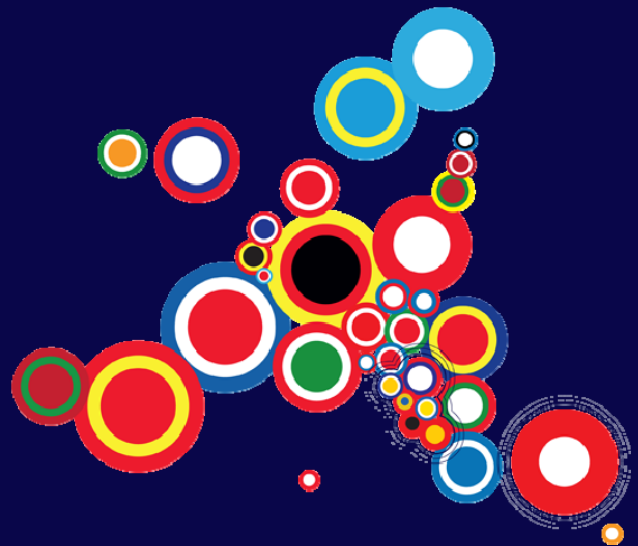




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

ALBANIA

Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016- 2017



Action summary

The main objectives of this Action are to strengthen the cross-sector cooperation between the Government and civil society and to develop the Civil Society Organisation's (CSOs) capacities.

Support will be provided to CSOs to take part to the policy dialogue and play their role of lobbying, advocacy and monitoring the implementation of reforms in sectors which are essential in the accession process, such as rule of law, fight to corruption, freedom of expression and social inclusion.

This is expected to provide a more solid base for the proper implementation of the EU sector budget support.

A second phase of a Technical Assistance project to the Albanian Government is also included to complete the improvement of the legal framework for CSOs work (fiscal regime, information data base, public funding, etc.). This is expected to secure a stronger base for the independence and future sustainability of the CSOs.

| Action Identification | |
|--|---|
| Action Programme Title | Civil Society Facility and Media 2016 - 2017 |
| Action Title | Civil Society Facility Action for Albania 2016 - 2017 |
| Action ID | IPA 2016/038-960.02/CSF & Media/Albania IPA 2017/038-961.02/CSF & Media/Albania |
| Sector Information | |
| IPA II Sector | Democracy and Governance – subsector Civil Society Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights - subsectors Civil Society and Media |
| DAC Sector | 15150 Democratic participation and civil society 15153 Media and free flow of information |
| Budget | |
| Total cost | 2016: EUR 4.24 million 2017: EUR 5.155 million |
| EU contribution | 2016: EUR 4 million 2017: EUR 5 million |
| Budget line(s) | 22.020401 |
| Management and Implementation | |
| Management mode | Direct management |
| <i>Direct management:</i> | Delegation of the European Union to Albania |
| Implementation responsibilities | N/A |
| Location | |
| Zone benefiting from the action | Albania |
| Specific implementation area(s) | N/A |
| Timeline | |
| Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary | N.A. |
| Final date for concluding delegation agreements under indirect management | N.A. |
| Final date for concluding procurement and grant contracts | IPA 2016: 31 December 2017 IPA 2017: 31 December 2018 |

| | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Final date for operational implementation | IPA 2016: 31 December 2021 IPA 2017: 31 December 2022 | | |
| Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement | N.A. | | |
| Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form) | | | |
| General policy objective | Not targeted | Significant objective | Main objective |
| Participation development/good governance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Aid to environment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gender equality (including Women In Development) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trade Development | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| RIO Convention markers | Not targeted | Significant objective | Main objective |
| Biological diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Combat desertification | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Climate change mitigation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Climate change adaptation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

In the recent past Albania has intensified efforts to improve cooperation between state institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs). However, existing mechanisms need to be fully implemented in practice and input by civil society organisations needs to be followed-up more systematically. Although some organizations jointly addressed the government for having the legal framework of their work improved, the civil society sector remains overall fragmented and overly dependent on donor funding.

In October 2014, the Parliament approved a regulation on public consultations, and in December 2014 a resolution which ratifies a "Charter on civil society", recognising the importance of civil society in the country's democratic development.

Following a wide consultation process, the government adopted in May 2015 a "Roadmap" defining its policy towards a more enabling environment for civil society. As identified in the Roadmap and as confirmed by different national and international analysis of the situation in the country (CIVICUS Civil Society Index, CSOs Sustainability Index USAID, Monitoring Matrix on enabling environment for Civil Society development – Country Report for Albania 2014) the main problems to be solved are: the setting up of a National Council for Civil Society (a consultative body to enable regular dialogue between the government and CSOs), the lack of a national strategy for civil society development, a better functioning of the Agency for Support to Civil Society, wider involvement of CSOs in policy making process, a fiscal framework more favourable to CSOs work, collection of data on the CSOs activities and development of volunteerism.

While government bodies consult CSOs during the legislative drafting process, no systematic follow-up of their recommendations takes place. At local level, cooperation remains weak.

The law for the creation of the National Council for Civil Society was approved by the Parliament in November 2015.

Regarding the fiscal framework for non-profit organisations, a new law on VAT entered into force in January 2015, confirmed – as already established in an "Instruction" issued by the Ministry of Finance in 2013 - that CSOs can obtain reimbursement of VAT on IPA funds. However, until present, no cases of actual reimbursement have been confirmed. The new on-line tax system imposes monthly declarations by all organizations, even in cases when no activities are on-going, which creates an additional administrative burden, particularly for small organisations.

Public funding for CSOs is limited and procedures for funds allocations are not clear and homogenous throughout the public administration. Legislation - namely tax rules - is not conducive to stimulating private donations to CSOs.

In addition to lobbying and advocacy activities, civil society organisations play a crucial role in providing a range of services to citizens, enabling access to basic services particularly for poor, vulnerable and marginalised women and men, victims of domestic violence, citizens with special needs, and women and girls at risk. The delivery of such services which are essential for a significant share of the population is insufficiently regulated and monitored, and largely depends on donor funding.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

Support to Civil Society is an integral part of all financial instruments implemented by the European Commission in the past and will continue in the future. In 2013 DG Enlargement defined, through a large consultation process involving all the IPA beneficiaries, the "**Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020**". The Guidelines identify as priority of EU support to civil society two main goals: 1) to achieve an environment that is conducive to civil society activities; and 2) to build the capacity of CSOs to be effective and accountable independent actors.

In a parallel process dedicated to freedom of expression, the Commission has launched in 2013 the "**Guidelines for EU support to media in enlargement countries, 2014-2020**". Based on the conclusion of the "Speak-up!2 Conference", the Guidelines set the agenda for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in the enlargement area. Main priorities are: 1) promote an enabling environment for free expression and media; 2) help media outlets assuming responsibility for improved internal governance and production; 3) increasing capacity and representativeness of journalist professional organisations.

In this frame, the following actions have been included in the CSF 2014/15 for Albania: grants for reinforce the capacity and activities of CSOs and a technical assistance to the government to support the implementation of the most urgent recommendations identified in the "Roadmap" for the improvement of the working environment for CSOs.

For the period 2016/17, additional investments are proposed for these same lines of work (grants for CSOs to reinforce civil society activities and TA for enabling environment). Additionally a specific support is considered to help CSOs to play an active role in policy making of the government for the definition and implementation of different sector reform strategies. A component in support of media is also envisaged. In connection with the regional initiative implemented by UNDP to foster collaboration between CSOs and local government units (Local Democracy Programme - LOD), an additional share of funding from the Albanian CSF funding will be targeted to an enlarged LOD project for Albania. Special attention will be paid to strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation in policy, governance and electoral processes at all levels, and to the empowerment of girls' and women's organisations and human rights defenders.

A specific allocation is also foreseen to support the functioning of the Resource Centre, after the end of the TACSO Project.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The priorities for support to CSOs in Albanian are coherent with the overall lines of the Indicative Strategy Paper for Albania and the Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper for Civil Society in the enlargement Region. In both documents a need is identified for further strengthening of civil society, including capacity building and encouraging of the creation of an enabling environment for its development and greater involvement of stakeholders in reforms, including through greater transparency of government action and spending. Furthermore, in its Gender Equality Action Plan II 2016-2020, the EU commits to activities targeted at improving gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment through external assistance modalities such as support to civil society organisations and thematic interventions.

Civil Society actors and organisations can make a substantial contribution to addressing many of these through their lobbying, advocacy and oversight activities in field of action such as justice (access to justice including women's access to justice, treatment of detainees including women and female juveniles), good governance and fight to corruption, environment and media, women's human rights, responding to and preventing the wide-spread occurrence of violence against women, and actions in favour of vulnerable groups and minorities such as Roma and Egyptians, as well as LGBTI.

They can create demand for change and enhanced transparency, accountability and effectiveness from public institutions and facilitate a greater focus on better reflecting the needs of citizens in policy-making and

implementation. The involvement of civil society in the pre-accession process can contribute to strengthened participatory governance deepening citizens' understanding of the reforms a beneficiary needs to complete for its development and in order to qualify for EU membership. This can help ensure EU accession is not just a government exercise and stimulate the process for the development of the society with stronger checks and balances, which is crucial to achieving a well-informed decision on EU membership at the end of the pre-accession process.

The activities included in the CSF are defined in coordination with other on-going and planned support provide by the Commission, such as the SMEI3 Project, the European Integration Facility and sector budget support actions.

A Civil Society Donor Working Group exists since 2009, under the joint chairmanship of the EU Delegation and OSCE Presence in Albania. It gathers twice/ year providing a useful forum for exchange of information and co-ordination among the different donors with a view to avoid overlapping and promote synergies.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Under the 2014 allocation, a technical assistance was included in support to the government for the improvement of the legal environment for CSOs for an amount of 600,000 EUR. The relevant tender was declared void, as none of the offers submitted were complaint in terms of profile of the expert offered.

This is stressing the need to have a better defined costing of the activities included in the TA assistance in order to have valid and competitive offers.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

| OVERALL OBJECTIVE | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | |
|---|---|--|---|
| To strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans and Turkey by empowering civil society to actively take part in decision making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for civil society and pluralistic media. | Quality assessment of existing legislation and policy framework Quality of structures and mechanisms in place for cooperation between CSOs/media and public Institutions | Independent assessments by I.O. and CSOs, including the Monitoring Matrix of the EU Guidelines for Civil Society Progress reports | |
| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTIONS |
| <p>1. Civil society and public institutions work in partnership through dialogue and cooperation, based on willingness, trust and mutual acknowledgment around common interests and through an enabling financial environment which supports sustainability of CSOs</p> <p>2. CSOs becoming more capable, transparent and accountable, effective and financially sustainable</p> <p>3. Representative media and journalist professional organisations capable of taking responsibility of sector relevant issues in dialogue with authorities as well as providing services to their members.</p> | <p>1.1 - Percentage of laws/bylaws, strategies and policy reforms, per sector, effectively consulted with and monitored by CSOs</p> <p>1.2 - Quality of structures and mechanisms in place for dialogue and cooperation between CSOs and public institutions, disaggregated by sector and focus area of CSO engagement</p> <p>2.1 - CSOs' perception of the ease and effectiveness of financial rules and reporting requirements</p> <p>2.2 - Percentage of CSOs publishing their governance structure and internal documents</p> <p>2.3 - Share of CSOs that monitor and evaluate the implementation of their strategies and make this information publicly available/accessible</p> <p>3.1 – Increase of professional and labour standards for journalists</p> <p>3.2 - Media and journalists organisations engage in a dialogue among themselves and also with authorities in a coordinated manner</p> | <p>National registry and / or information from national government and surveys with CSOs</p> <p>Survey TACSO/resource centre</p> <p>Based on sample or National registries</p> <p>Survey and assessment of sample of CSOs</p> <p>Surveys among journalists and media associations</p> <p>Increased capability of fundraising</p> | Political stability and EU accession process continued; |
| RESULTS | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*) | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTIONS |
| <p>1.1 A mechanism for a structured dialogue between CSOs and state bodies (Parliament, Judiciary, Central and Local Governments) is set-up and operated (NCCS, NCEI, IPMG, sector WG)</p> <p>1.2 Public institutions recognise the importance of CSOs in improving good governance through CSO inclusion in decision-making processes</p> <p>2.1 Easy-to-meet financial rules for CSO, which are proportionate to their turn-over and non-commercial activities are put in place</p> | <p>1.1 – A National Council for Civil Society formally established and is properly functioning; Sector specific reform dialogue mechanisms with CSOs (e.g. IPMG) are in place for policy formulation and implementation</p> <p>1.2 – The representatives of the CSOs in the National Council for Civil Society and IPMGs are identified in an inclusive and participative way.</p> <p>2.1 - CSOs' perception of the ease and effectiveness of financial rules and reporting requirements</p> | <p>National registry and survey</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>Public Revenue Office, Annual financial reports by CSOs Central Registry, Public Revenue</p> | <p>Government is committed to develop a structured dialogue with civil society actors and to improve the legal framework for CSOs functioning in the IPA II beneficiary</p> <p>CSOs are able to organize themselves for a structured dialogue with the governmental counterparts bypassing disruptive political</p> |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---------------------|
| <p>2.2. Donations are stimulated with adequate legislation and regulations 2.3. Financial (e.g. tax or in-kind) benefits are available for CSOs 2.4. Government support to CSOs is provided in a transparent, accountable, fair and non-discriminatory manner</p> <p>3.1. CSOs' internal governance structures are transparent and accountable to members/constituents/beneficiaries 3.2. CSOs are able to communicate the results of their activities to the public 3.3. CSOs are transparent about their programme activities and financial management 3.4. CSOs monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their work</p> <p>4.1. CSO activities are guided by strategic long-term organisational planning 4.2 CSOs regularly network within and outside the beneficiary and make use of coalition-building for increased impact in campaigning and advocacy</p> <p>5.1. Fund-raising activities are rooted in CSOs' long-term strategic plans and the core mission of the organisation 5.2. CSO have a diversified funding base, including membership fees, corporate/individual giving and social entrepreneurship</p> <p>6.1. Regular dialogue within the media community on issue of press freedom and integrity and regular dialogue with the authorities on labour standards is established and increased membership of the media associations.</p> | <p>2.2 - Number and kind of donations to CSOs from individual and corporate donors 2.3 - Percentage of CSOs benefiting from tax incentives 2.4 - CSO's perception of the provision of funds in terms of transparency, fairness and non-discrimination</p> <p>3.1 - Percentage of CSOs publishing their governance structure and internal documents 3.2 - External perception of importance and impact of CSOs activities 3.3 - Percentage of CSOs making their (audited) financial accounts and annual reports publicly available 3.4 - . Share of CSOs that monitor and evaluate their projects and programmes using baselines and quality indicators</p> <p>4.1 - Share of CSOs that monitor and evaluate the implementation of their strategies and make this information publicly available/accessible 4.2 - Share of CSOs taking part in local, national, regional and international networks</p> <p>5.1 - Percentage of CSOs that confirm that they are able to raise funds according to their strategic plans 5.2 - Diversity in CSO sources of income</p> <p>6.1 – Establishment of a membership card system; frequency and productiveness of conducted meetings; number and significance of joint conclusions and actions at the national level; increased number of journalists reporting adequate working contracts with sufficient social protection</p> | <p>Office, other national registries Survey</p> <p>Based on sample Survey TACSO/resource centre Based on sample Survey and assessment of sample of CSOs Based on survey/sample</p> <p>Survey and research</p> <p>Based on survey/sample</p> <p>Based on surveys</p> | <p>polarization</p> |
|---|---|--|---------------------|

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Activities to achieve Result under point 1 and 2:

A - Technical assistance to the Government. This would be a second phase of the first contract from CSF 2014/15. Priorities have been identified by the Government based on the Roadmap for enabling environment for CSOs. This second phase should complete the implementation of the Roadmap recommendations.

Additionally, this TA will include a component supporting CSOs to actively participate in consultation process of reform strategies and policy dialogue with the government. This will include training sessions, workshops, awareness raising and facilitation about public policy, the role of civil society in the government's sector reform design and implementation, capacity building and training on sector specific reform requirements towards EU accession and information on EU support delivery mechanisms (e.g. sector approach and sector budget support) and the role of Civil society in that context.

Service contract, EUR 1.4 million in 2017.

B - Support to CSOs to enhance consultation process of reform strategies and policy dialogue and public participation with the government. This would be channelled through the Government's sector specific Integrated Policy Management Groups for policy making and monitoring system in Albania (including dialogue under the Sector Budget Support actions) as well as other sector reform consultation and dialogue mechanisms in the area of Good governance (Public finance management and Public Administration, Employment, Transport and Water Management , Justice reform and others).). Special attention will be paid to integrating gender equality goals across sector and governance reform.

After a basic understanding of the process will be established through the training sessions and awareness raising activities as for the specific component of the TA contract under activity A, a mechanism will be established to secure support to a wide number of civil society activities along the process of strategy definition, implementation and monitoring. This should facilitate CSOs to actively contribute to the policy dialogue, enhanced public consultation and participation and act as oversight and policy implementation of various sector reforms.

The management of the mechanism will be entrusted to an International Organization or a Member State Delegated Body after a call for proposal. This mechanism will deliver financial support for individual activities, through a system of call for proposals with recurrent deadlines for submission of proposals throughout the year.

This mechanism will be funded by EUR 1 million in 2016 and 0.5 M in 2017

C - Local Democracy Programme. The allocation from the national envelope will complement the regional one to be contracted by D5 through direct grant to UNDP. The project will provide assistance to municipalities to exercise transparent funding mechanisms and institutionalise cooperation mechanisms, in particular when related to gender and socially responsive service delivery through CSO at the municipal level. To that end, the project will select as direct partners 3 – 6 local governments from the country – in addition to the 5 local governments included in the regional contract. The project will support adoption and practical application of the approach, working in close collaboration with CSOs and relevant institutions. 60% of the project funds will be channelled to civil society through sub-granting.

Activities to achieve Result under point 3, 4 and 5

D - Support to CSOs capacity building through call for proposals. Eligible sectors of activity might include: justice, rule of law, good governance (including fight against corruption, good public finance management, public administration, local governance, transparency and oversight of public funds) transport and infrastructure (including road safety, road maintenance, environment and water management) economic development, environment, support to vulnerable groups (PwDs, Roma, socially marginalised, LGBTI, victims of trafficking and other disadvantaged categories) in access to basic services, gender equality, VET and labour market policies, social dialogue & Social Partners (employees and employers unions & associations), cultural, social and youth actions, prevention of religious or ideological extremism, prevention of exodus (Albanians requesting asylum abroad).

In line with EU GAP II 2016-2020, Directive 2004/113/EC (“Gender Directive”), and Directive 2006/54/EC, in all sectors, gender equality goals will be explicitly and consistently addressed and incorporated as eligibility criterion in the Calls for proposals.

2 Calls for proposals, EUR 2.5 million in 2016 + EUR 2.6 million in 2017

E - Resource Centre, action grant through an open call for proposals. After hand-over from TACSO, there will be a need to support the functioning of the Resource Centre for a three-year period. The RC will provides information services, awareness, capacity building and trainings for local and national CSO, technical assistance to operating grants and the government in the implementation of the national Strategy for development of civil society.

1 Open call for proposals, EUR 0.5 million in 2017

Activities to achieve Results under point 6

F1 - Support journalists' professional associations to strengthen professional standards and ethics and also to develop better labour standards for journalists, benefiting female and male professionals.

Action grants through a call for proposal, EUR 0.3 million in 2016.

G - For the activities related to **all the Results**, support measures, including external evaluations, information sessions, kick-off events etc. will be funded through a Service tender (framework contract) EUR 0,2 M 2016.

RISKS

The political stability of the country has been relatively under control in recent years, although open conflicts between political majority and opposition are still frequent. With the advancement of the reform of the judiciary system – set as a priority for advancement in the path of integration to the European Union – there might be possible impacts over some of the political leaders with reflection over the whole stability of the current political balance.

This might affect the whole advancement of the dialogue currently established between government and groups of CSOs to consolidate their collaboration.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A primary condition for the proper advancement of the programme is the setting up of the National Council for Civil Society. The relevant law has been approved by the Parliament in Nov 2015 and it is expected to be implemented in the next future with the selection and appointment of the representative from both governmental and non-governmental sides. This would provide a solid base for organizing the participation of CSOs in the different bodies where strategies are defined and monitored (NCEI, IMPG, etc).

A binding condition for the release of the share of funding targeting the Albania Government is the satisfactory solution of the problems affecting VAT reimbursement on EU grants to CSOs. Current legal base exists but it is not regularly applied and a specific commitment of the government is needed for the application of the existing rules throughout all the public administration bodies both at central and local level. The actual functioning effective functioning of reimbursement procedure will be monitored through a survey administered by EU Del / TACSO to all the EU grant beneficiaries.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Main institutional stakeholders for the activities related to Results 1 and 2 will be:

- for the TA contract: High Level Administrative Group established at the Prime Minister Office with participation of the Ministry of European Integration, the Agency for Support with Civil Society, the Ministry for Social Welfare and Youth and the Ministry of Finance;
- for the support to policy dialogue: IMPG, sector working group and relevant sub-group in the NCCS;
- for the LOD project (under regional component): Ministry of Local Government in due coordination with the other project entrusted to UNDP in the frame of the Administrative Reform for Local Level Support capacity building.

Main institutional stakeholders for the activities related to Results 3, 4 and 5 will be:

- the National Council for Civil Society, the Agency for support to Civil Society. Due coordination will also be sought with relevant EU funded actions at regional level.

Main institutional stakeholders for the activities related to Results 6 will be:

- Journalists associations, and media organizations in Albania

IMPLEMENTATION METHODS AND TYPES OF FINANCING

Direct management by the EUD, through (indicative number):

- 1 international tender for services for Act.A;
- 2/4 calls for proposals including different Lots for the Act.D and F1.
- 1 call for proposal for Act.E.
- 1 call for proposals for IO or MS Delegated Bodies for Act. B

This implementation method is selected to secure re-distribution of resources through an independent agency to a wide number of CSOs in a politically sensitive sector, while in the meantime limiting the workload for the Contracting Authority.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The EUDEL will perform regular monitoring of the implementation of the different contracts awarded through a system of external monitoring experts recruited through ATA funds.

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this Action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for evaluations. In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

A Thematic evaluation for the whole CSF will be managed by Unit D5.

Annual-bi annual measurement / analysis of all indicators of the EU guidelines will be performed by TACSO and will provide the basic monitoring of specific objectives and results.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

| Indicator | Baseline 2015 | Target 2017 | Final 2020 | Source of information |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| (Relevant CSP indicator) Composite indicator for good governance | | | | |
| Specific Objectives | | | | |
| Action outcome indicators specific objective 1 – Civil society and public institutions work in partnership 1.1 - Percentage of laws/bylaws, strategies and policy reforms effectively consulted with CSOs | A law on public consultation is in force since Oct 2014 | The law on public consultation is applied for 50% of new laws | The law on public consultation is applied for 100% of new laws | Parliamentary registry |
| 1.2 - Quality of structures and mechanisms in place for dialogue and cooperation between CSOs and public institutions | Lack of a national strategy for cooperation between CSOs and Government. | National strategy for cooperation between CSOs and Government in place | National strategy for cooperation between CSOs and Government regularly working | Parliamentary registry |
| Action outcome indicator specific objective 2 – An enabling environment for CSOs 2.1 - CSOs' perception of the ease and effectiveness of financial rules and reporting requirements | Financial reporting and accounting rules do not take into account the specific nature of the CSOs | Improvement of the tax and financial reporting, related legislation through a separate framework for the CSOs sector | Fully enabling tax and financial reporting-related legislation for CSOs | TACSO / RC survey |
| 2.2 - % of CSOs publishing their governance structure and internal documents | 25% | 50% | 70% | TACSO / RC survey |
| 2.3 - % of CSOs that monitor and evaluate the implementation of their strategies and make this information publicly available, by CSO typology/focus area of engagement | 25% | 50% | 70% | TACSO / RC survey |
| 3. Action outcome indicator specific objective 3 - An enabling legal, regulatory and policy environment for the exercising rights of freedom of expression and media and media integrity 3.1 – Increase of professional and labour standards for journalists | Professional and labour standards are not regularly applied for journalist | Professional and labour standards are applied for 50% of journalist, disaggregated by sex | Professional and labour standards are applied for 100% of journalist, disaggregated by sex | Surveys among journalists and media associations |
| 3.2 - Media and journalists organisations engage in a dialogue among themselves and also with authorities in a coordinated manner | Internal organization is extremely weak | Internal organization and dialogue are reinforced | Internal organization and dialogue are comparable to the average in MS | Audience measurement |
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|---|--|--|--|---|
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| Results | | | | |
| <p>Action outcome indicator Result 1.1 - A mechanism for a structured dialogue between CSOs and state bodies is set-up</p> <p>1.1 - A National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) formally established and is properly functioning; Sector specific reform dialogue mechanisms with CSOs (e.g. IPMG) in place with substantial gender expertise among its CSO and GoA members</p> | <p>The law for setting up the NCCS has been approved in Nov 2015</p> | <p>The representatives of CSOs in the National Council are selected in a transparent and inclusive way and the Council is working properly</p> | <p>The National Council is established and working properly</p> | <p>Information from national government and surveys with CSOs</p> |
| <p>Action outcome indicator Result 2.1 - Easy-to-meet financial rules for CSO, which are proportionate to their turnover and non-commercial activities are put in place</p> <p>2.1 - CSOs' perception of the ease and effectiveness of financial rules and reporting requirements</p> | <p>Financial reporting and accounting rules are not effective and appropriate for CSOs.</p> | <p>Financial reporting and accounting rules are fully appropriate to CSOs nature and needs</p> | <p>Financial reporting and accounting rules are fully appropriate to CSOs nature and needs</p> | <p>Survey</p> |
| <p>Action outcome indicator Result 2.2. - Donations are stimulated with adequate legislation and regulations</p> <p>2.2 - Quality and applicability/practice of the legal framework for individual and corporate giving</p> | <p>Procedures in place to claim tax deduction are not functional and do not encourage individual and corporate donations</p> | <p>Procedures to claim tax deduction are revised to encourage individual and corporate donations</p> | <p>Procedures to claim tax deduction are made fully functional to encourage individual and corporate donations</p> | <p>Survey</p> |
| <p>Action outcome indicator Result 2.3. - Financial (e.g. tax or in-kind) benefits are available for CSOs</p> <p>2.3 - Quality of the system of tax benefits for the CSOs' operational and economic activities</p> | <p>Decision of Council of Ministers No. 953, date 29.12.2014, establishes a ceiling of 20% of the annual turnover of the CSO resulting from the economic activity is tax free</p> | <p>Income from CSOs mission-related economic activity is tax free.</p> | <p>Income from CSOs mission-related economic activity is tax free</p> | <p>Survey</p> |
| <p>Action outcome indicator Result 2.4. – Government support to CSOs is provided in a transparent, accountable, fair and non-discriminatory manner</p> <p>2.4 - CSO's perception of the provision of funds in terms of transparency, fairness and non-discrimination</p> | <p>ASCS has adopted a more open dialogue with the civil society sector, although transparency and accountability in funding distribution and conflict of interest within the agency remain problematic</p> | <p>The ASCS is properly functioning, possibly becoming the reference body for management of EU funds for CS.</p> | <p>The ASCS is properly functioning, possibly becoming the reference body for management of EU funds for CS.</p> | <p>Survey</p> |
| <p>Action outcome indicator Result 3.1. CSOs' internal governance structures are transparent and accountable to members/constituents/beneficiaries</p> <p>3.1 - Percentage of CSOs publishing their governance structure and internal documents</p> | <p>A small % of organizations publishes information about internal structure and results of their work</p> | <p>50%</p> | <p>70%</p> | <p>Survey</p> |

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| Action outcome indicator Result 3.2. CSOs are able to communicate the results of their activities to the public 3.2 - External perception of importance and impact of CSOs activities, by CSO typology/focus area of engagement | 35% of the surveyed general population believe that CSOs are trying to solve the problems in their country | 50% | 70% | Survey |
| Action outcome indicator Result 3.3. CSOs are transparent about their programme activities and financial management 3.3 - Percentage of CSOs making their (audited) financial accounts and annual reports publicly available | 67% of the surveyed CSOs do not publish their financial statements | At least 50% of the CSOs publish their financial statements | At least 70% of the CSOs publish their financial statements | Survey |
| Action outcome indicator Result 3.4. CSOs monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their work 3.4 - . Share of CSOs that monitor and evaluate their projects and programmes using baselines and quality indicators | 73% of the surveyed CSO claim that the projects are evaluated | 100% of the surveyed CSO claim that the projects are evaluated | 100% of the surveyed CSO claim that the projects are evaluated | Survey |
| Action outcome indicator Result 4.1. CSO activities are guided by strategic long-term organisational planning 4.1 - Share of CSOs that monitor and evaluate the implementation of their strategies and make this information publicly available/accessible | Only 16% of the surveyed CSOs state that an external expert evaluates the implementation of their strategic plan | 50% of the surveyed CSOs evaluates the implementation of their strategic plan | 75% of the surveyed CSOs evaluates the implementation of their strategic plan | Survey |
| Action outcome indicator Result 4.2 CSOs regularly network within and outside the beneficiary and make use of coalition-building for increased impact in campaigning and advocacy 4.2 - Share of CSOs taking part in local, national, regional and international networks | The majority of surveyed CSOs state there are part of a network at local, national or international level. | 100% of CSOs are part of a network at local, national or international level. | 100% of CSOs are part of a network at local, national or international level. | Survey |
| Action outcome indicator Result 5.1. Fund-raising activities are rooted in CSOs' long-term strategic plans and the core mission of the organisation 5.1 - Percentage of CSOs that confirm that they are able to raise funds according to their strategic plans | Less than a half of surveyed CSOs claim they collect funds in line with the organisation's strategic plan. | At least 50% of surveyed CSOs claim they collect funds in line with the organisation's strategic plan. | At least 70% of surveyed CSOs claim they collect funds in line with the organisation's strategic plan. | Survey |
| Action outcome indicator Result 5.2. CSO have a diversified funding base, including membership fees, corporate/individual giving and social entrepreneurship 5.2 - Diversity in CSO sources of income, by CSO typology/focus area of engagement | On average, CSOs in Albania have 2.2 sources of financing per CSO | On average, CSOs in Albania have 4 sources of financing per CSO | On average, CSOs in Albania have 4 sources of financing per CSO | Survey |

5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

The Government of Albania is committed to achieve continuous progress in the country's European integration process, which is considered essential to maintain and increase the reform momentum and address a number of challenges in many policy areas. Albania has already received the status of the candidate country for the EU membership and is struggling to start opening of the negotiations with European Union.

While stepping further in the EU integration, the Government of Albania remains committed to the involvement of citizens and civil society organizations in the reform process. Ensuring broad involvement of civil society contributes to the democratization of the country, but also consolidates the nationwide consensus on EU integration and provides a framework to channel expertise and energy within Albanian society into the policy making and implementation.

The Albanian government policy with regard to civil society is focused on creating an enabling environment for development of an independent and sustainable civil society, contributing to the success of comprehensive reforms the country is undertaking on the road to the EU accession. The development of meaningful government-civil society cooperation implies establishing adequate institutional structures and building their capacities for effective accomplishment of key tasks in the process of shaping and implementing public policies.

The European Commission Progress Report 2014 noticed that the cooperation between state institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs) has improved, but there are a number of areas where progress is needed, especially at the level of local government units where cooperation is weak. In particular, the Report states that "consultations with CSOs need to become more systematic and transparent, including follow-up on their recommendations."

Indeed, despite various initiatives and mechanisms related to the enhancement of the government – civil society relationship, the overall framework for the collaboration of the government with civil society organisations still needs to be improved, in order to create synergy among existing initiatives and contribute to the irreversibility of the EU acquis related policy reforms.

To this end, the Council of Minister of the Republic of Albania approved on the 27 May 2015 the Road Map for Drafting Policy and Measures for Enabling Environment to Civil Society. This document sets out a targeted programme of priority areas of action that the Albanian Government is taking to improve environment for cooperation with civil society. In addition, the Law on the establishment and functioning of the National Council for Civil Society was approved by the Parliament in November 2015. Its aim is to ensure institutional collaboration between government and civil society organizations in Albania in favour of expanding democracy, consolidation of good governance, increased transparency in public decision-making through better involvement of civil society in this process.

The Road Map commitments of the Albanian Government are in line with the "Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020" that have been developed by DG Enlargement of the European Commission with the aim to ensure a solid framework for monitoring and evaluating the progress in developing an enabling and stimulating participatory democracy in beneficiaries moving towards EU accession. The Guidelines are focused on a set of objectives, results and indicators assessing the beneficiaries' performance in achieving an environment that is conducive to civil society activities, but also the overall effectiveness of the assistance provided.

The Albanian Government Road Map also identifies possible areas where technical assistance will be needed in the future. In order to ensure effective implementation of strategic priorities identified by the Road Map, the provision of technical assistance to institutions supporting government - CSO cooperation is considered of paramount importance for strengthening the capacities of these institutions in developing cross-sector partnership and cooperation between civil society organizations.

Furthermore, in its Gender Equality Action Plan II 2016-2020, the EU commits to activities targeted at improving gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment through external assistance modalities such as support to civil society organisations and thematic interventions. EU GAP II Objective 3, [61] and [62], specifically articulates the need to strengthen girls' and women's voice and participation in policy, governance and electoral processes at all levels, and the empowerment of girls' and women's organisations and human rights defenders.

CURRENT SITUATION IN THE SECTOR

Over the past few years, efforts have been started by Albanian Government to support more favourable environment for government-civil society cooperation. In general, the State has started to apply a more open and collaborative approach with civil society in the preparation of new laws, bylaws, strategies and other policy documents supportive of the integration process of the country. Important initiatives were launched to establish institutional structures and mechanisms that would enable regular structured dialogue among relevant government bodies and CSO representatives on all policies affecting civil society, but also to provide sustainable public funding for CSO programmes.

The adoption of the Law on notification and consultation by the Parliament in October 2014 is a positive development that is expected to be accompanied by relevant structures and mechanisms ensuring systematic and transparent processes of consultation and dialogue between public authorities and CSOs. The Law aims to provide a clear framework for the process of public notification and consultation of draft-laws, national and local strategic draft-documents, as well as policies of a high public interest. It sets forth the procedural rules that are to be implemented in order to guarantee transparency and participation of the public in the policy-making.

Besides, in December 2014, the Parliament adopted the Resolution for Recognition and Strengthening the Role of Civil Society in the Process of Democratic Development of the Country, the first political document that recognizes and establishes concrete commitments in this regard. By adopting the Resolution, the Parliament committed to cooperation with civil society, based on the principles of participation and inclusion, respect and partnership, accountability and independence.

After a series of consultations with CSOs, the Road Map for Drafting Policy and Measures for Enabling Environment to Civil Society was adopted by Government in May 2015, setting out a targeted programme of nine priority areas of action that the Albanian Government is taking to improve environment for cooperation with civil society. In order to ensure long term Government commitment and more systematic approach to implementing necessary reforms, the first priority area identified by the Road Map is adopting Strategy for creating an enabling environment for civil society development in Albania, as well as the Action Plan for implementing the Strategy, with specific and measurable indicators accompanied by precise financial impact assessment of all short, medium and long-term activities. This would contribute to better policy coordination in this very complex area encompassing activities of a number of ministries and other government agencies. Such a Strategy and Action Plan should be developed in close cooperation with CSOs through a participatory and inclusive process.

The Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS) was established in 2009 by the Law on the organization and functioning of the ASCS. In order to accomplish its mission of encouraging the sustainable development of civil society, ASCS offers financial assistance for programmes that encourage and strengthen the sustainability of non-profit organisations, inter-sector and international cooperation, civic initiatives, philanthropy, volunteerism and democratic institutions of society. As central mechanism for public funding of CSO programmes in Albania, ASCS is facing increasing expectations from civil society, particularly in regard to redefining its role and work towards more proactive outreach to CSOs at local levels, more transparent programming of funding priorities, clear criteria and procedures for allocating grants for CSOs, collection of reliable data on CSOs and supporting balanced civil society development across the country. In order to gain trust of civil society and wider public in the integrity and fairness of the ASCS, further capacity building of the Agency staff is needed, especially for managing complex grant making procedures, monitoring and evaluating awarded projects and providing support to CSOs. Besides, ASCS needs additional assistance in

strengthening its visibility and outreach, to be able to respond to increasing demands for information and support from local CSOs.

In order to respond to increasing needs for regular structured and institutionalized dialogue with wide range of actors of organized civil society, Albanian government decided to set up the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS), as cross-sector independent advisory structure of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania.

The draft law on the establishment and functioning of the National Council for Civil Society was prepared and, after a series of extensive consultations with civil society across the country, was approved by the Parliament in November 2015. The main NCCS tasks are as follows: i.) advise the Government on establishment of state policies to promote sustainable development of civil society, ii.) propose to the Government the principal programmes to promote sustainable development of civil society and the inclusion of this sector on issues related to the respect of fundamental freedoms, human rights, and also strengthening democracy and the rule of law in our country, iii.) advise the Government on legislative improvements that affect the development of civil society in Albania and the inclusion of CSOs in public decision making, iv.) make recommendations on public policies related to or affecting the activities of CSOs and their development, and involvement in inter-sectoral cooperation, v.) give opinions to the Government and the ASCS on priority planning regarding the distribution of public funds to support programmes and projects of CSOs as well as on the analysis of annual reports of ministries and other government agencies on financed projects and programmes, vi.) make suggestions to the Government for setting priorities regarding European Union funds or other international institutions funds for Albania that affect the development of civil society. The Council should give substantial contribution to building trust and mutual understanding between government and CSOs, consolidating good governance and increasing transparency in public decision-making.

The establishment of the Agency and National Council is not in itself the indicator of completing the work in institutionalizing dialogue with civil society. On the contrary, all public bodies are expected to maintain dialogue and cooperation with CSOs and citizens in conducting everyday tasks and fulfilling strategic goals within their policy areas. Therefore additional capacity building is needed at all levels of public administration to promote the involvement of CSOs in decision making processes in all sectors, as an excellent tool for gradual transformation of styles of governance and approaches to management of public policies. Starting from 2013, several other mechanisms/structures were established at the central administration level, to deal with civil society issues and to facilitate the interaction of the institutions with civil society, such as: Civil Society and Strategy Unit in the Ministry of European Integration (MEI); Department of Programming and Development of Foreign Aid at Prime Minister's Office (PMO); Office for Coordination with Groups of Interest in the Parliament, and Civil Society Advisory Board on Human Rights of the Ombudsman. Besides, the process of appointing coordinators for public consultations in all public bodies has already been envisaged by the Law on notification and consultation. This can serve as an impetus to planning more systematic measures of strengthening cooperation of all public institutions and actors of organized civil society.

The availability of data on civil society development trends is of strategic importance for more quality assessment of needs and future programming of models and extent of support to civil society in Albania both from domestic and international public and private funding sources. In that context, one of the key challenges in promoting more enabling environment for civil society in Albania remains the lack of official information on CSOs (number of CSOs, form of registration, geographical distribution, proportion according to fields of activities, etc.), which makes any data gathering and analysis very challenging and time consuming. As the Tirana Court of First Instance, the central and only CSO registration body in Albania, does not keep electronic records, it is unable to provide an exact number of registered CSOs or make the data available via internet through a searchable database. For this reason, it is not possible to track the trends of registration of CSOs in various parts of the country and in different sectors of activities.

The absence of official and public internet database of CSOs may also be considered as important obstacle to building public trust in the work of CSOs. In addition to basic data on the number and profile of CSOs, there is no possibility to keep track on other data that can enable social impact of CSO

programmes and assessment of the contribution of CSOs to overall social development, equality and economic growth, such as: number of employees, overall revenues, sources of financing, assets, number of volunteers, number, sex and characteristics of beneficiaries, etc. This requires changes in the current legislation regulating registration and reporting of CSOs. Namely, current Law on the registration of non-profit organizations that is regulating the procedures for registering non-profit organizations (NPOs) as well as for maintaining the registry should be amended in order to allow establishment of electronic Register. A public and searchable electronic Register with all relevant data on CSOs could lead to increasing the public visibility of CSOs and enhancing the public understanding of CSOs.

RELATED PROGRAMMES AND OTHER DONOR ACTIVITIES

EU support to civil society development in Albania in previous years has been mainly focused on the capacity building of CSOs. This involved funding organizations to implement field activities for social service delivery and – whenever possible – to address policy levels in terms of formulation and/or monitoring. This approach allowed involving in the EU support an increasing number of organizations, including a wider number of small scale grass-rooted ones. However, the national legal framework ruling the CSOs functioning remained not adequate for the proper and durable development of the CSOs. Under the new approach, based also on a refreshed attention by the new government to the collaboration with civil society, a targeted support is foreseen to the competent governmental bodies to engage in meaningful cooperation with civil society and promote reforms of the CSOs legal framework in order to favour the possibility for their long-term development and self-sustainability.

The EU Integration facility (Activity 2.1 - Support to civil society organisations for EU agenda), implemented under IPA 2014 Action Programme for Albania, aims to enhance policy dialogue with Civil Society on the Albanian accession process. This activity (worth 1 million euros) includes one or more call for proposals with Albanian Civil Society organisations which activities will aim to increase knowledge of EU accession process among all key stakeholders, including schools, universities, academic institutions and citizens in general as well as increase policy dialogue between CSO and Albanian Administration. This activity will also fund awareness raising events organised by the Ministry of European Integration (MEI).

The Gender Equality Facility, implemented by UN Women and currently funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation, is to be supported by the EU in the forthcoming period. The aim is to support the Government of Albania in the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis through implementation of gender and socially responsive government strategies, plans, policies, budgets, funds and priorities at a central and municipal level. It will also include strengthening of the national machinery for gender equality and supporting decision-making and coordination bodies, so that the mechanisms of government are self-sustaining in their functioning and the oversight of implementation of the EU Gender Equality acquis.

Swiss Contribution funded "Local Democracy Promotion project" (worth 6,6 million CHF) aims at "creating an enabling environment for civil society actors (incl. the marginalized citizens) to voice, exercise control over administrative and political processes and engage in a dialogue with local authorities".

Various other international donors, including Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Italian Cooperation, Austrian Development Cooperation, were approached by the Government for possible assistance in implementing priority issues addressed in Road Map for Drafting Policy and Measures for Enabling Environment to Civil Society.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In line with the EU commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, specific support will be provided to strengthening the capacities of CSOs specializing in gender issues to engage in effective dialogue on implementing the EU Gender Equality acquis. EU GAP II 2016-2020", p.11 on, "1. Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Furthermore, special attention will be paid to strengthening women's and girls' voice and participation in policy, governance and electoral processes at all levels, and to the empowerment of girls' and women's organisations and human rights defenders. Support will be provided for strengthening articulate, informed and effective civic engagement of women and girls including in citizen consultations, planning, monitoring, decision-making processes, participatory budgetary processes at local level, and similar.

In line with the commitment to data disaggregation across all EU's monitoring and evaluation, research and surveys on CSOs will include gender-sensitive analysis and sex-disaggregated data, where adequate. Proposed, adopted and implemented reform measures related to the regulation and operation of CSOs will be assessed for their impact on different typologies of CSOs and their areas of engagement, paying particular attention to the impact on NGOs providing essential services to citizens, and on women's rights advocates and human rights defenders,.

In line with EU GAP II 2016-2020, Directive 2004/113/EC ("Gender Directive"), and Directive 2006/54/EC, gender mainstreaming will be pursued in all aspects related to CSO, irrespective of sector. Gender equality goals will be explicitly and consistently addressed and incorporated as eligibility criterion in all Calls for proposals.

The AD has been consulted with organizations active in the sector, including UNWOMEN.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Support to vulnerable discriminated, marginalised and underserved groups of women and men, including women and girls in difficult conditions and gender discriminated groups, is one of the traditional sectors of activity of CSOs and of EU support in Albania. Organizations active in these areas have been largely involved in the formulation of the Action Document. Special measures (affirmative action) will be applied for ensuring that CSOs addressing and articulating the rights, needs and entitlements of these groups will be well-represented among the beneficiaries of the capacity building components.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Support to vulnerable groups of female and male citizens, including national minorities, is one of the traditional sectors of activity of CSOs and of EU support in Albania. Organizations active in these areas have been largely involved in the formulation of the Action Document and will be among the beneficiaries of the capacity building components. Specific support will be provided for increased and effective articulation of rights, needs and entitlements in dialogue, policy formulation and implementation, and the EU accession process.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER NON-STATE STAKEHOLDERS)

The Action document is based on the Regional Guidelines for support to CSOs in IPA 2 and has been consulted with CSOs. The main lines for financing in the 2016/17 period have been presented in a public meeting with open attendance publicly announced on the Delegation and TACSO websites. About 150 organizations attended to the presentation providing relevant inputs which were incorporated as much as possible in the final document.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Environmental CSOs are relatively active in the country and in some case benefiting from a good level of networking system in the region. Environment is one of the sector where support will be provided with the aim of having the CSOs more present in the legislative process as well as in the monitoring of law implementation and enforcement.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The action aims at establishing legal and operational conditions for the autonomous functioning and growth of the CSOs in the country.

On one side, the reformed legal framework to be established is expected to be a stable and durable platform for flourishing of CSOs activities in the country. On the other side, the increased capacities and financial independence of the organization are expected to trig a virtuous circuit for their accrued credibility and development.

8. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action. The drafting of communication strategies and plans along with the implementation of the communication activities shall be mandatory and funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions. Additional Visibility Guidelines developed by the European Commission (DG NEAR) will have to be followed.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.