



ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN SLOVENIA

DISCUSSION PAPER FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS 2014-2021

1. THE EEA GRANTS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

Support to civil society is a key priority for the **EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021**ⁱ, funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway in 15 EU Member States in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. Ten per cent of the total country allocations is set aside for a **programme for civil society** in each beneficiary state. The **Active Citizens Fund** is established under the priority sector 'Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance and Fundamental Rights and Freedoms', one of five priority sectors agreed between the donors and the European Union. The fund shall **contribute to the overall objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants, to reduce economic and social disparities, and to strengthen bilateral relations between the beneficiary and donor states.**

The **objective** of the Active Citizens Fund is: "Civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered". The fund shall seek to **develop the long-term sustainability and capacity of the civil society sector**, strengthening its role in **promoting democratic participation, active citizenship and human rights**. The following Areas of Support are eligible:

- Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency
- Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity
- Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Gender equality and gender-based violence
- Environment and climate change

2. THE ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN SLOVENIA

The allocation to the Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia is EUR 3,000,000. **The consortium of CNVOS, Institute PIP and DRPD NM have been appointed by the FMOⁱⁱ as Fund Operator** in an **open and competitive tender process** and will be responsible for the development and implementation the fund.

In light of the importance of feedback from the civil society stakeholders in shaping the Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia this Discussion Paper outlines the main challenges identified in the country and invites stakeholders to reflect on ways to address these challenges to obtain impact through the fund.

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3. PROGRAMME RELEVANCE AND JUSTIFICATION

Programme relevance and justification is based on statistical data, continuous needs-assessment of NGOs, and detailed analyses of funding opportunities in Slovenia.

Statistical data:

- Continuous increase in number of NGOs (December 2013: 24.497, October 2018: 27.781),
- Continuous increase in income (2013: 742.700.234, 2017: 873.419.927), however, 18.2 % of NGOs did not have any income in 2017 at all; additional 36 % had less than 5.000 EUR.
- Continuous increase in public funding (2013 = 287.5 mio; 2017 = 310.7 mio; 36 % of the sum was provided by the municipalities, 27 % by the ministries and 28 % from other public institutions, such as different agencies and public institutes).
- Continuous increase in employees (from 6.682 in 2013 to 7.811 in 2017), however, more than 92 % of NGOs did not have any employee in 2017, less than 1 % of NGOs have more than 5 employees.
- Continuous increase in volunteers (2013: 494 voluntary organisations, 46.903 volunteers, 6.161.795 voluntary hours, 2017: 1499 voluntary organisations, 287.588 volunteers, 9.282.195 voluntary hours). However, this data doesn't not reflect the actual number of volunteers, which is much higher, as only "registered" voluntary organisations report on volunteers.

Positive features of NGO sector in Slovenia:

- Sound enabling environment (especially since adoption of the Non-Governmental organisations act, Strategy for the development of NGOs and voluntarism and establishment of the Fund for NGOs in 2018),
- Continuous increase in income, public funding and donations,
- Developed infrastructure of support/intermediary organisations,
- Good embeddedness of NGOs in implementation of public policies on some areas (social care, culture, sports, youth),
- Good framework for public participation in decision-making process.

However, NGOs in Slovenia still face with several **challenges** and some **threatening trends**:

- Majority of the NGOs are grass-root organisations (very important on the local level, focused on direct support to beneficiaries and curative measures, but not active enough on preventive and changing environment/advocacy activities),
- Lack of financial support to advocacy organisations and activities in the field of democracy, transparency, rule of law and human rights; organisations in general lack advocacy skills,
- Big discrepancies between areas (i.e. good public funding support in social care, sports and culture, limited support on environment protection, human rights),
- From grants to contracts in service delivery (although officially the funding is still project and programme based, the call for proposals are narrowly defined, decreasing NGOs' flexibility and innovativeness),
- Increase of populism. Although Slovenia is a stable country, one can observe increase in populism in the rhetoric of the right-wing parties (especially during election campaign), attacks on NGOs related to refugee-crisis, pressures on NGOs demonstrating their legal rights in environmental permit procedures, increase of hate speech, etc.
- Low transparency and self-regulation of NGOs,
- Low professionalization, in terms of leadership, communication, advocacy, etc.



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To build **synergies and complementarities** with the objectives and funding opportunities available for NGOs in Slovenia and address the identified challenges, the programme will support deficit activities (that are not funded from other sources) and focus on under-served geographic areas.

Based on the defined **areas of support** of the Active Citizens Fund and needs assessment of Slovenian NGOs, the ACF Slovenia will support the following areas:

- Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency. This is the most under-funded area in Slovenia, organisations that work on it are scarce and not-focused due to lack of funding. The Programme will thus focus on supporting advocacy, awareness-raising, watch-dog activities, innovative methods to tackle current issues described, etc., while supporting project promoters' organisational development and helping them to strengthen their sustainability.
- Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity. In this area, funding targeted at specific groups is available, however, the existing funding opportunities favour service provision and awareness-raising, while advocacy activities and strategic litigation, are not supported. The Programme will focus on human rights advocacy in general, strategic litigation, various types of support to marginalised groups and civic education. In the scope of this area, also the gender equality and gender-based violence will be covered.
- Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups. For this area, other funding sources are available in considerable amounts, but again narrowed down to service provision and limited advocacy. Under the Active Citizens Fund, provision of welfare and basic services will only be supported as part of actions addressing awareness-raising, advocacy, empowerment and reform initiatives. The Programme will focus on people in poverty, migrants (especially economic migrants from South-East Europe), refugees, Roma, elderly, and other vulnerable groups and encourage innovative methods to support activation, economic and cultural empowerment of the marginalized groups, activities that foster solidarity and understanding among Slovenians, etc.
- Environment and climate change. The situation in this area is a bit better than some years ago with Ekosklad's funding of awareness-raising campaigns, however, access to justice still remains problematic (esp. lack of funds for relevant experts that would enable "fair legal proceedings"). The latter is very important also in the light of quite negative track record of EU legislation transposition. Considering the limitation that the protection of the environment and climate change shall only be supported as part of measures to promote civic participation, advocacy, social innovation and active citizenship, the programme will focus on advocacy, campaigning and awareness-raising.

To strengthen the **capacity and sustainability of the sector**, the Programme will build on existing capacity-building activities already available to organisations in the scope of intermediary organisations. The CB support will focus on project promoters, the support will be tailor-made, based on the organisational needs assessment. Project promoters will need to set aside 10-15 % of the project budget to organisational development. Furthermore, institutional grants will be available to semi-developed organisations. To reach under-served geographic areas, additional capacity-building activities will be available to grass-roots in these areas during the application period (additional workshops and counselling) and implementation phase (individual mentoring to develop their financial and project management systems).

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4. PROGRAMME FOCUS

The programme will foster to:

- (further) develop NGOs, especially in fields of democracy, transparency and human rights, to be able to fundraise for their activities from different sources,
- develop innovative methods to enable sustainability of organisations,
- encourage NGO evidence-based advocacy, watch-dog and monitoring activities, while supporting innovative methods and development of new approaches when it comes to service provision,
- increase transparency and accountability of NGOs,
- encourage youth inclusion across all priorities and projects.

	Challenge/problem	Desired outcome	Direct target groups (intermediaries)	End beneficiaries	Proposed solutions (outputs)
1	Due to lack of financial support, watchdog/advocacy organisations lack in evidence-based advocacy and advocacy skills, resulting in low impact on national/local policies.	Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role	Decision-makers: Government, ministries and parliament, local administration and local councils. Public institutions and agencies.	Public at large	OPEN FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION
2	Not-satisfactory implementation of legislation and increase of populism result in increased needs for strategic litigation and advocacy campaigns.	Increased support for human rights	Decision-makers: Government, ministries and parliament, local administration and local councils. Political parties. Employers. Courts.	Refuges and migrants Roma LGBT Women Other victims of discrimination	
3	Vulnerable groups face with multi-layer obstacles (poverty, health issues, discrimination) that are not appropriately addressed in the current system of public services.	Vulnerable groups are empowered	National and local decision-makers. Centers for social work. Courts. Police. Educational institutions. Financial institutions. Employment service of Slovenia.	People in poverty Refuges and migrants Roma Elderly Other vulnerable groups	
4	Climate change, increase demands	Increased civic engagement in	Decision-makers: Government,	Public at large Inhabitants of	



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	for foreign investments and corresponding ill-judged spatial planning are jeopardising environment and call for innovative civic response.	environmental protection/climate change	ministries and parliament, local administration and local councils. Companies	deprived areas	
5	Low engagement in planned and comprehensive organisational development is hindering organisations' management, realization of activities, fundraising and transparency.	Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (organisations and sectors)	NGO management Donors (individual, corporate, foundations, ...) Media	NGOs and their beneficiaries	

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5. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- a. **Challenges:** What are the main challenges that remain inadequately addressed by national or EU funding in your organisation's area of work?
- b. **Youth inclusion:** How can the programme engage young people as active citizens that contribute to address the identified challenges?
- c. **Capacity building:** In your opinion, what are the main capacity deficits of civil society organisations and the civil society sector in Slovenia?
- d. **Proposed solutions:** What are the most appropriate solutions to address the identified challenges?

ⁱ For further information about the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021, see www.eeagrants.org

ⁱⁱ Financial Mechanism Office (FMO), the Brussels-based secretariat for the EEA and Norway Grants.

