs specific civic pressure upon the representatives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the efforts should be more coherent and visible at the governmental level in increasing the public opinion's level of information.

The National Strategy for International Cooperation for Development Policy dates back to 2006, the priorities and actions established at that point obviously needing a serious update. Romania should better identify the needs and priorities for development in priority countries and the main fields of action according to its strategic socio-economical interests. The UNDP Partnership has the aim of assessing the needs and priorities for development but it should not be seen as the only valid vehicle for such task. Presently, the Ministries are only distributing the allocated amount of money from ODA resources with unfortunately no follow-up decisions or results' evaluation. The Romanian overall turnout could become significant if Romania will elaborate on the donor advantages that derive from participating in this policy.

Although the National Platform of NGOs for Development – FOND has organized a series of seminars with the explicit purpose of improving the National Strategy for Development and implicitly the funding directions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not yet adopted the necessary steps to address those needed changes. Unfortunately, at this very moment, there is no official information about the volume of financial support allocated for countries like Moldova, Georgia or Serbia. Public reaction would certainly be of disapproval, only because the governmental authorities do not transparently explain the fundamentals and benefits of being a donor of development aid. ODA funding is taken mostly as an obligation instead of a constructive commitment to participate in a medium/long development vision.

Despite all agreements and general treaties signed with Moldova, for example, in the specific field of Development, there is no strategic framework for cooperation. In the AidWatch National Report, recently released by FOND, an expert from Moldova outlined the need of a general framework of cooperation to strengthen to development ties between Romania and Moldova. Such a document which will define technical aspects regarding the funding mechanism, procedures applicable, the elements of cooperation with other donators on the same sectors of interest in order to achieve the envisaged results, the sectors funded by Romania or the goals of ODA Romania in Moldova, etc. There will be only with such an approach that Romania will make the most use of its resources by participating in ODA policy.

The specific role of the NGO sector remains of implementing projects for raising awareness with regards to ODA engagement and its benefits as well as of exercising civic pressure on the public authorities and politicians in order to publically underline ODA's importance within overall Romania's external affairs. Through the conferences, round tables and other reunion formats of this kind the NGOs create the necessary framework for debating the proper solutions of making ODA policy more effectively coordinating with the national priorities.

Unfortunately, not always the results of the debates are properly assumed by the responsible Ministry in Romania thus it happens that very often the good ideas and solutions are mostly kept within the nongovernmental sector and analysts. Moreover, as the AidWatch National Report mentions, the cooperation projects between Romanian and Moldovan NGOs within the scope of ODA funds are sporadic since 2007 to present. One reason that explains this situation is related to the lack of strategic cooperation approach in Romania with regards to Moldova. Another reason concerns the insufficient transparent funding mechanism within the ODA budget. Only in 2012, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized the first transparent Call for projects within the

ODA budget, under which circumstances the nongovernmental sector hoping that this would be a successful beginning in light of transparency and efficient funds assessments.

Until 2012, projects within ODA budget were implemented through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP office from Romania, based on a selection process that is not publicly known. From one point of view, one could name the reasons for this decision of outsourcing the actual implementation of specific activities: lack of institutional capacity to monitor and evaluate the project, impartiality and effectiveness in achieving results already proven by UNDP, previous experience in implementing projects for development, etc. In terms of effective use of available resources dedicated to ODA, the Romanian civil society's point of view is that the intermediaries tend to have significant administrative costs for administrating the funds instead of allocating resources for actual activities on the field.

At a more general level, the situation that existed in Romania could be assessed also from the following point of view. A potential conflict of interests may arise as UNDP represents both the beneficiary and the evaluator of ODA allocated funds in Romania. This is why the research team advocates for more transparency of the allocation and implementation of ODA policies, a challenge for the ODA Unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which, as a matter of fact, recently decided to launch a call for proposals addressed to local applicants (NGOs, local and central public administration, journalists, etc.). Romania already has the law on public financing projects (Law no. 350/2005) that could easily be used by the MFA, with some adjustments, related to ODA funds' specificities, in working with the national partners for implementing specific activities. Of course, this situation might take into consideration additional specialization of the ODA Unit's personnel which would, in the end, be possible through the funds for technical assistance.

As for the financing mechanism, NGOs identified 3 potential scenarios for the future management of ODA funds, with their pros and cons arguments related, namely:

- Administrated by a private entity but this should take into consideration a costs-benefits analysis
- Administrated directly by the MFA under specific conditions like specialization of the personnel
- Administrated indirectly by an external entity with experience like UNDP, USAID, etc.

Other commentaries referred to the influence of politics upon ODA daily activities, few participants to the survey suggesting that the ODA Unit should no longer be the subject of political changes within the MFA staff.

Finally, any commentary about the impact of already implemented projects would be incipient since there are no centralized and verified implementation results of the ODA projects since 2007 when Romania became a donor to nowadays.

The final conclusions of the civil society are that Romania should support especially those countries where there certainly exists a potential of collaboration within the commercial field or a strategic interest (for example, Africa). ODA support should be better valued in the sense that it should be integrated within the entire system of Romania's foreign relations, thus complementing other international affairs' efforts. An integrated mechanism for financing the ODA countries' needs in correspondence with their evolution within those fields could be drafted by the Romanian authorities in consultation with the nongovernmental partners, in order to coherently design and implement an effective external policy. The Aid Watch National Report actually admits that in Moldova, the ODA funds should be prioritized by firstly covering the urgent needs of inhabitants (in fields like health, public services, education, etc.).

Taking into account its availability and willingness to be an active partner for the Romanian Government, the cooperation with ODA recipient countries at the level of civil society could be strengthened from a technical view (procedures, clear mechanism for funding) and also from the perspective of human resources (reliable and stable for the implementation and evaluation of ODA projects). One solution proposed by NGOs would be to set up an Agency for Development and Cooperation in Romania which will be in charge of direct implementation of projects for development. The advantages of such an Agency located in Romania would

be the elimination of intermediaries in funding ODA projects and directly allocate resources depending on the needs, as well as the possibility to verify and follow-up on the invested funds.

As far as specific contribution mechanisms are concerned, such as the scholarships that Romania is provided at a large scale, the civil society agrees these should not be evaluated as ODA support, as they are considered now, because such support does not return in the beneficiary countries, in the end. Still, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses the OECD criteria when reporting about ODA funding and that is why scholarships are included as ODA resources. With these methodological clarifications that are required by the civil society, more public information is demanded by the civil society as it would very much like to plan a greater role in implementing successful, sustainable projects in the area of ODA policy.

## **7. Main Conclusions and Recommendations**

Government officials need to be more aware of the significant contribution that NGOs may bring to increasing the impact of the cooperation for development policy. This does not only concern the implemented projects as they are not a scope in itself, but mostly the results and mechanisms available for increasing the CSO's impact to ultimately contribute to better monitoring and evaluating the ODA allocations thus increasing its impact. ODA policies should be an important part of the overall international cooperation effort of a State and Romania has to use all these opportunities for increasing its impact abroad while directly contributing to enforcing effective development policies.

The documentation at the level of CSO in Romania proved to be extremely helpful in the overall efforts of making the Development policies more effective. The input of the CSO was very useful as they openly pointed out that:

- The public should be informed about the ODA role and relevance on international and economic relations which, in the end, represent a benefit for any participating country, including Romania. ODA should not be perceived as an obligation but mostly as a mechanism for mutual national benefits and a constructive commitment.
- The National Strategy for International Cooperation for Development Policy needs to be updated as soon as possible in Romania in order to meet current goals that are appropriate for developing countries' needs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently adopted the Multiannual Strategy upon Assistance for Development for 2011 – 2015 which only emphasizes the general aspects regarding Romania's contribution as a donor for development. Further developments have to be taken into consideration. Also, this document reaffirms the need for Romania to reach 0,33% of GDP for ODA allocations until 2015. Unfortunately, in 2010 Romania allocated only 0,07% GDP instead of 0,17% as it was the objective established by the European Union.
- NGOs should really become the first partner for the MFA in the implementation and evaluation of ODA funds. They need to be involved in all consultations phases and in all related actions concerning the decisions about the ODA implementation mechanisms.
- In order to effectively implement and evaluate the results of ODA projects within MFA budget, CSO finally launched the idea of setting up an Agency for Development and Cooperation in Romania with the role of optimal use of resources in the framework of cooperation policies.

## Appendix

*List of NGOs member in the National Platform for Development FOND Romania<sup>11</sup>*

- Civil Society Development Foundation
- CENTRAS
- Caritas Romania
- Save the Children Romania
- Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania
- Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania
- World Vision Romania
- Foundation Partners for Local Development
- The Citizens Advice National Bureau Association
- Association for Organizational Development SAH ROM
- SynergEtica Foundation
- Pro Democracy Association
- AUR Organization
- Contraceptive and Sexual Education Society
- Close to You Foundation
- Center for Resources CREST
- Foundation for Democratic Change
- Euro-Asia Promotion and Cultural Foundation
- Estuar Foundation
- Association of Francophone Students
- Free Youth Romania Foundation
- Pro Women Foundation
- A.R.T.Fusion Association
- « Youth for the Future» 2006 Association
- Association for European Integration “Repere”
- Pro Vobis - The National Volunteer Center
- Policy Center for Roma and Minorities
- ADRA Romania
- Little People Association
- Danube Edu
- Assistance and Programs for Sustainable Development - Agenda 21
- Intercultural Institute Timisoara
- Association of Cross-border Cooperation “Euroregiunea Dunarea de Jos”

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*Online resources*

Millenium Development Goals <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/global.shtml>

TRIALOG <http://www.trialog-information-service.blogspot.co.at/2012/11/the-black-sea-ngo-forum-2012.html>

FOND Romania

- <http://www.fondromania.org/pagini/proiecte-derulate-in-anul-2011.php>
- <http://www.fondromania.org/eng/pagini/member-organisations.php>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fondromania.org/eng/pagini/member-organisations.php>



- <http://www.fondromania.org/eng/pagini/member-announcements.php>

Romanian National Strategy on International Development Cooperation [http://www.aod.ro/resurse/strategie\\_pcd\\_forma\\_finala-eng.pdf](http://www.aod.ro/resurse/strategie_pcd_forma_finala-eng.pdf)

Unit for Official Development Assistance – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<http://www.aod.ro/>

Busan Partnership for Effective development Cooperation

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm>

# SLOVAK REPUBLIC

## Introduction

In order to fully comprehend the current role civil society organizations (CSOs) play in Slovakia's official development assistance (SlovakAid, ODA), one should first of all examine the historical background of the development of the system itself and all the circumstances surrounding it. When reviewing the way in which the Slovak system of ODA has developed and the role CSOs play within that, consideration should be made of the domestic political situation and Slovakia's changing position in international relations, stemming from domestic political changes as well as institutional capacities.

For Slovakia's civil society, the period 1993 – 1998<sup>1</sup> can be seen as one of years spent learning, gaining experience and building up the sector. Following 40 years of severe suppression and a non-existent dialogue with the government, civil society began to create its institutions and build the associated personnel, technical and infrastructural capacities, partnerships and sectoral focus. This was made all the easier by the fact that this was a period in which significant foreign funding was made available, aimed primarily at the building of civil society in Slovakia. The fact that civil society was awarded this funding considerably contributed to its improved abilities to use funding responsibly in every sense: relevance, efficiency and transparency of use. During this period, only a few organizations were able to or had the capacity and/or the will to look beyond the country's borders.<sup>2</sup> One of the pioneers of Slovak CSO development work was "eRko – Christian Children Communities Movement," who began operating in Africa in 1995.<sup>3</sup>

The second period (1998 – 2003/4) is far more relevant in terms of ODA and particularly CSOs. First of all, the domestic political situation had improved significantly due to the change of government. Consequently, Slovakia found itself back on track towards the EU, and became an OECD member. This enriched Slovak political discourse with the words "accountability" and "development aid". Slovakia transformed itself from recipient to donor and the Foreign Ministry, responsible for implementing ODA, began creating its own mechanisms, institutions, conceptual frameworks and procedures relating to ODA in line with the clearly defined priorities of foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On January 1, 1993, Slovakia became an independent state and started building its own identity, statehood and institutions. This was also a period in which Slovakia was labeled the black hole of Europe due to the authoritarian rule of Vladimír Mečiar and his HZDS political party (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia).

<sup>2</sup> It should be pointed out that at that time Slovakia itself was still a recipient of development assistance.

<sup>3</sup> It would be appropriate to mention that eRko was and still is, for the most part, an organization that deals primarily with children and young people in Slovakia. More information at [www.erko.sk](http://www.erko.sk).

<sup>4</sup> A strategic document entitled Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance: 2003–2008 was published by the Foreign Ministry in 2002, setting out priorities, goals, principles and partners.

At the same time, improvements in Slovakia's political situation and membership of the "rich club" meant a significant cut in funding from international agencies, both private and state, (mainly those from the USA) aimed primarily at supporting the work of civil society. Faced with this shortage of funds for their own development or for activities in Slovakia, some CSOs partly turned their attention to other, mostly supplementary, activities. Some, having previously been involved in projects relating to the political, economic and social transition in Slovakia and CSO development, turned their attention to sharing "transition know-how" with countries in Southeastern and Eastern Europe. Others, primarily Christian organizations, often became involved in projects led by Austrian charities especially in Africa. New organizations whose founding documents featured "development" as a key word began to appear as well.

The fact that the topic of ODA did not significantly attract the attention of the political or financial elites, since it was not part of the EU membership negotiations and there were no significant sums of money involved, was one of the important factors that actually enabled greater involvement of CSOs/experts. This involvement ranged from being present at consultations, during comment sessions, at workshops, seminars or during the wording of documents when the conceptual, legislative and institutional framework was being prepared and at the same time from being among those to first officially implement bilateral projects.

In part CSOs were able to wield such influence due to the fact that Slovakia's institutions had limited human resources and practically no experience. Thus the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) decided to build on the existing capacities, experience, partnerships and contacts CSOs had. Initially, the motive behind the selection of partner countries was two-fold – a combination of established foreign policy goals and the strong involvement, experience and presence of CSOs in the country. Despite signs of rationalization and a shift towards the OECD mainstream, many of the original partner countries remained. Over the last 10 years, Slovakia has cooperated bilaterally with 25 countries, to a large extent through CSOs.<sup>5</sup> The increasing role played by the CSOs during this period and the common goals they were to achieve led to the idea of establishing an umbrella organization that would define and promote the shared interests of CSOs. The Platform of Slovak Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGDOs) has become extremely active in raising key issues concerning development cooperation in Slovakia.

The third period which can be framed by Slovakia's EU membership and implementation of the two medium-term ODA strategies<sup>6</sup> is characterized by the institutional and legislative changes in ODA – all realized in cooperation with the CSOs –, a decrease in the number of project countries, the creation of an administration and contracting unit to manage bilateral projects and by the fact that the relationship between the Slovak Foreign Ministry and the Platform achieved new heights when both signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2010. At this time the CSOs were and still are very active in awareness raising campaigns and they participate in creating program documents such as Country Strategy Papers (Kenya, Sudan, and Afghanistan<sup>7</sup>), the National Strategy for Global Education, the Volunteer Sending Program and they also commented on legislation (although often not effectively), such as the law on development assistance, the law on subsidies, and the law on volunteers. CSOs campaigned and voiced their opinions through various publications and at expert events on, for instance, making ODA more effective and transparent. They also continually called for the creation and implementation of a Slovak ODA monitoring and evaluation system.

### **CSOs join hands for development**

The idea of establishing an umbrella organization of CSOs first emerged in 1998 at a conference in Austria on development cooperation in relation to EU enlargement, which was attended by several Slovak NGDOs. The

<sup>5</sup> For a small donor like Slovakia, maintaining a presence in Afghanistan, Albania, Burma Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba, Cambodia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Serbia, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Vietnam, Ukraine and Uzbekistan is well beyond its capacities and resources and is far removed from the label of effective donor. The number of priority countries varies from year to year; in 2012 the list of countries was reduced to Afghanistan, Kenya, South Sudan and countries in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership.

<sup>6</sup> "Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance: 2003–2008," Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2003 and "Medium-Term Strategy for Official Development Assistance: 2008–2013," Bratislava: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> None of the Country Strategy Papers has been finalized yet and all are a matter for discussion between the MFA and the CSOs at present.

Platform became a reality five years later and initially had 15 members. It is one of the founding members of the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD) established in 2003. As already mentioned, in May 2010, the NGDO Platform and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic signed a Memorandum of Understanding whereby the NGDO Platform was granted the status of an official partner of the Ministry for reviewing and preparing key documents related to development policies and development cooperation. The parties involved thus formulated an overall framework for collaborating in development and humanitarian assistance.<sup>8</sup>

Currently there are 31 organizations in the Platform. There are 23 regular members and 8 observers who are most active, relevant and indispensable in Slovakia's international development cooperation performing development work in education, healthcare and social infrastructure as well as undertaking projects on the transfer of transition know-how i.e. "technical assistance." There are also members implementing projects in humanitarian assistance. The Platform represents the common interests of its member organizations, both at home and abroad, strives to influence policy-making in development cooperation and raises public awareness of issues related to development assistance.

The position of the platform, as the official partner of the Foreign Ministry has been strengthened by a regular though modest annual grant of 40,000 euros. Despite the fact that this was initially seen as a kind of institutional grant to support the Platform's activities on the basis of its own plans/decisions, the reality is that the Ministry also has a say on what the money should be spent on. The grant is basically used to expand advocacy and ODA awareness raising campaigns not only among the general public, but also among politicians (especially parliamentarians), decision-makers or the media.

The establishment of the Platform has undoubtedly contributed to the smooth and gradual development of a productive, transparent, structured and standardized dialogue with the government.

### **EU awaits Slovak CSOs**

Slovak CSOs are mainly active within SlovakAid schemes or schemes by smaller endowments and foundations, and are less well represented in EU activities in development countries. Some CSOs have successfully implemented projects funded by the EU. However, most of the projects carried out were implemented in Slovakia and not in the development country in question and focused on awareness raising, education and advocacy.

In development countries, Slovak CSOs usually implement EU funded projects as partners and/or as associates involved in projects by other organizations.

The current situation is the result of the following factors. First of all, many CSOs are rather small in terms of their personal and financial capacities and have limited capabilities and capacities for managing projects. Secondly, the PR/lobbying conducted within the EU by Slovak state institutions on behalf of CSOs is not very developed yet. Thirdly, most of the organizations lack their own financial resources and operate using project-based budgeting. Thus, an EU funded project involving a 10–25% co-financing share is too much of a burden. Furthermore, Slovak CSOs lack experience and presence in the field compared to old member states which have had field offices in developing countries for decades now, making it difficult for Slovak CSOs to compete.

Finally, despite declaring its support for approved EU projects in the form of providing the grants required for the co-financing of all EU approved projects, the Foreign Ministry, in fact, supports projects selectively. This causes uncertainty and increases the doubts of CSOs as to whether they should participate in calls for EU projects.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on the Platform visit its website <http://www.mvro.sk/en/>.

## Methodology

The methodology used in the research assessing the current role of Slovak CSOs was based on desk research as well as a survey via questionnaires, individual interviews and focus groups. The survey respondents included CSO representatives working in development cooperation, representatives of Slovakia's Foreign Ministry, SlovakAid Agency and independent experts.

Following the agreed methodology, the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFPA) identified CSOs working in development cooperation in three steps:

1. A search of the registry of non-governmental organizations using the following key words: development cooperation, international assistance, friendship society, democracy assistance, aid for development, post-crisis reconstruction, humanitarian aid, advocacy and awareness raising. We identified 109 organizations that might be involved in development work.
2. By analyzing the websites and annual reports of the CSOs initially identified and via personal consultations with their representatives, we excluded those which either do not consider themselves as development organizations or have not conducted any development work in the past. The list of CSOs was narrowed down to 56 organizations.
3. In the third stage we consulted representatives of the national NGDO Platform, the Foreign Ministry as well as SlovakAid Agency to identify the most relevant organizations and we arrived at the number of 34 CSOs. In the end, those most relevant for us were members of the national Platform (31). We approached these 34 organizations and requested that they participate in our research and complete questionnaires compiled during a methodological workshop in Sofia. We received 23 responses, of which 19 came from either regular members or observers from the national Platform.

Based on the information received from the questionnaires, we conducted individual interviews with the representatives of the most relevant organizations. Since the author of this paper is also a member of the chairing body of the Slovak NGDO Platform, he has discussed the research findings and hypothesis during regular sessions. We have also built on existing research and attempted to provide new perspectives and recommendations.

## 1. Analysis of CSOs development role

The data collected confirmed our initial hypothesis on the position and role of Slovak CSOs in the system. The following is a summary of the data collected and subsequent individual interviews.

### What CSOs do

The majority of Slovak CSOs working in development assistance consider themselves to be service providers. Only 8.7% of respondents stated the opposite. The majority of Slovak CSOs are not purely focused on a single type of activity; rather, they provide a variety of services. Around 62% manage development projects, nearly 24% provide technical support for disaster relief and reconstruction, approximately 38% recruit and use volunteers for their intervention work, and 52.4% clicked the "other" option. When specifying, they added education, research, promotion of public debates, sales of tickets for cultural and educational events, social services and health education, health extension services, social and legal services assistance for children and young people, training, consultation and evaluation, networking, awareness raising, and funding management. As we can see, the work of CSOs is rather extensive in scope and this is closely interconnected with the limited resources in the system and the fact that they have to perform most of the work on their own.

The data on the territorial presence of CSOs was not surprising either. Roughly 55.5% of respondents are based only in countries that are, or have been for some time at least, SlovakAid priority countries. Around 36%

operate primarily in SlovakAid priority countries; however, they are active in other countries<sup>9</sup> as well. About 6% carry out projects solely in Slovakia and only one respondent implements a significant proportion of its projects in countries other than SlovakAid priority countries.

The vast majority (around 95%) of CSOs see education as one of their aims. Around three quarters provide stakeholder training/consulting in recipient countries,<sup>10</sup> about 36% focus on reducing health and poverty. The CSOs also concentrate on other forms of intervention, but do not consider these to be significant, i.e. they are not the ultimate goal of the project, but rather a consequence of their activities. Thus, nearly 27% of respondents say they also focus on gender equality, maternal health and environmental sustainability, and around 23% on child mortality.

The timescale of the development projects implemented is largely dependent on the fact that the majority of projects are realized through the SlovakAid scheme, which imposes a limit of a maximum of three years. The timescale differs depending on the call for project proposals and on sectoral and/or territorial priorities. Therefore, approximately 50% implement projects lasting 6–18 months, and roughly 45% between 2–3 years. Only 5% implement projects lasting longer than five years. As can already be figured out from the sectoral focus of Slovak CSOs, only a few work with international relief agencies (25%), mainly on short-term humanitarian programs. During development interventions, a considerable number (82%) of NGOs work in conjunction with local authorities and local CSOs. The explanation for this is simple. Given their limited resources, Slovak CSOs have never been able to develop a service delivery mechanism comparable to those operated by large international CSOs. Therefore they need to carefully select local partners for projects in development countries, thus engaging them in local development.

Only 7 respondents chose to answer questions on disaster relief and reconstruction. However, the length of intervention differs from case to case and varies from 1 month to 4, 6, 12, 18, 24 months. Only 2 respondents have the in-house capacity to react within 72 hours and only 4 of them work with international relief agencies. Four CSOs work with local authorities and local CSOs.

## **Funding and sources**

Slovak CSOs are usually relatively small organizations in terms of human resources and financing is project-based. Respondents suggested that annual funding comes from several sources: 86% cited private donations, 82% government grants, and 68% tax donations.<sup>11</sup> Roughly 36% of Slovak CSOs make a profit from payment for services and 23% boost their income through membership fees. The proportion of these resources in relation to the overall budget is of course different in each organization depending on the legal status, type of activities performed, and/or membership base. Only 82% of respondents felt comfortable answering this part of the question. However, analysis of the Annual Reports available shows that the overall picture of CSO funding was captured by the questionnaire.

Only two organizations see private donations as constituting a significant component of their budget – 90 and 95% respectively. Approximately one third of the respondents stated that private donations represented either 40 or 50% of their budgets. About 22% of the CSOs anticipate that either 20 or 30% of their budget comes from private donations. Around 25% state that less than 10% of their budget consists of private donations.

As assumed before, government grants play a significant role for the Slovak CSO community working in development assistance. For 30% of them government grants represent 30–40% of their budgets. While government grants constitute more than 50% in 22% of budgets and 22% of the organizations suggested that government grants are a significant part of their budgets (80–90%). For the rest, government grants represent less than 10% of their budget.

<sup>9</sup> Non- SlovakAid target countries numbered from between 1 and 4; the majority of CSOs operate in SlovakAid priority countries. Some have been active in non-SlovakAid countries that required humanitarian assistance.

<sup>10</sup> Stakeholder education and consulting is technically part of every intervention regardless of the area in which the CSO operates.

<sup>11</sup> Under Slovak law, taxpayers can donate 2% of their income tax to an NGO.



For around 60% of organizations working in development assistance, tax donations do not exceed 20% of budget. We have found only two organizations that claimed a higher share: 40 and 75% respectively.

In terms of money raised from private sources, around 75% suggested that one of their main source of donations was from individuals. Nearly 30% said they also receive funding from private companies and about 35% from foundations. Approximately 70% of respondents stated that the main fundraising methods used are direct marketing and face-to-face meetings; 40% organize public and/or charity events as well as media campaigns; 35% sell products and 20% raise money through educational activities. Approximately 22% carry out fundraising activities in the development countries using the same methods as in Slovakia. The money is used mostly to support the activities of the local CSOs.

Approximately 90% of Slovak CSOs consider the good public image and reputation of their organization as the strongest point of their fundraising campaigns. Furthermore 42% see themselves as a strong partner for other stakeholders and 17% regard a large volunteer base for fundraising as their strong point.

### **Public awareness raising**

Almost every CSO of any significance in Slovakia is involved in some sort of awareness raising activity. About 90% state that their goal is to improve the level of awareness, while roughly 50% want to establish a popular support base for development. Around 37% are eager to provide support for change in official policy and only 18% conduct public awareness raising activities with the aim of increasing the number of volunteers.

Nearly 45% of CSOs conduct public awareness raising activities by providing quick and well informed responses to news items and/or by more occasional and ad hoc interventions. One quarter proactively campaign around issues that receive little mainstream attention, produce regular bulletins or newsletters and provide stories to journalists. Nearly 72% of CSOs promote development issues via public events, 62% via publications, 43% hold training sessions and 33% run media/PR campaigns. These activities are mostly directed at young people, government officials, educators and opinion leaders. Around 73% of CSOs work at the local level, 64% at the national, 59% at the European level and 41% at the international level as members of various consortia.

### **Advocacy and policy development**

Roughly 65% of the respondents state that they are involved in campaigns to change public policy. Around 80% of them do so on an "ad hoc and case by case basis targeting national audiences," 26.7% run these campaigns or are involved in them on an "ad hoc and case by case basis, targeting international audiences" and the same number of CSOs do so "on a regular basis and targeting national audiences." Only one of the largest Slovak NGOs, in terms of scope of activities and human resources, stated that it conducts campaigns to change public policy on a regular basis and targeting an international audience.

When asked about the main goal of their work in this field, more than half the CSOs participating in our research stated that they want to help uphold the international principles of development cooperation at the national or EU level. About a third of Slovak CSOs aim to ensure that the government upholds its commitments on supporting development and/or seek to amend specific government policies on development.

A total of 76.5% say they influence public policies on development issues by working in alliance with other CSOs operating in this field, whilst 42% campaign on issues that receive little mainstream attention. Roughly 25% do this through well informed research and analysis targeted at key decision makers as well as by producing regular bulletins or newsletters to attract public attention. When advocating policy change, the vast majority do so via public awareness raising events, by producing publications and through media campaigns. When asked about who their main supporters are in advocating for policy change, three quarters stated that young people were a crucial element, followed by opinion leaders and educators, government officials, and professional associations and unions.

Around 70% rated their advocacy efficiency as good (on a scale of 1 to 5 the majority clicked 3). Approximately 82% rated the success of their activities according to changes in public debate, 36% according to whether development issues became part of the official curricula. Only 18% measure success according to changes in government policies.

### **Human resources**

As mentioned above, most CSOs in Slovakia conduct project-based activities and financing. Therefore, the majority of staff are usually contracted for a specific project. This was confirmed by 64% of the respondents. Another 50% stated they have full-timers as well, while 32% also employ part-timers. Nearly 65% state that they have volunteers in their organizations. Following the introduction of new legislation in early 2013 in Slovakia which considerably increases social security contributions, we assume that the number of part-timers will significantly decrease.

The role of volunteers is seen in terms of providing services (as stated by 72%), training (45%), and fundraising (33%). Some organizations appoint volunteers to assist in advocacy campaigns and as mentors or counselors (around 25%). Volunteers are mainly recruited through advertisements at schools and universities (stated by 68.4%) or by word of mouth (58%). Roughly 42% are recruited during public events. Only one third of the respondents recruit volunteers in the partner country and all of them do so primarily by word of mouth. There is no difference in their job descriptions from those of the volunteers recruited in Slovakia.

### **Donors**

Only 30% of the CSOs participating in the research give grants to other bodies; of the total number of grants around 80% are awarded to organizations, while the rest go to both organizations and individuals. For this purpose, 40% of respondents use 10% of their budget on grants, 20% between 25 – 50% and another 40% more than half their budget. The grants are used to support African programs for children, development projects in education and health, for local government support, to support civil society, for public awareness campaigns and/or for individuals in need. In the field of development education, the main targets are youth activists and students (67% of the CSOs awarding grants) as well as teachers (33%).

Around 57% of the respondents considering themselves to be a donor participate in campaigning coalitions; however, only 33% see this as an activity that will significantly increase in the near future. Over the past 5 years, they have been involved in 33 campaigns.

## **2. Good practices**

Slovak CSOs face many problems concerning funding, personal capacities and sustainability. Despite these challenges, the NGOs implement projects that are relevant, effective, and efficient, providing help where help is needed. Since there are many notable projects, we will mention just three, selected using the following criteria: one of the first ODA projects that is still running is a project realized by a typical non-governmental development organization and the second is in the field of transfer of transition know-how.

The first one, as already mentioned, is the oldest project. Started in 1995 it has a three-fold goal: it is a public fundraising collection in aid of projects in Africa; it is a development education project; and at the same time it supports volunteer placements for projects in Africa. The project is organized by eRko – Christian Children Communities Movement and is entitled Dobrá novina (Good News). It is by far the most extensive activity conducted by eRko. During Christmas time, children sing carols and at the same time collect money used to support development projects in African countries. Dobrá Novina is also involved in developing training programs and education on solidarity. Children learn about life in extreme poverty and become aware of the lives of real people in Africa. Over the years, Dobrá novina has become the largest regular volunteer project in Slovakia. In 2012, 26,000 volunteers took part. In 2,719 groups they visited 79,917 families. Together with

the individual donors they collected 910,750 euros. Thus, Dobrá novina was able to support 28 projects in Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Rwanda.<sup>12</sup>

The second project is the People in Peril foundation, whose mission is to provide effective support for those suffering as a consequence of natural catastrophes, conflicts and authoritarian regimes. The foundation's activities range from humanitarian aid and development cooperation to human rights advocacy and education as well as awareness raising in Slovakia. It has a project in Central Kenya<sup>13</sup>, which focuses on increasing expert capacities in agriculture in relation to effective agricultural methods and agricultural potential. The project involves educating primary and high school graduates about food and thus increases their potential to be employed in the agricultural sector. It is implemented in the districts of East Laikipia, Central Laikipia and Kieni East in cooperation with 11 primary and high schools. It offers young people theoretical and practical education and through their own agricultural production better food for the students as well. By creating forest gardens, the project contributes to fostering neighboring communities and thus positively contributes to the environment. In the long term, the project will improve the food and income safety of the local community.

Many Slovak CSOs work in the area of transferring transition know-how. One of the most successful of these is the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. Via its cross-sectoral project, the National Convention on the European Union, it institutionalizes the public debate on various issues concerning the country's modernization, reforms and relations with the EU. The overall goal of the project is to stimulate a direct, transparent and open dialogue, based on sectoral interests, among all segments of society, in order to provide them with expert information and feedback from different networks, groups or local organizations. It seeks to engage the crucial segments of society in discussion on the key issues of European integration and its eventual success, as well as facilitate the establishment of groups based on common cross-political interests. It is a unique model which was successfully applied and developed by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association between 2003 and 2007 in Slovakia. Following the Slovak model, the project has been implemented in Serbia (2005–present), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2008–2011), Ukraine (2010–present), Moldova (2010–present), and Montenegro (2011–present).<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Civil society's challenges in implementing development aid projects

The research has revealed that Slovak CSOs have faced very similar and repeated problems since SlovakAid was launched. These include, first and foremost, the issue of limited budgets, hence the limited resources for CSOs, which leads to a capacity building problem at both CSO and state level.

#### Issue of funding and regulations

When analyzing the problems of Slovak CSOs working in development, one has to start with the limited resources available. NGOs provide around 50–55% (depending on the year) of the bilateral assistance administered and contracted via Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation.

For some years now bilateral assistance has accounted for roughly 25% of overall ODA (excluding the years of Slovak debt relief) and has not increased. SlovakAid Agency usually administers around 50–60% (sometimes even less) of all the resources for bilateral activities while approximately 7–9% of this is used to cover the Agency's operational expenditures. Additionally, approximately 9–10% of this money covers activities undertaken either by the Foreign Ministry and its Center for the Transfer of Integration and Reform Experience or is awarded directly (by embassies) to organizations in the recipient country via the "micro-grant scheme".<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> More at [www.erko.sk](http://www.erko.sk), [www.dobranovina.sk](http://www.dobranovina.sk).

<sup>13</sup> More at <http://www.clovekvohrozeni.sk/en/kenya-en-dev>.

<sup>14</sup> For more about the projects and the results, see: Slovakia – <http://eurokonvent.sk/>; Serbia – <http://eukonvent.org/pages/2010/index.htm>; Bosnia and Herzegovina – [www.eukonvent.ba](http://www.eukonvent.ba); Moldova – [www.conventia.md](http://www.conventia.md); Ukraine – [www.euconvention.org.ua](http://www.euconvention.org.ua); Montenegro – <http://eukonvencija.me/>.

<sup>15</sup> For more information, see the Annual Reports of the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation at [www.slovakaid.sk](http://www.slovakaid.sk). Data compared with the statistics annually published by the Foreign Ministry entitled Information on Slovak ODA.

The rest is shared among the stakeholders such as CSOs (50–55%, as mentioned already), businesses (around 35%) and the remainder goes to public administration, universities etc. The total amount of money spent on bilateral projects realized by CSOs thus stands at 2–2.5 million euros per year. This gives us an idea of how much money is distributed among the CSOs and of how much money there is in the state budget for ODA activity, despite the fact that technically this is the only visible foreign policy tool.

As suggested earlier, the majority of Slovak CSOs depend on the SlovakAid budget in order to conduct their activities abroad and it is a significant component in their projects. Many CSOs, of course, attempt to raise funds from private companies; however, given the country's communist history, in which much was provided at the state's expense, it takes longer to encourage people to adopt philanthropic values, without focusing solely on the domestic context. At present, as indicated by many CSOs, raising private funds for sensitive issues such as MDGs or for building democratic institutions in developing countries is a rather complicated issue. Despite all the effort it seems that, for the time being, a significant percentage of Slovak CSOs will have to cease their activities if they are unable to apply for SlovakAid funding.

This section would not be complete if we did not point out that SlovakAid is a rather bureaucratic system. The grants are subject to the regulations on funding from the state budget. This means that the Agency has to comply with restrictions that were never intended for funding this specific type of project, which rather complicates implementation.

Last but not least, the regulations (financial and technical) for CSOs and other stakeholders change almost on an annual basis, albeit often just slightly. All these problems make implementation rather difficult. This is also very closely connected to the fact that some parts of the laws on development assistance and subsidies are poorly worded and require amending.

#### *Flawed donor system*

One of the crucial problems affecting Slovak ODA is that there is a lack of planning and strategy. The Medium-term Strategy is not reflected in any country/region program document. The individual bilateral projects are selected without the project proposals being assessed by independent experts, which creates a great deal of uncertainty about the sustainability of the CSOs' activities abroad.<sup>16</sup> Strategic documents are not sufficiently considered in calls for proposals and the evaluation and peer review process of activities in developing countries is technically immature and unsystematic.

#### **Limited capacities**

The limited funding leads to limited capacities at the level of CSOs, MFA and the ODA system in general and means that there is a lack of support structures for those implementing projects in priority countries.

Since Slovakia's role in development is small and the country has a limited amount of money to spend on bilateral development and the majority of CSOs depend on SlovakAid resources, the number of CSOs actively involved in development activities is, naturally, relatively small. Apart from a few organizations, the CSOs also have limited budgets since the limited resources available for their activities are provided on a project basis and are earmarked. Thus, they are not able to build up personnel and institutional capacities, which would enable them to function at a higher level. Therefore, they cannot become involved in larger projects, take on greater responsibilities and engage in more extended international partnerships.

The scope for private–NGO partnerships in development activities abroad is fairly limited and fundraising campaigns for development projects are not as successful as economic developments would suggest.

Another problem in realizing development projects is the rather humble institutional setting and personal capacities of the institution responsible for the planning and administration of SlovakAid.

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<sup>16</sup> The project committee consists solely of representatives of the Foreign Ministry – department directors. The approval process lacks any expert input. Unfortunately, projects are approved on an annual basis without any strategic plan or vision.

The personnel capacities of SlovakAid Agency are not sufficient either. The project managers change practically every year, and the Agency leaders have not had an opportunity to set out a specific direction either. During the five years of its existence, the Agency has had six directors. The Foreign Ministry itself frequently changes those involved in planning and those responsible for ODA, as appointments are made to different embassies around the world (and not necessarily in developing countries) and none of them was in office for longer than two years.

Moreover, there is no institutional support for those implementing projects in many of the selected countries, i.e. there is no embassy or representative office and if there is, they do not have a staff member with the necessary expertise in development.<sup>17</sup>

### **Limited cooperation of state institutions beyond MFA**

It has to be stressed that CSOs have been actively supporting the development of philanthropy in Slovakia, organizing numerous events, publishing non-periodical materials and/or journals and newsletters. CSOs carry out awareness raising activities at a variety of levels, at schools and universities, and focus on decision-makers and policy-makers as well. Even though they organize numerous fundraising collections, the potential of these CSOs is, however, hampered by the financial restraints they face. Although nowadays people are more aware of the need for action on development abroad, especially thanks to the CSOs, development policy per se has yet to become a serious part of political discourse in Slovakia.

There are also difficulties in cooperating and agreeing on crucial aspects of policies with partners. Global education is perhaps the best example of a CSO awareness raising campaign and of the dedication with which these organizations pursue their goals. Despite the dismissive attitude of the Education Ministry, in particular, Slovak CSOs have initiated the creation of and co-authored a strategic document on global education – the National Strategy for Global Education for 2012–2016, adopted by the Slovak Government in 2012. Implementation, however, is another story.

## **4. Suggestions for problem areas and recommendations**

Slovak CSOs play a very significant role in the Slovak system of ODA. They help create the system and they comment and criticize on it and aspects relating to it. They set the topics for debate and at the same time they are an important part of the system. The bilateral component of SlovakAid would not exist without the CSOs. On the other hand, many of the CSOs working in development would not exist without SlovakAid either.

The Foreign Ministry took the strategic decision of delegating the implementation of the bulk of bilateral development projects to the CSOs, since they have the most experience, and it also decided to engage other sectors in development activities. There is no political interest or will to change this status quo. Therefore, it is up to both parties to institute the necessary changes to make development work more effective, efficient and to ensure that interventions occur where they are needed the most.

The recommendations will therefore be divided into two parts: The first set will suggest what should be done at the national and international level, i.e. what can be done to improve government input in development policy. This part also deals with proposals as to how government can stipulate CSO participation in development assistance. The second part will focus on the CSOs and the potential for improvement.

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<sup>17</sup> There are of course exceptions, such as the Slovak Embassy in Kenya, which is heading in a positive direction. There is a person employed who has previously worked in development cooperation; however, this entirely depends on the individual working at the Embassy and his/her previous experience with ODA at the MFA. Nevertheless, the Ministry does not have the capacity (nor a workable plan) to fill such positions at embassies in developing countries with staff that understand development issues.



## Governmental and international level

### *Funding:*

- to provide a long-term financial plan of the funds to be allocated to SlovakAid so that Slovakia can fulfill its international obligations as part of the EU/OECD;
- to considerably increase the amount of bilateral and regionally provided assistance (up to at least 50% of the ODA);
- to focus more deeply on multilateral assistance by formulating Slovak policy goals within the transnational development organizations;
- to secure cooperation with other donors so that resources can be accumulated;
- to implement strategies using different methods such as tenders;
- more active lobbying at the EU level in favor of Slovak foreign policy priorities;

### *Program and conceptual changes:*

- to decrease the number of priority countries;
- to create medium- and long-term strategic documents for priority countries/regions with specific sectoral medium- and long-term priorities;
- to reduce the proportion of infrastructure projects and focus on priorities with added value: health care, education, social services in specific developing countries (Africa) and sharing transition experiences with the countries in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership (focusing on Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus);
- to monitor the implementation of all strategic policies adopted by government – create an internal evaluation and monitoring system for bilateral assistance;
- to increase support for and promote the engagement of volunteers in third countries;
- to extend the timeframe of projects in order to assure sustainability of interventions;
- to be more active in presenting development work to the general public (to improve transparency and awareness);

### *Legislative aspects*

- to amend the law on development assistance and the law on subsidies in the competence of the Foreign Ministry in order to create more flexible and favorable conditions for all stakeholders enabling prompt action;

### *Human resources*

- to ensure stability in the key Foreign Ministry departments dealing with ODA – ODA department and SlovakAid Agency in order to ensure continuity;
- to ensure there is a qualified person at each embassy in SlovakAid priority countries to monitor and evaluate the impact of the project;
- to create a model of effective staff training in cooperation with CSOs with the aim of improving understanding of the program cycle and the specific nature of the work in development countries;

### *To encourage participation of civil sector:*

- to apply a program approach to financing projects as part of key sectoral priorities through long-term program contracts with key development stakeholders;
- to create a start-up fund mechanism for initiatives and CSO projects;



- to simplify the project implementation administrative mechanism;
- to finalize the official mechanism for involving NGOs in humanitarian aid;
- to increase transparency in allocation of subsidies;
- to be more active in promoting CSO-private sector partnerships in realizing projects;

### **Civil sector**

- networking, joint cooperation and coordination of activities abroad;
- to comply with international standards and codes;
- to be open to new and innovative approaches to development cooperation;
- to professionalize and build capacity;
- to communicate more effectively with other stakeholders;
- to be actively involved in awareness raising campaigns;
- to be more active in promoting their activities;
- to conduct regular self-evaluation of projects and critically and sincerely assess individual development projects and actual impact regardless of whether the organization will take action and regardless of the financial sustainability of the organization.

# SLOVENIA

## Introduction

This policy brief is part of the project “Update of the current status of implementation of international/bilateral trade regimes with ODA recipients and the current role of civil society and private sectors as development actors in the new EU Member states”, as part of which we did research on the Role of the Civil Society in the Development Assistance and Aid Effectiveness.

Structure of policy brief contains a short introduction about existence and role of national platform and civil society sector, participation in projects and methodology. Then follows the analysis of the data about civil society as development actor, good practices, problems and at the end suggestions.

### **Existence and role of national platform in support of development**

SLOGA, Slovenian Global Action, platform for development co-operation and humanitarian aid, aims to raise awareness about social justice, social responsibility, respect for human rights, solidarity, sustainable development and better inclusion of vulnerable groups in the decision-making process within the context of development co-operation. SLOGA started its work as of 2005. In support of development Sloga in 2006 joined CONCORD, the umbrella organisation of European Non-Governmental Development Organisations-NGDOs, one year before the start of the European Presidency that Slovenia held in 2008. By the assistance of Concord and Trialog, the consortium project of the European Commission for development and enhancement of the capacities of New Member States NGDOs in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid, Sloga is set up strong links with other European NGDOs and platforms. Until now, SLOGA's members have been involved in various CONCORD working groups such as Policy, Funding for Relief and Development - FDR, Enlargement, Development Education Forum - DEF, Aid Watch, Cotonou and other. Moreover, SLOGA is also offering full technical and information support to the Slovenian coordinator of Global Call to Action against Poverty-GCAP. In support of development Sloga plays an important role in raising awareness within the general public on the importance of development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

### **Assessment of national civil society sector role in development aid policy making, submission of development aid and raising aid effectiveness**

Legal framework of Slovenian Development cooperation consists of two legal documents: the International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia Act (adopted in 2006) and the Resolution on International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Slovenia (adopted in 2008). The first defines the goals and methods of long-term planning, financing and implementing international development cooperation; the second sets out the geographical and sector priorities of Slovenia's international development cooperation

until 2015, and the mechanisms for its implementation. In this documents government recognises the non-governmental organizations (NGDOs) as important stakeholder in development cooperation.

On the one hand, most of the representatives of non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) as well as experts in the field of civil society participation assess the impact of Slovenian NGDOs in the process of policy development and implementation as limited. But on the other hand, the government representatives expressed that the cooperation and the quality of relations was relatively high and had significant impact in development aid policy making and everyday activity in development cooperation (Bučar; Rakar in Nagode, 2011). Consultation on the preparation of new strategic documents has become regular practice. Slovene NDGO Platform – SLOGA is expected to contribute to „Guidelines on Cooperation between Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and NGDOs in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid” which will formalize and strengthen cooperation. The consultation process started in December 2012 and it is expected to be formalised in Spring 2013. MFA believes that progress has been achieved in development cooperation and raising aid effectiveness in recent years. A clear progress has been made, both in the civil dialogue and in an increasing importance of NGDOs as providers, however the progress needs to continue. An important role in strengthening the role of civil society in international development cooperation in Republic of Slovenia can be attributed to Slovenian NGDO Platform - SLOGA.

### **Participation in European initiatives and projects**

SLOGA is carrying out projects exclusively in the areas of providing support to NGDOs and informing Slovenian and European public about the international developmental cooperation. Since its foundation, SLOGA has carried out the following big projects or has taken part in the implementation of the following programs: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (support to the developmental NGDOs for the enhancement of their functioning on the national and the European level), Ministry for Public Administration within the framework of European Social Funds (project to strengthen the content network), European Commission (project to strengthen the functioning of developmental NGDOs during the Slovenian EU presidency), Presidency fund (strengthening the cooperation among European and ACP members of parliament), Regional Partnership Program (implementing a 3-year program to strengthen NGDOs) and smaller projects from other donors.

### **Methodology**

Our work started with the preparation of timeline. We determined what we have to do (activities), who is responsible for certain activity, descriptions of activities and time limits (until when should the activities be realized). The first activity was the desk research. Under it, we considered set of relevant literature, review and selection of relevant literature and its analysis. The Slovene literature in this area is limited, but there are some Slovenian authors, which have also articles related to the development of civil society. In addition, we also found some undergraduate thesis but their focus was all too often different. In the second phase we continued with the outline/mapping of the development NGDOs. In doing so, we collected information; their contacts, their vision and mission, basic activities and information on the development projects. On this basis we decided that at least 20 NGDOs (amounting to 50% of the sample) will complete the questionnaire.

The next steps were individual in-depth interviews with some of the NGDO representatives which, in turn give us further detailed information and explanation. In order to cross check the data and views of the governmental perspective, we undertook an interview with representatives from Directorate for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance, Department for International Development Cooperation Policies and Department for International Development Cooperation, Implementation and Humanitarian Assistance from the MFA. Our last methodological instrument was a focus group, where we gathered together some of the analysed development NGDOs and questioned them about their perceptions, opinions, experience in area of development cooperation. We used open question method, based on questions and had space for discussion so that we could analyse gathered data.

# 1. Analysis of civil society's role as development actor (types of activities)

## Service provider

Out of 20 development NGOs that were included in the survey, 18 of them provide services. The services and their quality varied. The type of services differentiate: 88,9% of NGOs managing development projects (for example conferences and trainings for teachers), 61% recruiting volunteers and 22,2% offering technical support for disaster relief and/or reconstruction. Other types of services, included: assistance to asylum seekers, education provision (global education, education seminars), trainings, counselling, awareness raising, capacity building, assistance in the establishment of structure, purchase of cars and/or equipment rental, info activity and offering food relief.

The NGOs do not only differ in type of services but also in the countries of intervention. Most of the development NGOs, in our survey, have worked in the past 5 years (or are still working) in Slovenia (55%), in the Western Balkans Countries (45%)<sup>1</sup>, in other European countries (35%)<sup>2</sup>, in Africa (65%)<sup>3</sup>, in Asia (50%)<sup>4</sup>, in America (45%)<sup>5</sup> and others (15%)<sup>6</sup>. Other distinctions are fields in which NGOs are active, when they carry out development projects. NGOs in Slovenia are most active in education (85% of all NGOs participating in the project), poverty reduction (65%), training/consulting of stakeholders in recipient countries (55%) and gender equality (55%). Other fields where they are also active are health (40%), environmental sustainability (30%), global partnership (30%), maternal health (15%) and child mortality (10%).

Average length of development project managed by the Slovenian NGOs is from one to two years, but it depends on each NGO individually (from 3 months to 30 years). In development projects Slovenian NGOs work with international relief agencies (35%), with local authorities (80%) and with local CSOs (90%). Example of work with local CSOs is Kafuli in Burkina Faso, which work together with one of the Slovenian NGOs.

However, only 40% of the NGOs are participating in the project of disaster relief and reconstruction, this means six NGOs. Average length in this case is from one months to three years. The four out of the six NGOs have an in-house capacity to react within 72hrs. However, non of the Slovenian NGOs have the ECHO status for humanitarian intervention. Almost all of them, work with international relief agencies, local authorities and local CSOs.

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<sup>1</sup> Albania (10% of all NGOs), Bosnia and Herzegovina (30%), Kosovo (15%), Montenegro (5%).

<sup>2</sup> Estonia (5% of all NGOs), Ireland (5%), Latvia (5%), Macedonia (10%), Moldova (10%), Romania (5%), Ukraine (10%), Turkey (5%).

<sup>3</sup> Burkina Faso (20% of all NGOs), Congo Brazzaville (5%), DR Congo (5%), Eritrea (5%), Ethiopia (5%), Ghana (20%), Ivory coast (5%), Kenya (15%), Madagascar (15%), Malawi (5%), Mali (5%), Morocco (5%), Niger (5%), Rwanda (5%), Senegal (5%), Sierra Leone (5%), Somalia (5%), South Africa (5%), South Sudan (10%), Sudan (5%), Tanzania (5%),Togo (10%), Tunisia (5%), Uganda (25%), Zambia (5%).

<sup>4</sup> Afganistan (5% of all NGOs), Armenia (5%), Azerbaijan (5%), Bangladesh (5%), Cambodia (5%), China (5%), India (20%), Iraq (15%), Japan (10%), Kyrgyzstan (5%), Mongolia (10%), Myanmar (5%), Russian Federation (10%), South Korea (5%), Thailand (5%), Tibet (5%), Vietnam (10%).

<sup>5</sup> Bolivia (5% of all NGOs), Brasil (15%), Canada (5%), Chile (10%), Columbia (5%), Dominican Republic (5%),Ecuador (10%), Guyana (5%), Haiti (10%), Mexico (5%), Peru (10%), Tahiti (5%), U.S.A. (5%).

<sup>6</sup> Australia (5% of all NGOs), Fiji (5%), Greenland (5%), New Zeland (5%), Tahiti (5%).

## Raising funds

**Table 1. Sources of funding of NGOs in the past 5 years  
(approximate amount of their share in budget)**

	Private Donations (%)	Government Grant (%)	Payment for Services (%)	Membership fees (%)	Tax assignments (%)	Other (%)
1.	/	30	3	1	1	38
2.	70	30	/	/	/	/
3.	95	5	/	/	/	/
4.	0	70	0	2	/	28
5.	25	10	/	0	0	65
6.	40	30	30	/	/	/
7.	10	90	/	/	/	/
8.	30	60	10	/	/	/
9.	17	38	36	/	/	9
10.	95	5	/	/	/	/
11.	50	50	/	/	/	/
12.	100	/	/	/	/	/
13.	10	90	/	/	/	/
14.	3	60	/	1	/	36
15.	54	/	/	/	/	46
16.	4-10	40	5	0	1	50
17.	18,6	45,69	1,99	0,09	6,5	27,13
18.	90	0	0	10	0	0
19.	20	80	0	0	0	0
20.	/	/	/	/	/	/

The table indicates that majority of the surveyed NGOs are funded from private donations<sup>7</sup> and government grants, some of them also from other sources like EU Funds (European Commission), UNESCO, ALF and other international organization, open society, local communities and municipal funds. In fundraising activities, Slovene NGOs use a different methods like public and charity events (35%), direct mailing based on the database of e-mail addresses (70%), school activities (10%), media campaigns (20%), face to face (50%), selling products/web shop (10%), program funding and writing applications and letters of intent. Only three NGOs fundraise in the countries, where they work and this funds presents 2-5% of NGOs budget. To get this share they fundraise with direct mailing and face to face.

The NGOs mainly considered that their good public image and reputation greatly influence their capacity to fundraise. Some of them, pointed out that they are a strong partner for other stakeholders, and the third consideration was that they have large volunteer base for fundraising and fourth well written project applications.

### Public awareness raiser

The Slovene NGOs play an important role in raising public awareness on development cooperation. The survey indicated that 90% of the questioned NGOs were active in this area. The main goal of their work is to enhance the level of awareness about the development issues (80% of NGOs raised that in the survey). Other, less important goals are to establish basis of popular support for development (45%), to provide support for

<sup>7</sup> Individuals are main donors in 40%, private companies in 20%, private foundations in 10%, the first two in 25% and all options in 5%.

change in official policy (45%) and to increase the number of volunteers. One of main goals is to also activate citizens and bring social change, which NGOs achieved through the organizing numerous public events, round tables, conferences, publishing publications (f.e. handbook aimed at teachers - how can they implement global education in schools), media, public relations (f.e. screening of the documentary film), campaign (f.e. »Make it Ageless«), training (f.e. international training of teachers) and street actions. NGOs reach the media and the general public through a webpage, a blog, Facebook, Twitter and through awareness raising events as well as via traditional media (newspapers, radio).

The study revealed that the most effective tool in Slovenia for promotion greater public awareness are campaigns that have little mainstream attention or by more occasional and ad hoc interventions. An example of such a campaign is »Enough« which addressed many different issues from climate change, migration to consumerism. Other options such as offering quick and well informed reactions to stories that make news, producing regular bulletins or newsletters and regularly supplying stories to journalist are in the minority and more or less occasional. The main target audiences are in this case general or wider public, young people (children, students and youth activist), opinion leaders in the media, government or local officials and educators. To do so many of Slovenian NGOs works on different level.

The research showed, that 50% of interviewed Slovene development NGOs worked at local level (in the local communities in third countries, f.e. Nyamirambo in Rwanda or Library House of the World in Ljubljana), 60% at national (f.e. foster parenting, fair trade), 55% at international (f.e. international conference, study visits) and only 35% at European level (f.e. partnership project in the field of global education). Impact of their work, NGOs rate in general by public debate or discourse changed or increased material support to their organization. This can be also seen as increasing the number of volunteers and raising the number of donations. In a small, but not negligible proportion, did development issues become part of the official education curricula and the number of NGOs has increased.

### **Advocacy & Policy development**

The survey showed that, 65% of NGOs carry out campaigns that have an adverse effect on policy issues. Their work is carried out mainly on an ad hoc and case by case interventions or on a regular basis and targeting national audiences. A good example is a study visits in Rwanda where they organized several public events, round table discussions and other related activities. There were only two cases that targeted international audience.

The main advocacy goal differentiates among NGOs, however they all recognized that they exist in order to bring attention to the negative impact of national/regional/international public policies on development and the need for reform. Most of them, try to accomplish that through public actions and awareness raising campaigns, but they also write petitions to governmental bodies or governmental institution in cooperation with other organizations. Attention to negative impact has also been done through public events, education, screening of documentary film and open discussions. An important goal is also aiming at amending specific government policies toward development, one of the NGOs for example aimed at including aging population in the countries of the global South into the EU policies on development. To achieve their goals and to influence public policies Slovenian NGOs used different resources. They influence policy and decision makers through different campaigns around the issues that have little mainstream attention (f.e. campaign »Make it Ageless«) or work together in an alliance (f.e. already mentioned campaign "Enough") or even through research and analysis targeted at key decision makers.

To advocate for policy change Slovenian NGOs mostly used public awareness raising events, producing publications, media, public relations and campaign. Sometimes NGOs in their activities involved also government departments which work in the development sector. Some of the NGOs organised specify targeted events for their target groups and mobilised media orientated towards their target groups (through specialised newspapers). Other NGOs join already existing advocating activities of some of the other organization or had asked NGO Platform - Sloga or some other organization to do an advocacy on a specific issue. The main supporters in advocating for changes in policy were also different from one NGO to another.



Under the questioner, under no specific target groups, NGOs noted that their supporters in their activities were young people, opinion leader in media (f.e. journalist, columnist, University professors and other visible members of society) professional associations, educators, other NGOs involved in development projects and government/local officials.

The impact of successful advocacy NGOs in Slovenia rate in general by public debate or discourse changed or if development issues become part of the official education curricula. The advocacy efficiency on the questioner was poorly rated, with an average of 3,4; where 1 was best. The reason for average results, was down to their assessment that they haven't been as active in advocacy as they could have been due to various reasons or advocacy is not their main activity or they haven't the capacity (are not trained to undertake advocacy). In the recent, questioner about advocacy support offered to NGOs, they all expressed the need for stronger joint advocacy measures to be supported by SLOGA.

### **Promoting volunteering**

In Slovenia volunteerism is highly widespread, all but one of our surveyed NGOs operate with volunteers. The number of volunteers varies from less than 5 to above 20 depending on the size and needs of the NGOs. The volunteers in Slovenia do different activities, such as educational and awareness raising activities, helping with writing project proposals, fundraising, they providing services, training, do advocacy work, mentoring and counselling. Most of volunteers in Slovenia, NGOs recruit by word of mouth or advertising in schools and universities (f.e. on Faculty of social science in Ljubljana) or by Facebook and at different public events. In the partner development countries they used the same methods, but the number of NGOs doing so is much smaller, because only 45% of NGOs do so. Volunteers in the partner countries are an essential part of projects that are aimed at fostering volunteering in schools/communities and making volunteer work an integral part of the school system (projects in Kosovo, BiH, North Caucasus). They do the same activities as volunteers in Slovenia and also artistic and creative activities (concerts, competitions), providing learning assistance to children with learning difficulties and so on.

### **Donors**

Only 20% of NGOs give out grants (to individuals and organizations or both of them), but they vary in frequency from 2-3 per year to 50 in five years. The proportion of NGOs annual funds was less than 10% in two cases and more than half of NGOs annual funds also in two cases. The main purpose of this grant is for example video surveillance of Sudan, capacity building, financial help to asylum seekers and refugees, scholarship and others.

### **Others**

75% of the NGOs also do development education, where the target groups are teachers (for 45% of NGOs), youth activist, students and children (for 65% of NGOs) and other stakeholders in development cooperation (for 55% of NGOs). The NGOs undertake workshops in schools (f.e. especially for teachers and children), conferences, capacity building, providing them publications, brochures and handbooks. The activities NGOs do mainly for youth activists and student are public events, round tables, awareness raising activities, campaign or street action (f. e. global education week, promoting global education in general at Universities).

70% of NGOs campaigning and also participating in campaign coalitions (85% of NGOs which do campaigning). In the past 5 years the numbers of campaigns are different from case to case. Smaller NGOs had from one to 5 campaigns and bigger NGOs had more than 10 campaigns (some of them more than 20 or 35) and in majority they see this activity as increasing in the near future.

Slovenian development NGOs use private funding for own projects in 55%, for donor to third parties in 15% and for both of the options in 30%.

## **2. Good practices – projects implemented by NGOs in an effective manner**

When we talk about good practices it is necessary to have clear designed criteria for assessment and evaluation. OECD criteria as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, result / impact and sustainability are important for setting up these criteria. The NGOs expressed the need for each project to be regularly evaluated based on these criteria - during the project and after the project (interim and post evaluations). Evaluation would be necessary for each project, but NGOs pointed out that there is a lack of funding and a lack of time for evaluations. The trainings and evaluations themselves will be provided as a service by NGO platform SLOGA. The impact of evaluations, will also serve as information provision for donors (especially MFA which does not have its own evaluation mechanism). Some of the NGOs indicated as good practice the concrete and direct local community based projects. If NGO work in a small country they can achieve more because of the higher impact. As example of projects realized by NGOs in an effective manner they count training of teachers in Kosovo and training of psychosocial professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another good practice recognized by some of NGOs in focus group are exchange visits of the children from the Balkans (Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina) to Slovenia. In this project were included schools, institutions and municipalities. As an effective project one of NGO also count project in Rwanda, because the final result is women's empowerment which was achieved through a women's center and further local development projects.

## **3. Problems met by civil society sector while implementing development aid projects**

If we talk about problems for the civil society sector in relation with development assistance there are many different opinions about what the main problems are, but almost all NGOs agreed about funding or particular about the lack of national funders/foundations for financing. In this respect and due to a larger number of NGOs every year the civil society sector is marked with greater competition. It is difficult to compete against big international organizations and consortiums which have more experience and influence (superiority of well established organizations with well established ways of working). NGOs also compete against governmental organizations, universities and local authorities, because there is not sufficient number of national calls for grants. Another problem identified is provision of co-financing, which mostly amounts to 25%. NGOs opinion is that civil society sector is not seen by governmental institutions as an equal partner, it is treated mainly as an executor of projects, while in reality they play an important player in the global-South, where most of the Slovenian Embassies are absent (f.eg. Slovenian Embassy in Africa only present in Cairo-Egypt). There is also a lack of interest from government, local bodies, donors and on the other hand there is lack of power in decision making process on development policies, in setting development trends and in understanding the entire development discourse. At this point we can also mention lack of public support for assigning governmental funds to development assistance and still not enough public awareness and public support in general. Problem or challenge also represents a lot of bureaucracy, too much time spent on reporting and writing project proposals and not enough on the actual project implementation. The results are too short termed and goals/targets are not as visible in the development sector. One of the challenges represents also identity and role of civil society, definition of development assistance, aid effectiveness, policy coherence, proper realistic connection for productive cooperation and trust. The development NGOs indicated the following problematic aspects: lack of collective advocacy, piecemeal solutions that are not sustainable, opportunity to influence policy, how to raise and present in an effective manner, understanding of development issues and at the end also poverty, health care and education.

## **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

The recommendations and suggestions to improve input in development assistance were divided on recommendations to the governmental level and recommendations to the civil society level. If we look at the governmental level, NGOs first recommendation is that governmental institutions should carry out their commitments. For instance, the 2012 call for proposal for development projects in Slovenia was annulled by

the MFA (due to budgetary cuts) after NGOs already submitted their proposals. This means cooperating with NGOs and including them in development assistance by funding development projects. In addition, there should be more flexibility in the implementation to the projects. There should be pre-financing/advance funding for projects in the same manner as done by the European Commission projects. As it stands, all the funding is received following the project expenditure which in turn means that NGOs need to take loans in order to carry out projects. Although an effort was made on behalf of MFA to for the first time advance funding for development NGOs that have a special status as public interest NGOs. If we talk about projects, it's also recommended by the development NGOs that government officials should undertake field visits to projects in order to understand their implementation and impact.. NGOs have also suggested to discuss priorities with CSOs that are present in the field, in order to establish needs assessments, which would serve as a basis for improved (or specified) development strategy, reconsidering national priorities. In addition, there should be support of long-term projects which are longer than 2 years in order to achieve the impact and ensure sustainability. The importance of awareness raising among general public, starting in primary schools, was also highlighted as an important tool in the functioning of development NGOs and acceptance of their projects.

To improve input of civil society level in development assistance NGOs also have some important recommendations. Most important is not to work individually but cooperating, for example to build consortiums of more organizations and implement projects together, not only at national level but also at regional, international or even transnational level. NGOs should share more knowledge and experiences, exchange more information - not only exchange of good practices but also their mistakes and how to learn from them. At the fields where CSOs work, they must respect the local knowledge and work closer with CSOs representing recipients. It is also recommended to focus on limited number of fields of expertise and just on few projects. In order to be more effective it is advised to acquire a qualification, expertise, transparency, competency, integration, good management, development skills, better public relations and to take concrete action. For further improvement it is recommended to think out of the box and not just follow the agenda of the donors (be self-reflective), change the unsustainable practices and get better performance in the policy field. To solve one of the biggest problems (financing) it is suggested to maintain contacts with donors, not just rely on calls for proposals. We can conclude that it is important to think more critical on development projects and entire development discourse. Development assistance should be very critically examined and not taken as something given.

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