

BETTER GOVERNANCE FOR A GREATER IMPACT

A Call for Citizens

POLICY ACTION BRIEF

This Policy Action Brief serves as a guiding document to government, key constituencies and civil society to take the actions necessary to strengthen civil society and address weaknesses identified in the 2008-2011 Civil Society Index (CSI) project.

March 2011

CIVICUS
CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Policy Action Brief serves as a guiding document to government, key constituencies and civil society to take the actions necessary to strengthen civil society and address weaknesses identified in the 2008-2011 Civil Society Index (CSI) project.

The findings of the study show that civil society organisations (CSOs) in Kosovo have still not reached the level of being the legitimate representative of their constituencies, which limits the overall development of Kosovo. However, despite low levels of citizen engagement and the challenging socio-economic and political environment in which it operates, civil society in Kosovo is well organised and promotes positive values within society.

Overall, many CSOs have a well-established internal structure on paper, but only a small percentage put it into daily practice. Kosovo is a small country with few CSOs working on particular sectors: the potential for networking is high and therefore needs to be utilised.

Active CSOs appear to have achieved a solid level of technological resources and financial sustainability. However, the number of active CSOs in comparison to the number of registered ones is decreasing. Withdrawal of many small donors, and thus loss of considerable amounts of funds from the country, may be one of the main reasons for this.

Because of the complex situation of governance in Kosovo, where international institutions are in many cases above national government, parliament or political parties, civil society has not been able to impose itself as an influential actor and respond to the priority needs of their constituencies. Importantly this can be particularly noted in relation to economic development and the rule of law. Conversely civil society has been influential on social developments. In supporting the poor and in education, civil society has had a far reaching impact.

With the end of the war in 1999, Kosovo had to adopt a new set of values that would enable society to develop strong systems for state-building and democratic governance. However, the country is still in transition and key democratic values are slow to be established. Kosovar civil society is successfully engaged in promoting peace and non-violence. It is also successful in positioning women within the sector and promoting gender equality; indeed women take some of the most influential roles with the NGO sector. Labour and environmental standards fall short however, as only half of all CSOs report that they implement these practices. Finally, while standing as a strong advocate of accountability, transparency and democratic decision-making, civil society in Kosovo still needs to further internalise these practices.

2. ABOUT THE CSI

The Civil Society Index (CSI) is a participatory action-research project that aims to assess the state of civil society in countries around the world. The project is initiated and implemented by, and for civil society organisations at the country level, in partnership with CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. The global methodology is designed to generate specific information at the country level, as well as comparative information between different countries, and regions. Most of quantitative data is uniform and easily comparable for all countries undertaking the CSI, while the qualitative data and analysis aim to provide information on the status of civil society in each country.

The CSI project approach marries assessment and evidence with reflections and action. As such, CSI does not produce knowledge for its own sake but instead seeks to directly apply the knowledge generated to stimulate strategies that enhance the effectiveness and role of civil society.

3. THE CIVIL SOCIETY INDEX IN KOSOVO

Following the declaration of independence, on 17 February 2008, Kosovo entered into a very dynamic period of development. Civil society had to take these new societal changes into account and adapt to its new role within the overall state-building framework. To be effective civil society must work with the most recent information on social transformation within Kosovo and implement its objectives in line with this.

In this context, Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) in late 2008 started to implement the first phase of the CSI for Kosovo, with the aim of fully understanding the state of civil society and creating a knowledge-based action agenda for advancement of the sector in Kosovo. The methodology included reviews, collection, validation and analysis of a wide range of information. It also includes the review of secondary data, undertaking quantitative and qualitative primary research, discussing and validating the data within an Advisory Committee, Focus Groups and at a National Workshop. This process involved over 150 CSOs at national and local level and 150 individuals representative of civil society, public authorities, media, academia, private sector and donors. In addition, through its opinion poll, the study involved 1,300 Kosovar citizens from different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. The CSI methodology uses a combination of participatory and scientific research methods to generate a comprehensive overall assessment of the state of civil society at the national level.

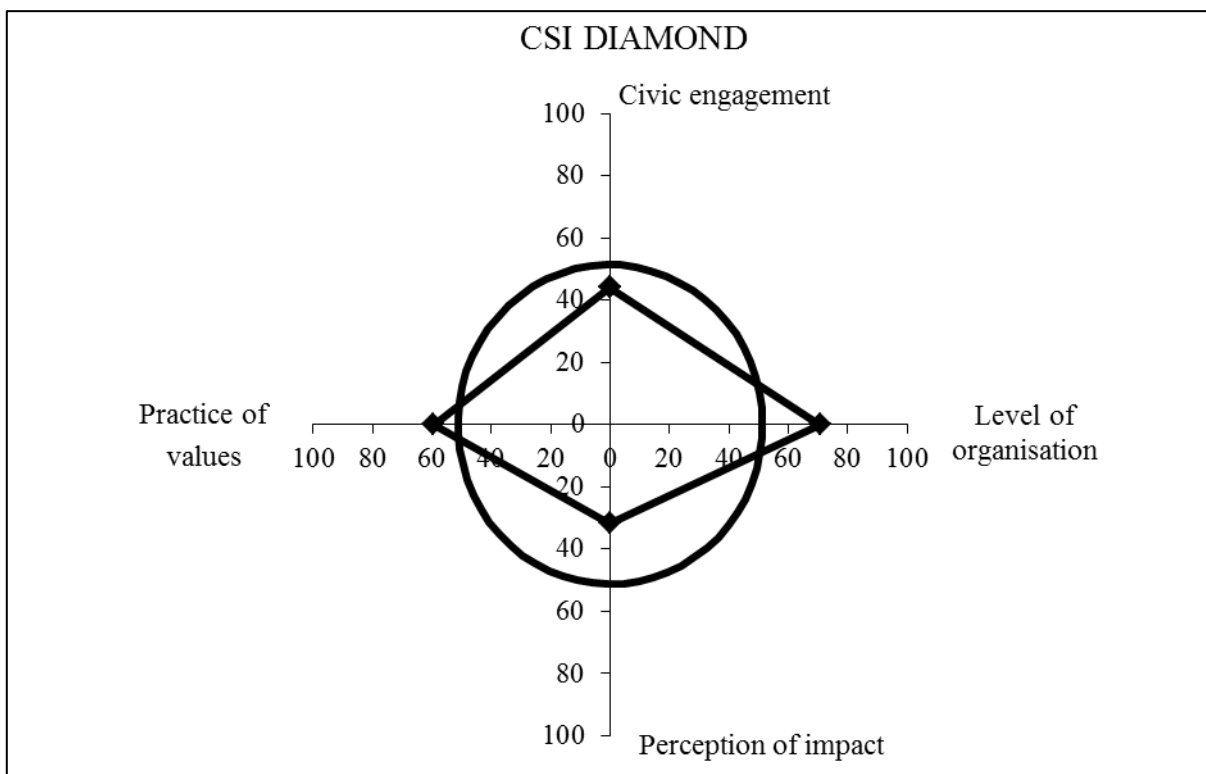
The CSI methodology looks at five main dimensions:

- I) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
- II) LEVEL OF ORGANISATION
- III) PERCEPTION OF IMPACT
- IV) PRACTICE OF VALUES
- V) THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The entire quantitative and qualitative data collected during this participatory process are now analysed and published in two main documents; an Analytical Country Report and this Policy Action Brief. The first one aims to present and analyse the most relevant data of the study, while the Policy Action Brief identifies the main opportunities and challenges for civil society in Kosovo with the aim of producing a knowledge-based action-agenda for advancing the sector.

4. THE KOSOVO CIVIL SOCIETY DIAMOND

The state of civil society in Kosovo is illustrated visually through the Civil Society Diamond (see figure below), which is one of the most essential and well-known components of the CSI project. To form the Civil Society Diamond, 67 quantitative indicators are aggregated into 28 sub-dimensions which are then assembled into the five final dimensions along a 0-100 percentage scale. The Diamond's size seeks to portray an empirical picture of the state of civil society, the conditions that support or inhibit civil society's development, and the consequences of civil society's activities for society at large. The context or environment is represented visually by a circle around the axes of the Civil Society Diamond, and is not regarded as part of the state of civil society but rather as something external that still remains a crucial element for its wellbeing. Detailed explanation of the diamond and all specific data of CSI can be found in Analytical Country Report for Kosovo.



The Civil Society Index Diamond for Kosovo

5. THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN KOSOVO: KEY FINDINGS

The first civil society initiatives and organisations in Kosovo date from the late 1980s, following the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the start of political repression and divisions in Kosovo. Because of the very specific situation in Kosovo at that time, civil society developed itself as an important part of the entire parallel system and civil resistance to the Serbian regime, built from grassroots needs to deal with the survival of the general population.

The NATO intervention and establishment of international protectorate in 1999 was a turning point for the overall development of civil society in Kosovo. The need for emergency actions and reconstruction, as well as inter-ethnic reconciliation, made civil society transform the way it was working in order to adapt to the new reality. Large scale financial and technical support from international donors resulted in a substantial increase in the number of CSOs, which was not necessarily followed by a corresponding increase in the quality of their work. However, there have been a number of successful initiatives and campaigns that have influenced specific policies and developments, and thus placed civil society as a crucial sector in terms of state-building and democratisation.

Since the declaration of independence and the establishment of a new system of governance new decision making attitudes are being set on the ground. Civil society is adapting and increasing its activities and capacities to influence public policy and decision making, advocate for the benefits of its constituencies, keep the government accountable and especially contribute to the European Accession process.

Over the last decade civil society in Kosovo has been comprised mainly of registered non-governmental organisations but it is important to note that other forms of civil society are uncommon. Although trade unions are formally a part of the sector, in practice, they are not active in civil society initiatives. Religious communities are organised according to their traditional value systems, while only a limited number of charity and humanitarian activities can be considered to contribute to active citizenship. The media remains both in and outside of civil society, as much of the media is registered privately. However, their role in society in advancing public interest aligns them to the goals of civil society.

The findings of the study show that civil society in Kosovo is still not fully representative of its constituencies, and so its impact on the overall development of Kosovo remains limited. However, considering the low level of citizen engagement and the socio-economic and political environment in which it operates, civil society in Kosovo has achieved a solid level of organisation and is a promoter of positive values in society.

I) CITIZEN'S ENGAGEMENT - Civil society's main strength lies in the active participation of citizens to advance shared interest and create links. However, only 16.3% of Kosovar citizens are active in socially based initiatives and organisations, which is disappointingly low. Volunteerism is as low, with only 17.3% doing volunteer work for such initiatives. Furthermore, according to the survey, 48.5% of CSOs think that volunteer work is decreasing.

Kosovar society was very active during the 90s, but the prolonged transition into a democratic state – accompanied by an international protectorate which entailed a dual system of government, and which undermined the ability of citizen groups to influence decisions purportedly undertaken in their interest¹ - seems to have demotivated people and reduced their belief that activism can be achieved with concrete changes in their lives and the life of their community. In addition, civil society was shown itself insufficiently responsive to the changing priorities of citizens. Impact of civil society on key issues has also not been

¹ Mapping analyses of civil society in Kosovo, KCSF 2005

proved: the findings show that impact on two major problems affecting society is very low, namely, 21.2% on economic development and 32.3% on rule of law.

Finally, being a highly donor-dependent sector, civil society's agenda is not always in line with the needs of their constituencies. Other difficulties include the disparity between national and local CSOs. National, and therefore usually larger CSOs have better relations with the donor community and state institutions and of course, larger capacity, whereas the opposite is true for smaller, local CSOs who are too underfinanced and under resourced to always respond effectively.

II) LEVEL OF ORGANISATION – The Thessaloniki Summit of 2003, established that the future of Western Balkan countries lies within the EU and set a road map for accession. Since then, Kosovo's European agenda has gathered pace and several instruments have brought the European accession criteria into public policy making. EU integration processes imply many reforms to bring compliance with the EU political, economic, legal and administrative requirements. In this regard, Kosovo has been facing a unique challenge as well as new opportunities – it has to pursue internal reforms that would contribute to a classical national state building that is simultaneously transforming into a future EU member-state.² In practice, this means that Kosovo is building an advanced legal infrastructure where laws and other legal acts have to be aligning with European standards.

Formally, 89.9% of CSOs declare they have a leading board or assembly, since this is a legal requirement at the moment of official registration. However, only 16.2% have regular contacts with the government's NGO Department and the real functionality of such bodies is very hard to prove. It is a general impression that many CSOs have a well-established internal structure on paper, but only few of them implement this on a daily basis. A similar occurrence can be observed in the networking sphere. 69.7% of CSOs declare that they are members of different networks and coalitions, while in reality only a few formal and non-formal networks are active. However, the high level of non-formal contacts (89.9%) and exchange of information (86.9%) between CSOs creates a solid basis for joint activities and initiatives. Given the fact that Kosovo is a small country and there are only a few CSOs working on any given sector, the potential for networking is high and needs to be utilised.

Finally, the interviewed CSOs appear to have access to technological resources and have attained some level of financial sustainability. While the first is understandable when living in an era of cheap and accessible technology, the situation on financial resources is more complex. The study involved only active CSOs, which by default are active because they were able to fundraise for their activities. However, the number of active CSOs in comparison to the number of registered ones is decreasing. Withdrawal of many small donors – and thus considerable amounts of funds from Kosovo – might be one of the main reasons for this.

III) PERCEPTION OF IMPACT – Since June 1999, Kosovo has been under a UN protectorate with an international administration having full competences on Kosovo's politics. Decisions were made within a mixed system of administration, where a number of competences were gradually transferred to local institutions, but with the Permanent Representative of the UN Secretary General having full executive powers. It was only after independence was declared in 2008 that Kosovar institutions began to exercise the majority of state competences. Even then they are still subjected to strong monitoring and guidance from the international community through their missions and embassies in Kosovo.

Within this highly complex system of governance, the local impact on societal developments was limited and many of the most important issues of society were directly designed or influenced by internationals. This is reflected also in the trust towards different institutions, where citizens trust international institutions more than Kosovo's government, parliament or political parties. In this situation, civil society

² Contribution from Mr Neven Mimica – Member of Croatian Parliament at the roundtable "Kosovo's status settlement – effects on the EU integration process," KCSF – Pristina, 2007

was not able to impose itself as an influential actor and be responsive to the political developments in the country, in particular with regard to the most important issues of society – economic development and rule of law.

Different from its political influence, civil society was more influential on social developments. Amongst areas where civil society has had most impact is supporting the poor and increasing access to education. Similar perceptions were declared from civil society and external actors from other sectors. Even though internally tolerant and non-violent, civil society's impact on fostering these attitudes in society remains limited.

Finally, Kosovars have reported different opinions when asked whether different CSOs had a positive or negative effect in the past five years. More than half of those asked think that humanitarian or charitable organisations did have a positive impact on overall developments, while advocacy and democracy oriented organisations are perceived as having the least impact.

IV) PRACTICE OF VALUES – Kosovo's history was marked with political, economic and social instability for centuries and the onus was on society to survive, rather than develop for most of this period. During this time Kosovo was exposed to a variety of value systems and the reaction of the local population towards these values. For example, if they paid taxes to the state during the 90s, the Albanian majority directly financed an occupying regime which endangered the existence of that population. Following the 1999 war, Kosovo had to adopt a new set of values that would enable society to develop strong systems for state-building and democratic governance. However, Kosovo is still in this transition period and democracy is slow to be established.

In this context, civil society is playing a very important role as a promoter of different sets of values. The findings show that civil society in Kosovo is highly tolerant and non-violent and furthermore actively promotes these values. Similarly with regard to gender equality, it can be said that women are well positioned within the sector and women's NGOs are some of the most active and influential within civil society. When it comes to labour and environmental standards, more than half of CSOs declare that they have regulations in place, even though their implementation in practice is not on the same level.

Finally, while standing as a strong advocate of accountability, transparency and democratic decision-making, civil society in Kosovo still needs to internalise these values. Over 70% of CSOs declare that their financial information is available to the public, but most of this information can be found only in their offices, and even fewer have their financial information on their websites. However, the focus group discussions revealed an increased trend of financial good governance, largely due to the fact that large donors have stronger and more complex financial reporting requirements, while small donors – with low financial reporting requirements – are diminishing.

V) EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT – During the last five years, Kosovo has passed through an intensive phase of state-building, first through negotiations for its final status and after declaration of independence, establishing the independent institutions and mechanisms for their functioning. Furthermore, Kosovo is constantly striving for international recognition, with only 75 UN Member States recognising Kosovo as an independent country by the start of 2011. This environment has imposed independence as a top national priority and all other fields were subordinated to this major purpose. It was an unwritten agreement between all actors of the society to silence internal problems so this process would not be harmed. Civil society played its part in the game too. After a short post-independence euphoria, the real problems of everyday life were revealed and the struggle for a democratic and functioning state became part of civil society's agenda.

The new-born state faced huge challenges in its first years of existence, and these challenges directly impacted on the development and space for the civil society sector. Kosovo is still the poorest country in Europe: with unemployment rates around 40%,³ approximately 37% of the population lives in poverty, with around 15% living in extreme poverty. In addition, corruption remains widespread and the judicial system is still not efficient. A decade of apartheid and exclusion from proper education of the majority population in Kosovo has left significant traces, and professional human resources are highly deficient in most fields. In addition, Kosovo is ranked as one of the lowest in Europe when it comes to political rights and freedoms as well as rule of law.⁴ On the other hand, freedom of association and assembly are perceived as relatively high, albeit with a lack of supportive mechanism for exercising these rights.

One of the lowest indicators resulting from the study is the trust between people. Only a small minority of citizens have trust in other people, thus directly hindering cooperation between individuals – which is a key element for exercising the freedom of association and developing civil society. The findings show that public spiritedness is on a very high level, making Kosovars very sensitive to a number of ethical issues. However, when comparing the responses given to survey questions with real acts, a huge gap may be noticed. For example, a majority of respondents say that cheating on taxes or accepting a bribe are highly unacceptable – at the same time that tax evasion and corruption are constantly reported as being among the highest in Europe.

In general, Kosovo is still in its initial phases of state-building and norms and standards set in this phase will determine the future of the country's governance, including the role of civil society. Following a period of political crisis which reached its peak in autumn of 2010 after the resignation of the President and the Government as well as dissolution of Parliament, Kosovo has actually regressed in making political reforms. The last national elections were widely condemned for not being fair, resulting in the main institutions facing serious problems of support and legitimacy from different actors of the society and the political sphere.

In addition, Kosovo is going through a number of difficult international processes, such as dialogue with Serbia and striving to enter into contractual relations with the European Union. In this regard, civil society might be seriously affected by these developments on a couple of levels. First, its reaction and role in addressing this situation will have an impact on the trust of citizens in the sector. Second, the need for cooperation with state institutions vis-à-vis the unclear legitimacy of institutions will present a big challenge which needs to be managed by civil society. And last, the success or otherwise of joint efforts towards the increasingly problematic internal and external political environment of Kosovo will determine the prospects of CSOs' impact as a sector in the coming years. Only by switching their focal point of accountability - from the international community towards Kosovo citizens – will civil society's chances of becoming a strong and important sector in society be increased.

³ There are no official data, but most of the estimations vary in the edges of 40 %. Similar to this, the Population Survey data shows that only 41.3 % of the respondents had a job, while 36.6 % of them were unemployed (including housewives).

⁴ See the Freedom House Index of Civil Liberties

6. ACTION AGENDA

The Civil Society Index in Kosovo, through its participatory methodology and involvement of more than 150 CSOs and the same number of distinguished individuals from all sectors of society, discussed in depth the findings of the study and prepared a number of concrete recommendations for an action agenda for civil society. The set of recommendations acknowledge the fact that in contributing to an advanced civil society, all actors of society have their role to play. In this regard, specific recommendations target the civil society sector and their internal initiatives, while others propose concrete initiatives to public authorities, media or the business sector. However, most of the recommendations – if aimed at a successful implementation – must be approached on many levels and involve understanding, commitment and resources from all sectors of society. While this comprehensive approach will be a key element in their success, a fragmented and non-coordinated one would not contribute to the overall development of the civil society sector in Kosovo.

Following the quantitative surveys and qualitative analyses of different case studies, discussions in focus groups and the CSI Advisory Committee, the National Workshop – gathering around 60 CSOs from across Kosovo – resulted in concrete recommendations for action in all of the five dimensions of the Civil Society Index. Even though placed within any of these specific dimensions, a number of proposals might be similarly important also for other dimensions, and are thus horizontal for the spectrum of civil society in Kosovo.

I) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Key challenge: should civil society face donors or citizens?

Recognising the fact that citizens are both the source and the final target of civil society, their active participation in civil society activities and direct benefit from them should always be the focal point of all involved in and around this sector. Further, civic engagement is clearly dependent on a variety of factors and conditions and only a number of them are directly dependent on civil society. In this regard, the recommendations derived from the extensive discussions can be grouped in three categories:

- 1) Enhancing the level of knowledge on the concept of civil society and its role in society – through formal and non-formal education systems and initiatives, information sharing and promotion of best practices and awareness raising tools targeting specific sectors/groups of society;
- 2) Increasing responsiveness of the sector to the needs of citizens and their adequate reflection in civil society's activities – through direct communication with civil society's constituencies, adequate assessment and planning tools, support of grassroots initiatives and better coordination and strategic planning from international donors;
- 3) Creating supportive tools for encouraging civic participation and its effectiveness – through establishment of coordination mechanisms between civil society and other sectors, improvement of legal framework for civil participation and effective use of knowledge and resources.

CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS

For civil society:

Advocate for and develop civil society related subjects into the formal education system, thus preparing a more socially aware generation of citizens;

Increase promotion of best practices and success stories of civil society, involving media and other awareness raising techniques, in order to raise the trust of citizens in achieving positive change through civic activism;

Identify and establish internal information and communication mechanisms in order to understand and respond to the most immediate and priority needs of the citizens;

Connect larger CSOs with smaller ones to enable them to be supported through resources and skills in reacting to first-hand information and needs deriving from the grassroots level;

Jointly advocate for establishing mechanisms of participatory democracy, as well as advocate for drafting and adoption of the proper legal framework on Volunteerism.

For public authorities:

Cooperate with civil society in introducing civil society related subjects into the formal education system;

Revise and advance the mechanisms of participatory democracy in the central and local levels;

Initiate the drafting of the proper legal framework on Volunteerism, in close cooperation with civil society and the private sector.

For others:

Media should closely cooperate with civil society and other relevant actors to increase its role in building a democratic society;

Donors should coordinate closely with civil society and other local stakeholders in setting their strategic priorities to address specific problems of citizens;

Universities and other educational institutions should use civil society as a useful sector and resource for practical work of the students, which would at the same time expose students to civic initiatives and challenges of the community.

II) LEVEL OF ORGANISATION

Key challenge: theory vs. practice

Given the fact that the majority of civil society is comprised of registered non-governmental organisations or initiatives deriving from them, the legal framework for the formal establishment and function of these organisations creates a solid space to exercise the freedom of association and assembly, even though there is room for improvement. However, the mechanisms for ensuring that these legal provisions are being put into practice are lacking. Based on this, civil society both independently and in cooperation with public authorities need to strengthen its efforts in establishing concrete tools for increasing the level of implementation of principles of good governance within the sector, always being careful to preserve the independence of the sector from external pressures. Furthermore, a supportive environment for a sustainable sector will be a key element in the mid and long term development of the sector.

In this regard, the recommendations on this dimension address three main issues, with each of them requiring commitment and coordination with other stakeholders:

- 1) Civil society should establish internal mechanisms for ensuring good governance and accountability towards its constituencies – through building platforms and networks and adopting a Code of Ethics and other mechanisms, which will monitor and assist CSOs in putting into practice the main principles of the civil society sector;
- 2) Public authorities should increase state support for the development and sustainability of civil society - through creating a comprehensive governmental policy towards civil society, including legal, financial and institutional arrangements on supporting civic initiatives aimed at positive social change;
- 3) Donors should consider switching their assistance from short project-based support for civil society to long institutional-based support – through designing clear and long-term strategic priorities aimed at a sustainable and accountable sector.

CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS

For civil society:

Increase cooperation between CSOs and design and implement joint activities in establishing a system of internal self-control and accountability;

Draft and implement a Code of Ethics on civil society, aiming to ensure that good governance principles within the sector are being put into practice;

Create specialised and profiled CSOs in specific fields of activity – through their formal missions and concrete activities - aiming to advance their expertise and competences on particular fields, thus being more responsive towards the needs of their members/constituencies;

Increase the functionality of boards/assemblies and increase the participation of beneficiaries in designing and implementing specific activities;

Increase their transparency, in particular on financial issues, towards the general public and their beneficiaries.

For public authorities:

Adopt a comprehensive policy for supporting civil society, aiming to recognise its impact on society and facilitate the contribution of civil society in social development;

Establish public funds for civil society and create independent structures for the management of this, in consultation with civil society;

Advance the taxation system for civil society, differentiating the sector from private business and creating a separate and more relevant framework for civil society;

Increase cooperation with civil society, aiming to utilise the resources and expertise of the sector in policy-making, service provision and other fields of interest;

Advance the legal framework for civil society, ensuring more accountability towards members, whilst maintaining the independence of the sector;

Reform the institutional arrangements for cooperation and policy development on civil society, by separating the Registration Department and establishing a well-positioned and professionally staffed central NGO liaison unit.

For donors:

When designing support programmes for civil society, put more emphasis on the sustainability of the sector as a tool for longer term development of society in general, and for meeting public priorities in particular.

III) PERCEIVED IMPACT

Key challenge: can we change things for better?

In a complex environment where many formal actors have substantial influence, civil society has to find alternative ways of becoming representative of citizens' needs and being able to initiate and advocate for positive changes in society. A major difficulty in this regard is represented by the low level of the rule of law, while additional issues to be overcome include low public support, unconsolidated public image of the sector and the lack of functional mechanisms to contribute to social processes. The recommendations below address most of these issues, whilst acknowledging that the rule of law is a major issue for society in general and civil society can play only a limited role in its improvement.

CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS

For civil society:

Increase efforts aimed at changing its unconsolidated public image, both through promoting successful cases and highlighting realistic expectations on the exact role of civil society;

Put the needs of their constituencies at the forefront of their engagement, through direct communication with citizens and collaborative pressure on donors to harmonise their priorities with those of citizens;

Work with citizens in concrete initiatives for the benefit of the community, aiming to increase support for the sector and strengthen the connection with members;

Establishing sectoral platforms in order to be consistent and strengthen the influence on specific fields, whilst reacting towards newly breaking issues through ad-hoc coalitions and joint efforts;

Establish representative platforms, in order to facilitate the contribution of interested CSOs while addressing potential bad practice within the sector;

Continue with and advance the coverage of 'watchdog' initiatives, while at the same time contribute to establish a system of good governance in Kosovo.

For public authorities:

Consider criticisms from and utilise recommendations of civil society, thus contributing to an open society and wider participation from citizens in the main public interest fields;

Advance the level of information and consultation by public institutions towards the general public and civil society;

Establish concrete, clear and functional mechanisms for civil society's participation in public policy-making and law-making process in local and national level;

Appoint civil society contact persons in each Ministry and Municipality and a civil society liaison office at the National Assembly, aiming to increase communication and create an open door to initiatives coming from the sector;

Set standards for public service provision and outsource particular public services to CSOs which are closer to the beneficiaries and meet these standards.

For donors:

Adjust the fields of support and funding requirements to the local context and needs, aiming for timely support at an adequate level.

IV) PRACTICE OF VALUES

Key challenge: who guards the guards?

Often seen as forward thinkers, civil society has a challenging journey to maintain this image. While the sector is far advanced in promoting tolerance, peace and non-violence, it faces challenges in areas related to good governance and setting labour and environmental standards. Existence of good governance principles on paper is a good basis for their implementation in practice. While Kosovo's labour rights were not guaranteed for a long time, the recently adopted Law on Labour must be utilised for both advancing labour rights within the sector as well as pressuring to achieve advancement. In addition to this, considering the high sensitivity of the EU in environmental issues, Kosovo's European agenda should be used as an incentive for putting more emphasis on the protection and promotion of the environment in and outside civil society.

CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS

For civil society:

Draft a Code of Ethics and ensure internal mechanisms for its implementation, aiming to put good governance principles in practice;

Well-established CSOs should assist under-staffed ones in increasing their capacities on overall organisational management, in particular financial management;

Introduce Quality Assurance Systems, aiming to promote examples of good governance as well as ensure independence of the sector through independent monitoring and evaluation of work;

Identify and denounce malpractice within civil society to match the critiques made of such abuses in the public sector;

Increase transparency of their activities and resources through regular publishing of yearly reports and through their websites.

For public authorities:

Draft clear legal provisions on governance structures and systems for NGOs, while authorising non-state actors or joint units to monitor and evaluate implementation;

Increase cooperation and utilisation of civil society knowledge and expertise in promoting different sets of values within society, including any sensitive issues;

While designing the public funds for civil society, consider establishment of an 'audit fund', aiming to support small CSOs to undertake regular financial auditing.

For donors:

Encourage good governance within civil society, through setting clear and transparent standards of financing, monitoring and evaluation, as well as increasing the proportion of institutional support to grantees;

Support establishment of an independent Quality Assurance System for civil society, through provision of financial resources and technical assistance.

V) EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Key challenge: do we create society or does society create us?

While addressing numerous issues and recommendations for and about civil society, we are conscious of the fact that the sector is in a way a reflection of the general environment in which it operates. Most of the discussions in different forums of the CSI project raised this issue and agreed that civil society is not only a producer of the conditions of the society in general, but also a consumer of rights, space and difficulties of society. In this regard, it is also the responsibility of other sectors to create enabling conditions for civil society action, if we all are to abide by the declared consensus for a democratic system of governance. The concrete recommendations derived from the data gathered apply to public authorities, international missions in Kosovo and donors as well as civil society itself. All of these aim to advance the external environment in which civil society operates, so the expectations from this sector go hand-in-hand with conditions for action and impact.

CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS

For civil society:

Establish a framework for continuous assessment of socio-economic and political situation in Kosovo, through an alternative system of collection, processing, sharing and follow-up of relevant data and information;

Advocate a for clear division of responsibilities among different pillars of state apparatus, assisting each of them in undertaking their tasks and monitoring their responsiveness towards their mandate;

Increase the focus on 'system development' rather than reaction to ad-hoc problems, in order to minimise the problems caused by continuous political oscillations and high level of unpredictability in the domestic political developments.

For public authorities:

Develop a National Development Strategy, with civil society taking an active part and immediately create concrete mechanisms for its implementation and oversight;

Improve its general approach towards civil society, in particular through increasing the level of information and consultation, as well as creating open doors for monitoring and advocacy actions from the sector;

Increase the capacities and resources in law implementation oversight and involve all relevant stakeholders in this process;

Strengthen the role of independent agencies/bodies and ensure legitimate participation of civil society representatives in those units;

Adopt policies and measures for encouraging the private sector and individuals to take part and support civic initiatives of their interest.

For European Union:

Acknowledge the capacity and potential within Kosovo's civil society to be a crucial partner in implementing the reforms within European agenda.

Continue with the civil dialogue and seeking input from Civil Society within SAP dialogue and other SAP instruments

Include representatives of civil society into the programming process and evaluation and monitoring bodies for IPA assistance.

Continue its financial and technical support to civil society, in order to further increase the capacities of the sector to contribute to the European Agenda

For others:

International missions in Kosovo should play an active role in promoting democratic models of their countries and assisting Kosovo to meet European standards in democracy;

International missions in Kosovo should allow more space for domestic voice on important societal developments, including taking into account civil society's initiatives and concerns;

Public education system should reform the system and encourage critical thinking and active citizenship, while encouraging students to actively engage in addressing community problems.

MISSION

Kosovar Civil Society Foundation – KCSF is an independent, not-for-profit organization focused in supporting local civil initiatives leading to a strong civil society movement that will promote a democratic culture and will be responsive to the socio-economic needs of Kosovo. Kosovo’s European perspective has brought KCSF a strong focus on issues related to the EU framework for Western Balkans and Kosovo in particular.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Kosovar Civil Society Foundation, in line with its scope of work, operates with two main programs:

Civil Society Development Program

KCSF, within this program, is focused on supporting local civil initiatives leading to a strong civil society movement that will promote a democratic culture and will be responsive to the socio-economic needs of Kosovo. In specific, during the last years KCSF is focused on creating an enabling environment for functioning of civil society, mainly through:

- Capacity building of CSOs and public authorities through information provision, policy papers, trainings & coaching for and on civil society
- Direct advocacy on creating an enabling legal framework and mechanisms for strengthening civil society’s role in the society
- Supporting and participating in the networking initiatives, locally and internationally

HIGHLIGHTS

- 284 PROJECTS GRANTED
- 403 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED
- OVER 600 GRADUATES FROM EUROPEAN INTEGRATION SCHOOL
- MORE THAN 150 BASIC AND ADVANCED TRAININGS
- OVER 25 PUBLICATIONS

Support to European Integration Program

Within this program Kosovar Civil Society Foundation engages to promote the improvement of the knowledge about the functioning of the EU, to increase the public awareness and to promote the dialogue within the European Integration process. Concretely, through this program KCSF is engaged in accelerating the European integration process, informing and increasing the awareness as well as promoting the implementation of key documents which govern the relations between Kosovo and EU through:

- Information and awareness raising of Kosovo’s society about the European integration process
- Increase the capacity of Non-Governmental Organizations, of civil society, media and public authorities in Kosovo about the European Union through offering of information, analysis, studies for and about the European integration process
- Direct advocacy for establishment of necessary mechanisms for better use of civil societies capacities within this process
- Promote regional cooperation in European integration process and sectorial areas of EU, through networking and establishment of sectorial partnerships within EU common policies.



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The Civil Society Index (CSI) is a participatory action-research project that aims to assess the state of civil society in countries around the world. The project is initiated and implemented by, and for civil society organisations at the country level, in partnership with CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. The global methodology is designed to generate specific information at the country level, as well as comparative information between different countries, and regions.

Most of quantitative data is uniform and easily comparable for all countries undertaking the CSI, while the qualitative data and analysis aim to provide information on the status of civil society in each country.

The CSI project approach marries assessment and evidence with reflections and action. As such, CSI does not produce knowledge for its own sake but instead seeks to directly apply the knowledge generated to stimulate strategies that enhance the effectiveness and role of civil society.

SUPPORTED BY:

B | T | D The Balkan Trust
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