



Civil Society Working Group

1. Background

1.1 Paris Declaration

The Paris Declaration highlights as fundamental that beneficiary governments should exercise strong and effective leadership over their development policies and strategies. It is based upon the need for aid effectiveness influenced by three important factors:

- (1) a simplified and rationalised system of aid administration and fewer transaction costs;
- (2) the expectation of more accountability in the administration of aid by governments;
- (3) an awareness that there exists a democratic and legitimacy deficit in existing aid managed by international donors.

The Declaration lays down five main principles:

- Ownership: Recipient countries are to exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies to and coordinate development actions;
- Alignment: Donors should base their overall support on recipient countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures;
- Harmonisation: Donors should ensure that their actions are more harmonised and effective;
- Management for Results: All countries will manage resources and improve decision-making for results; and
- Mutual Accountability: Donor and developing countries pledge that they will be mutually accountable for development results.

1.2 Civil Society and the Paris Declaration

For many years, civil society in the IPA region has contributed to a wide range of political, economic, social and cultural initiatives that reflect values and norms with the support of donors. Civil society groups have also become of critical importance in the context of innovation and the progress of development.

The countries of the IPA region are also making improvements in the protection of human rights and in democratic standards. This becomes more apparent in the perspective of the eventual EU membership of these countries.

Civil society actors are therefore eager to play a more effective role for change and development. This is to be seen as the "value added" that civil society brings to effective aid partnerships. Civil society is a voice whereby the expectations of citizens are expressed and a vehicle to exchange ideas on issues of public interest and a framework for innovation and partnership with government initiatives.

In order to make this more effective and to promote the specific role and contribution of civil society without which donor strategies for achieving some sectors' aid effectiveness and efficiency will remain a dead letter, civil society have on many occasions called for better coordination between CSOs and donors (e.g. Ljubljana Declaration presented below).

It is clear that CSOs indeed recognise that donor coordination replies to many abiding civil society criticisms of the aid system, but donor coordination has until now on the whole remained silent on civil society and this potentially creates tensions between the principles of aid effectiveness, democratisation and real partnership between CSOs and government.

For example, the EU Platform "European Citizens Actions Service" (ECAS), which works closely with members and partner organisations from the IPA region¹, underlines that CSOs are to support all efforts to improve donor coordination.

The 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness² held in Accra in September 2008 gave a strong message for involving CSOs in improving the use of aid resources. The 'Donor Exchange Communication and Information Mechanism' (DECIM), which meets next week in Paris, could be used as a mechanism to facilitate this process and to concentrate on civil society capacity building in the region.

1.3 Ljubljana Declaration

On 2 April 2008, ECAS organised in Brdo, Slovenia, the Conference entitled "*Giving a Stronger Voice to Civil Society in the European Neighbourhood - Development of Civil Dialogue and Partnership relations between Civil Society, National Governments and EU institutions*" with CNVOS (Centre for Information Service, Cooperation and Development of NGOs) under the auspices of the Slovenian Presidency and in cooperation with the Government Communication Office and the Representation of the European Commission in Slovenia in the framework of the Management Partnership.

Several recommendations were put forward:

- Listen to civil society
- Develop a long-term strategy for a sustainable civil society
- Put the partnership principle into practice
- Strengthen the capacity of small organisations
- Focus on creating a supportive environment for NGO sustainability

CSOs believe that DECIM could be a good tool to achieve these recommendations but it needs to be better funded, more operational in delivering results and in contributing to the reduction in the duplication of projects and initiatives in the IPA region

1.4 Civil Society Facility (EC Commitment)

Since 2007, the main aims of EC cooperation with CSOs in the IPA region are to be found in the new Civil Society Facility (CSF) which determines the objectives and priorities to be covered at both national and multi-beneficiary level under IPA assistance. The CSF consists of three strands:

- Support to national/local civic initiatives and capacity-building;
- A "People 2 People" Programme supporting visits to EU institutions and bodies by groups with influence over decision-making and society;
- Partnership actions carried out between CSOs in beneficiary countries and EU.

¹ Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99

² <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ACCRAEXT/Resources/4700790-1217425866038/AAA-4-SEPTEMBER-FINAL-16h00.pdf>

The 2008 financing of the CSF is as follows:

1. Multi-beneficiary programme		
<i>Activity</i>	<i>IPA 2008</i>	<i>Other funds</i>
Technical assistance	€8.0 million	-
"People 2 People"	€2.0 million	IPA 2007: Taiex €0.5 million
Partnership Actions	€3.8 million	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>€13.8 million</i>	-

2. National programmes		
<i>Beneficiary</i>	<i>IPA 2008</i>	<i>Other funds</i>
Albania	-	CARDS 2005 & 2006: €2.9 million
Bosnia & Herzegovina	€3.5 million	-
Croatia	€3.0 million	-
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	€1.2 million	-
Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99	€1.7 million	-
Montenegro	-	IPA 2007: €1 million.
Serbia	€2.0 million	-
Turkey	€3.2 million	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>€14.6 million</i>	

The *multi-beneficiary programme* will set up an office in each country to support all CSF activities. Partnership actions are foreseen in the area of environment, energy efficiency, health and safety at work, as well as the fight against corruption, organised crime and trafficking. The "People 2 People" Programme will also continue.

Under the IPA 2009 multi-beneficiary/regional programme, it is foreseen to give priority to partnership- and network-building in fields such as culture, minorities and business associations.

2. Donor Coordination: Constraints upon Civil Society and their impact on achievements

The principles of the Paris Declaration (1.1 above) are widely accepted but donor coordination is difficult to bring these about. A common set of indicators, targets, timetables, and processes of aid effectiveness has been developed as a way of tracking and encouraging progress against the broader set of commitments and each indicator is linked to one of the five principles. The Declaration goes beyond a statement of general principles and lays down practical actions to monitor change and progress.

See attached table for a summary of the situation per IPA country. Coordination varies considerably in and between each beneficiary country. Coordination should ensure the efficient and effective delivery of donor assistance so as to maximise its impact. In many countries, coordination is organised at *sector level* by the beneficiary authorities, the Commission or by a group of donors. Coordination activities consist mainly of regular or irregular meetings which focus on the short rather than the longer term.

As indicated by ECAS, disagreement potentially still remains regarding the *independence* of civil society and "over-coordination" by governments. There is a danger of assimilating CSOs as mere agents of the state. However, experience has shown that governmental action, if it fully accepts independently run CSOs, can be beneficial to the development of civil society actors and even increase their capacity (Croatian and Slovenian examples). Nothing about CSOs ought to be managed without the participation of CSOs.

Private donors have an important role to play in the development of civil society by providing direct support to CSOs for which "the main long-term strategies is always to diversify their funding sources". *Private foundations* remain significant links in the overall development policies in the region. Nevertheless, as noticed also by ECAS, the development of internally driven philanthropy is at its inception in many parts of the IPA region.

Private donors should therefore be supported, and different models in achieving viable foundations should be made available to those that are interested in developing corporate social responsibility departments in their companies (e.g. with the support of EBRD). Furthermore, states should make the legal and fiscal environment favourable to the development of nationally driven philanthropy. CSOs should at the same time be able to preserve their space for manoeuvre and independence, remain real partners and not become the extended hand of corporate interests (or simple operators of the state or international organisations).

3. Recommendation: Baseline for Future Actions³

The principles of the Paris Declaration set out to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development. Some principles (“Ownership”, “Alignment” and “Harmonisation”) come about gradually and a start might be made towards drafting a CSF development matrix as a basis for strategic donor coordination:

3.1 Actions by beneficiaries:

- Governments should engage in a real partnership with CSOs, i.e. structured and regular consultations with CSOs;
- Creation of government offices or equivalent that have relations with CSOs with a clear mandate (as well as a decentralised funding organisation), both of which would ensure that CSOs be included in development policies;
- Governments should develop public guidelines/plans/principles on how they will engage with the CSOs (conception, implementation and evaluation of development strategies and programmes in all sectors) ;
- Existing EU/international functioning frameworks may be a good solution to regulate relations between governments and CSOs.

3.2 Actions by donors:

- The DECIM website could be made public as a resource and exchange mechanism for all those dealing with civil society development and it should be well advertised. It could be made visible by means of supporting help desks, linking this in turn with other coordinating mechanisms such as donor forums.
- In addition to Croatia, DECIM could be extended on the ground in the other Western Balkans countries and Turkey.
- Partnership between the European Commission and other donors in running the Civil Society Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey is desirable.
- The Commission could remind partner governments of their obligations to respect democratic values and EU-related principles by means of further dialogue with CSOs in the conception, implementation and evaluation of strategies and programmes.

In sum, donor coordination should recognise and promote the distinct contribution of civil society towards development and change in the beneficiary country and provide the necessary conditions for effective partnership with civil society on the ground.

Government/donor partnership to the exclusion of civil society marginalises it and undermines the contribution of civil society to the democratisation process, which is to the detriment of the beneficiary country as a whole.

³ Zadar, Croatia, 29-30 September, Conference “Building the Triangle: Civil society development, National Reforms and European Integration in the Western Balkans and EU Eastern Neighbourhood - Implementing the Ljubljana Declaration: Guidelines for National Action”, organised by DG ELARG – P2P, ECAS, European Centre for Cross Centre Partnership (IMPACT), Croatia National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Government of the Republic of Croatia Office for Cooperation with NGOs