

Active Citizens Fund Slovenia

Summary Report from Stakeholder Consultation and e-consultations

November 28, 2018, Ljubljana, Slovenia

On December 29, 2018 a stakeholder consultation was organised in Ljubljana with the purpose of gathering civil society stakeholders in Slovenia to:

- introduce the Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia under the EEA Grants funded by Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
- discuss the main challenges in civil society in Slovenia of relevance to the programme and how to address these challenges through the fund.

The stakeholder consultation was jointly organised by the Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) - the Brussels based secretariat of the EEA and Norway Grants - and the Fund Operator for the Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia, a consortium of the CNVOS, Institute PIP and DRPD NM¹.

The meeting was facilitated by:

- Consultants: Martin Watson, Prospex, main facilitator
- Resource persons: Tina Divjak and Veronika Vodlan, CNVOS, Brigita Horvat, Institute PIP and Tina Cigler, DRPD NM
- Bendik Elstad, FMO

PARTICIPANTS

Altogether 36 organisations participated at the meeting. Of these, the majority were civil society stakeholders representing a variety of topics such as community development, environmental protection, youth, domestic violence, human rights, watchdog and advocacy, among them also network and umbrella organisations.

A representative of EEA-Norway Grants National Focal Point was presented as an observer.

AGENDA AND PROCEEDINGS

A detailed agenda for the meeting is provided in Annex 1 (in Slovene language). A Discussion Paper was shared with all stakeholders prior to the workshop, providing a brief overview of the Active Citizens Fund, eligible areas of support, five outcomes and related challenges identified by the Fund Operator in Slovenia. The Discussion Paper also invited the stakeholders to reflect on some open questions regarding issues at stake in the civil society sector and possible ways to address these through the upcoming programme.

¹ Selected by the donors through an open and competitive tender process.

The meeting was held in English through a mixture of group work and plenary sessions. The parallel group sessions were facilitated in English, while the discussions in the group work took place in local language or English.

The meeting was opened with brief introductions from the FMO and the FO on the Active Citizens Fund, the consortium organisations, the outcomes and challenges in Slovenia identified by the Fund Operator as relevant for the fund, as well as the purpose of the meeting. Brief questions and answer sessions followed each intervention.

Participants were then invited to break out into four parallel working groups:

Group 1: Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency

Group 2: Human rights and equal treatment

Group 3: Vulnerable groups

Group 4: Protection of environment and climate change

In the afternoon parallel sessions, the participants discussed challenges and solutions related to the capacity building needs of CSOs in Slovenia.

The main issues raised in the group work are summarized below.

E-CONSULTATIONS

To enable all interested stakeholders to participate in consultations, the discussion paper was published together with the consultation questions (the same as for the stakeholders consultations) for e-consultations, which were open for 18 days (November, 16 – December, 3). Altogether 19 inputs were received in the consultations period.

SUMMARY OF MAIN CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Summary of main challenges and solutions includes issues raised during the group work, as well as inputs from e-consultations.

Group 1: Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency

The group identified the following main challenges:

- Unstable and project-based financing that hinders sustainability and does not enable CSOs to fight immediate threats/challenges,
- Shrinking of civic space,
- Lack of advocacy, communication and fundraising skills,
- Lack of legal knowledge and capacities in CSOs,
- Lack of early involvement in decision-making process.

The following remedies/actions were proposed as a solution to the above-mentioned challenges:

- Rapid response capacities fund,

- Awareness-raising campaign and enhanced networking (between CSOs and also between CSOs and other sectors),
- Increase in “professional” employees,
- Strengthening of research activities and advocacy,
- Civic education in different forms.

Group 2: Human rights and equal treatment

The group identified the following main challenges:

- Poor understanding of the human rights concept in the public,
- Lack of promotion of human rights,
- A gap between the legislation and practice,
- A lack of strategic documents addressing human rights as a concept,
- Diversification of HR protection according to respective vulnerable groups,
- Increase of populism.

The following remedies/actions were proposed as a solution to the above-mentioned challenges:

- Development and implementation of educational human rights modules for different stakeholders
- Awareness-raising campaigns,
- Development of advocacy tools,
- Thematic CSOs networks,
- Civic education.

Group 3: Vulnerable group

The group identified the following challenges:

- Poor cooperation between stakeholders, CSOs and experts,
- Stigmatisation and non-recognition of vulnerable groups as vulnerable,
- Access to target groups,
- Vulnerable groups not familiar with CSOs and available support,
- Lack of solidarity (in general and between different groups),
- Bureaucracy.

The following remedies/actions were proposed as a solution to the above-mentioned challenges:

- enhanced networking (between CSOs and also between CSOs and other sectors),
- bottom-up advocacy and awareness-raising,
- empowerment of beneficiaries and increase of their influence on CSOs, decision-makers, service providers, etc.,

Group 4: Protection of environment and climate change

The group identified the following challenges:

- Poor cooperation between stakeholders, CSOs and experts, lack of trust among public,
- Lack of awareness,

- Unclear and fragmented legislation,
- Lack of innovativeness in mobilising the public.

The following remedies/actions were proposed as a solution to the above-mentioned challenges:

- enhanced networking (between CSOs and also between CSOs and other sectors),
- awareness-raising campaigns,
- constituency building.

Capacity-building sessions

The following needs were emphasised during working groups and e-consultations:

- free venues for events
- increase in knowledge (organisational strategy, management, human resource management, advocacy),
- professionalised staff: IT, communications, fundraising, project writing
- increase of transparency,
- networking and cooperation among CSOs and other sectors,
- lack of funds for hiring external experts.

Participants were asked how can the FO help them to address their capacity needs. They identified the following:

- simplified application and reporting,
- pre-financing,
- clear identification of funds for smaller CSOs,
- mentoring of smaller CSOs,
- operational grants,
- samples of reporting documents (not just forms),
- on-the-spot review of reports,
- results-based reporting (focus on results, not activities)
- transfer of good practices (internationally),
- part of a project should be flexible and address organizational needs,

Plenary reporting back from working groups

Each group reported back to the plenary the challenges and actions/solutions that they had discussed and identified related to the support areas in question. It was then opened up to the plenary for additional comments.

NEXT STEPS

Analysing and processing the inputs from the stakeholders consultation and e-consultations

Suggestions of participants in the Stakeholders Consultation and e-consultations will be taken into consideration by the Fund Operator when preparing the Concept note - a programme document that is defining the design and expected results of Active Citizens Fund in Slovenia. The Fund Operator and the FMO will work together to see how to best integrate the inputs from the consultation into the

Iceland  _____
Liechtenstein **Active**
Norway **citizens** fund

required programme documents that the Fund Operator will submit to the FMO and the donors. Once the programme implementation starts, the Fund Operator will publically announce regranting opportunities (i.e. the calls for proposals).



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