



ARMENIA

**EU COUNTRY ROADMAP FOR
ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY**

2014 - 2017

Approved by: EU Heads of Missions to Armenia

Date of approval: 2 July 2014

1 STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

1.1 ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

There are currently more than 4000 registered CSOs in Armenia, however reportedly many of them do not remain active and the distribution of the organisations is uneven both in terms of geography and sectors. Aside from officially registered entities, Armenia does still have many traditional citizen associations formed on an *ad hoc* basis for practical activities, such as the renovation of common spaces in high-rise buildings or the creation of mutual support funds in local communities. Associations of this kind exist throughout the country; they are not institutional, and the actors are not aware that they are engaging in civil society activities. It is widely agreed among the various stakeholders that the availability of financial support for non-governmental organizations along with the democratic reform process has shaped the civil society in Armenia. The funding provided primarily by international donors, Diaspora foundations, and later on also by the government (despite in a very selective way), boosted the number of registered CSOs and foundations.

Despite the significant funding received and willingness to be engaged in the process, CSOs in Armenia remained with limited ability to influence public policy and opinion. The limited impact of the CSOs is the result of a number of reasons:

1. The soviet reminiscence that civic associations present a threat to the power of the state, which resulted in the apathy of the wider public together with the strong conviction that the state bears the responsibility for the wellbeing of the Society;
2. Lack of adequate institutional and professional capacity in CSOs and networks to find entry points for participating in policy formulation and monitoring of policy implementation;
3. Lack of predefined mission, strategic plans and organization structure of most CSOs that were established hastily and mainly in response to certain needs or funding priorities and not addressing the specific needs of their constituency, which resulted in lack of legitimacy, public trust or support to these organisations;
4. The leakage of "good brains", intelligent and capable people that fled the country to look for better opportunities abroad;
5. Competition for limited grants among CSOs, some of whom in some cases had to change their mission or reregister to match the objectives of these grants with their mission.
6. The creation of "pocket" nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs) by some state authorities and ruling elites aiming to secure foreign funding or to ensure that the participation of civil society organizations in policy making reflect their views.
7. Legal environment impediments: according to the Armenian law on CSOs, these cannot be directly involved in any political or income generating activity; participate in political campaigns or provide paid services for example. The CSOs in Armenia are commonly considered as institutes

that form public opinion, but they should not interfere in the political activities or external policy of the country. In addition, according to the law, CSOs are not allowed to perform any commercial activities. This hinders income diversification which has been one of the main drawbacks of CSOs in the country.

The relationship between the CSOs and the various level of governance is affected by government distrust (lack of constructive attitude and professional competencies). Further to the reasons mentioned above, the perception of most governmental officials towards co-operation with CSOs is rather negative that leads to a similar cautious approach.

This is not to say that the civil society has no voice in Armenia. Even within this not very promising environment there have been cases of involvement of the Armenian CSOs in policy formulation. In particular, when issues are not confrontational the role of the CSOs becomes more important. In some Ministries like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economy, etc, CSOs are asked to participate in the policy process, not only as mere participants but close to equal partners, sharing knowledge and expertise on specific issues. Also the governmental officials would seek the involvement of independent think tanks or CSOs, while developing a draft policy either due to increasing donor pressure or because of internal lack of capacities within the ministries. This latter is rare but has started to be acknowledged recently and it is one of the triggers for more involvement of the CS in draft policy-making.

Armenian legislation does not restrict all forms of cooperation between the State and CSOs. It defines that a governmental agency can create advisory bodies, councils and commissions. There are 18 councils created under the supervision of former RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan, with representation of CSOs in 60% of them.

In 2008 Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Ministry of Health elaborated and adopted Code of participatory cooperation between the respective ministry and public organizations. The aim of the cooperation is to ensure the participation of the general public and CSOs in particular in policy, strategy and project developing and implementing processes through the active engagement of public organizations. The main principles guiding such cooperation are publicity, transparency, trust and consensus. Components of the mechanism of cooperation defined by the Code of Conduct present different levels of cooperation from passive to active engagement as follows: a) Provision of information, b) Consultation and feedback, c) Active participation and active engagement. The Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Territorial Administration cooperate with CSOs on ad-hoc basis, using their capacity in special fields, relevant for the specific ministry.

On the local level Armenian legislation gives citizens, experts, advisory groups and other representatives of civil society the right to take part in public hearings and actively participate in the work of community councils and working groups. Additionally, Armenia has amended its law on Local Self-Government in line with the provisions of the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on

the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (Utrecht Protocol, CETS No.: 207), which for Armenia entered into force on 1 September 2013. These amendments are aimed at strengthening citizen participation in local self-government and enhancing the transparency of work of local self-government bodies. Regional and community authorities (mostly in towns) organize press conferences and public hearings and invite local media and CSO representatives to these events, however, most members of the civil society and the media alike do not have the necessary capacity to have a meaningful presence during these opportunities of public consultation.

1.2 PARTICIPATION AND ROLES

The majority of the CSOs in Armenia can be divided into the following broad categories: one that encompasses organisations whose main mission is policy advocacy and watchdog activities and one which encompasses service providers. There are also CSOs who focus on project implementation or charity so further subdivision among these two categories is possible. Having made the distinction above, it should also be stated that an inherent characteristic of the Armenian CSOs is their “chameleon” nature. There is actually not easy to identify a “pure” type of CSO in Armenia. Therefore, CSOs in Armenia can be both service providers and project implementers or watchdogs and think tanks.

The involvement of CSOs into the policy formulation and policy reform of the country still remains limited and ad hoc. Although there are increasing opportunities for the civil society to exert an active role towards the country’s policy making and monitoring, their complete potential is not fully materialized due to the institutional, legal, administrative, and economic impediments mentioned under 1.1.

The current economic situation in Armenia requires to be taken fully into account when addressing the prospects of increasing the role of local CSOs as independent development actors. Disparities in Armenia that were decreasing at a certain stage of development, are now rapidly on the increase. This is particularly affecting the rural regions where the working population is increasingly economically inactive or under-employed. Such situation is specifically observed in the number of young adults with no jobs and no prospects of jobs. The core challenge for Armenia comprises a mix of growing unemployment and under employment exacerbated by the general lack of economic and business competitiveness. In the regions this has resulted in continuing migration from rural areas to Yerevan and also from Armenia to neighbouring countries and further afield. To this effect the involvement of CSOs in socio-economic development of the country can be categorized into the following: improve the local business investment climate; encourage new enterprises and livelihood programmes; deliver social services and provide training and capacity building programmes.

Civil society sector’s contribution to the improvement of the local business environment can be accomplished through provision and maintenance of crucial economic and social infrastructure; advocacy for improved policy and governance; investment promotion and marketing and networking to improve

flows of information to enhance opportunities. CSOs are also expected to play a significant role in influencing economic and political policies that impact upon local development in general and the poorer sections in particular.

As mentioned earlier, the CSOs rely heavily on international donors, it is therefore not surprising that competition for limited donor funding does not allow enough room for cooperation save on specific occasions when that this is a requirement for funding. However, in the last couple of years, the picture is starting to change regarding cooperation among CSOs in Armenia. Driven by limited resources (particularly lack of adequate professional personnel) but also by current successes on achieving specific goals when advocating in unison, the CSOs in the country have started to join forces to achieve common goals. Coalition building among CSOs is increasingly seen (both by citizens and CSOs) as a means to more effective advocacy.

One strong example of joint initiative is the Stop Changes in Maternity Leave Law. On December 1, 2010, a law was enacted regarding the rights of those who took a leave of absence in their workplace. The changes significantly affected the livelihoods of working pregnant mothers and leave of absence workers and as a result a civil initiative was formed to protect their rights. The initiative group demanded that the National Assembly immediately review Article 22 of the law and the method of calculation and consistency with previously existing temporary disability cases. The initiative group organized a series of activities, consisting of protests and press conferences, and they sent letters to the executive and legislative representatives, with media support and publicity backing them. After a month-long struggle because of social and public pressure, the government held an urgent meeting on February 24, 2011, and restored the original law that protected pregnancy workers with 100% workplace paid leave.

On occasions, CSOs come together to protest against governmental policies or actions. Elections may always polarize but also bring the civil society together. For example the case of the recent elections is telling. Some very prominent CSOs worked together (and also with OSCE) in revealing electoral violations during the elections of May 2012.

Another example is that of legislative reform. In 2009 Civil Development and Partnership Foundation (CDPF) started a campaign against the draft amendments to the “Law on Public Organizations”. More than 300 CSOs joined forces and actively participated in the advocacy campaign which resulted in freezing the adoption of the draft law. This resulted in discussions between the representatives of the CS group with a working group composed by Government officials concerning the necessity of reforms. These discussions resulted in a concept paper which was drafted jointly by this group which included recommendations on how to further improve the existing legislation. This informal initiative was turned from an advocacy campaign into a formal network in 2011, when with the support of Counterpart International the campaign transformed to the formal network named “Civil Society Development Network” (CSDN) whose mission is to improve the CSO legislation. Based on the above mentioned initiative, some structured co-operation among CSOs seems to emerge.

Similar coalitions exist now in some **specific areas of action**. For example, particularly active are CSOs coalitions that deal with environmental and agricultural issues. The good example is the Environmental Public Alliance, which unites 50 ecological and other organizations with the aim to engage the society by raising public awareness on the issues related to the protection of environment. Another example is the Agricultural Alliance, a platform created by Oxfam, involving CSO stakeholders, agricultural companies and international organizations. The Agricultural Alliance signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure collaborative partnership for supporting small holder farms in rural and isolated regions of Armenia; it also leads the mid-term review the Sustainable Agricultural Development Strategy for 2010-2020.

Armenian civil society involvement in the policy dialogue was supported by the EU Delegation and the establishment of the structured dialogue between the Armenian National Platform (ANP) of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) and the Government of Armenia was encouraged. The Armenian National Platform of the EaP Civil Society was launched on 7th June 2010 upon the initiative of Armenian civil society organisations. The National Platform is a country-wide network of more than 180 NGOs. The Armenian National Platform has the potential to serve several objectives – increasing the accountability of the government, increasing the diversity of voices heard, acting as a bridge between politicians and citizens and giving more visibility to the Eastern Partnership.

The announcement by the President on 3 September 2013 on Armenia's future accession to the Customs Union resulted in lowering of ambitions for EU-Armenia cooperation and therefore implied less relevance to ANP's role in monitoring of cooperation developments. The fact that Armenian authorities were not ready to engage in an open dialogue with citizens as well as the lack of provisions on further EU-Armenia cooperation framework raised a debate among the Platform members on its further role. Some members do not see the room for constructive dialogue with Government of Armenia (GoA) and reforms monitoring; as a result some significant ones, such as Gyumri Asparez Journalists' Club, Armenia Helsinki Committee, Analytical Centre for Globalization and Regional Cooperation and Republican Union of Employers of Armenia suspended their membership in this structure. The ANP strategy in the new context of EU-Armenia relations is currently being discussed.

At its last meeting (8 February 2014), the ANP acknowledged that the Armenian authorities are not ready to develop structured dialogue on EaP process with proper involvement of the civil society, meaning that at this stage possibilities of constructive interaction between the ANP and the Government of RA do not exist. The Platform stated that its main priorities will be to raise awareness on the Eastern Partnership (demand for the publication of the draft Association Agreement) and strengthening cooperation with civic activists and informal activists groups including involvement in joint actions in protection of citizen's rights. The Platform also envisages establishing working relations with Armenian political circles whose positions on the EU-integration and priorities are close to those of ANP.

1.3 CAPACITY

To promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of Armenia actions should be taken to largely support capacity building of CSO sector in policy formulation and their active participation in decisions that affect their everyday life. The Armenian CSOs are characterized by deficiencies in organizational capacity, internal governance, financial sustainability but also intense negative perceptions and lack of trust from the public. The current legal framework regulating CSOs hinders even further the development of the CS in Armenia and its purposeful engagement in the country's policy making let alone its involvement in monitoring policy reform and legal implementation.

The development of CSOs in Armenia has been and is mainly determined by the donor's policy and strategic priorities. Donor grants are the main, and in most cases the sole, source of their income. The areas and type of activities of CSOs are shaped by local needs but also to a large extent by the policy priorities of international donors. The majority of CSOs work in more than one sphere, mostly to fit the donor's agendas and priorities in order to get funding. The main spheres of CSOs activity are human rights, community development, children and youth. The most frequently activities undertaken are awareness raising, consultancy and advocacy services as watch-dog activities. The sustainability of the sector is threatened by declining funding, restrictions on commercial activities that could provide alternative income, and lack of professional and institutional capacities.

The situation is slightly different in the regions but also within regions, differing extensively from region to region. The CSOs in Shirak, Lori, Gegharkunik and Syunik regions are well known for their enhanced institutional and professional capacity. In some regions for example in Gyumri (Shirak region) local CSOs (Sakharov Foundation, Asparez journalist club) are the driving force not only for the regional but also for sectoral development. However, the regions experience increased human resource drainage; young population move from the regions to the capital in the CSOs sector due to the wider availability of institutional and funding resources. The Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the regions, though concentrated on most specific local needs and targets, also face the same difficulties with funding and professional human resources which become more acute due to this mobility.

In order to enhance the active engagement of the civil society of Armenia and strengthen the democratic base and structures of the country, actions should be taken in the following diverse but nevertheless interconnected spheres:

- **Review of the regulatory framework covering CSOs**
 1. Change the Registration process (particularly focusing on regional CSOs): The registration process is cumbersome. Although currently it is under review and a lot of effort is taking place towards the speeding up of the procedure using an e-Registry, it is still difficult for CSOs to get registered in the National Registry. The situation is more aggravated in the regions, where representatives of the CSOs should travel to the capital to get registered and sometimes cannot

finish within the day so they either need to stay more in Yerevan or travel back and forth the next morning. This requires a lot of effort as well as human financial resources that in most cases regional CSOs are deprived of. To overcome that it is suggested not only to speed up the registration process but also to set up and grant authority to regional offices of the state registry body to be able to register CSOs in the regional offices. Facilitation of electronic registration is also within the same line of argument.

2. Change legislation prohibiting CSOs from performing income-generating or commercial activities in order to allow CSOs to access alternative funding and decrease dependency on grants.
3. Another area in which the legal regulations on CSOs could be improved relates to the HR and beneficiaries' rights protection: "Law on PO" states the right of CSO to represent and protect the beneficiaries in the court. However, according to the "Advocacy Law", only lawyers have rights to do that. CSOs have limited possibilities to pay for lawyers. Thus changes in this respect are required.

- **Capacity building for Civil Society**

Support actions through training courses in a number of areas (not exhaustive): financial management, CSO programme and project management, strategic planning, human resources management, fund raising, writing skills, advocacy skills, communications skills. One way is to involve international short term experts specialised in the priority areas of training and involve CBOs based in the Regions in order to train the trainers and create a pool of experts that could diffuse the knowledge to other civil society organisations.

In addition, support actions which raise awareness of the civil society at large regarding policy formulation, policy making, policy development but also other important issues or activities (stemming from both the public and the private sector) that affect their everyday life should be undertaken. This could be done through launching a public awareness campaign (media outreach) on policy reform, freedom-of-information and other issues which will be taking place simultaneously in the capital Yerevan and in the regions informing and updating the public and the government on the current situation.

- **Involvement of CS in the monitoring of the allocation of state funding to CSOs**

The Armenian government provides annual financial assistance to civil society organizations for the public sector development. However, the public sector does not have a consistent policy on supporting the development of the CS or indeed a mechanism for the provision of financial support. A clear and transparent regulatory framework coupled by the necessary monitoring mechanism on state aid to CSOs is required to avoid abuse and corruption.

Also legislative reforms, definition of a strategy and development of procedures for state aid to CSOs should be clearly defined including inter alia differentiating CSOs from for-profit organizations and making state aid accessible to them. It is important to introduce a separate budget line in the state budget for CSOs allocation in order to ensure the effectiveness and transparency of the process. The amount of state budget allocations for CSOs should be decided based on clear policy priorities to be determined by the government in consultation with CSOs. An independent monitoring mechanism should also be set up to ensure transparency, accountability and good practice.

- The co-operation with other IOs to foster volunteerism and similar initiatives

To enhance the idea of volunteerism in the country joint programmes can be developed between Armenian Public Organisations with IO initiatives such as the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme or the European Volunteer Service (European Commission programme). Such initiatives can increase the culture of volunteerism in the country which in turn can serve to transform the pace and nature of development, sustainability and engagement for society at large.

National voluntary campaigns and events can boost volunteer recruitment practices and active engagement in CSO activities.

- The regulatory framework covering CSOs and developing Social Entrepreneurship

One of the new approaches in the sphere of public-private partnership is social entrepreneurship. Generally social enterprises (SE) are a form of economic activity performed by NGOs as means of generating income for activities in support of the NGO target group or economic activity, which provides employment for members of the target group. A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders and owners.

Social enterprises are currently used successfully by many CSOs in other CEECs. When used effectively they could serve a dual purpose:

- provide a flexible, untied financing source for sustaining and thus furthering CSO missions and build a stronger, more locally sustainable civil society;
- develop a vibrant, environmentally and social responsible local economy.

The notion of SE has recently started to win supporters also in Armenia as more and more often it is seen as an adequate response to the major problem of financial sustainability of the third sector, namely CSOs. A few projects from other international donors are already in place in Armenia putting into test and experiencing the results of the implementation of SE as a means if not to resolve at least to alleviate the financial sustainability problem the CSOs in Armenia are facing.

However, this is a very difficult task which requires the understanding and commitment of the national authorities. The change of the regulatory framework related to CSOs activities, and particularly their ability

to generate income, is a fundamental prerequisite for the organisation and development of real and active CSOs with a coherent, stable mission and the necessary financial sustainability which will allow them to act independently and in good will. However, in order to become a reality a joint agreement should be made among the parties and trust should be built among them so that none of the parties would use this possibility to profit for their own personal advantage but for the benefit of the Armenian community as a whole.

In addition, a second prerequisite is also important to be fulfilled. This relates to the expansion of the scope of the legal framework on the provision of social services and on strengthening the culture of state and local self-governance to outsource social services to CSOs. Tackling the regulatory framework, this could be realised through a law amendment (a necessary Act) that would allow non-for profit organisations to become potential social service providers in addition to private legal entities (private companies) and social institutions (state-level and municipal) which is currently the case. At the same time in order to increase the effectiveness of the policies and programs implemented by government agencies, some social support, education, research, and monitoring the progress of the projects implemented through tendering processes should be outsourced to CSOs.

To summarise, support actions in the following areas (indicative and not exhaustive) are needed: legislative drafting, monitoring legislative implementation, financial management, CSO management, human resources management, analytical skills, SE related skills, and communications & marketing skills. The CSOs should be provided with a sustainable support in the specified areas and ensure that capacity building is focused and targeted on actual demands, thus providing more effective and sustainable results. It is important to note that all training programmes should be designed with “**multipliers**” for instance by including elements of train the trainers, providing “free” curricula and training materials supporting the creation of mechanisms for future exchange of experience/transfer of know-how, etc.

Launching a comprehensive public awareness campaign (media outreach) on policy reform, assessment of reforms, the role of CS in policy reform, the EU initiatives in Armenia and other issues is another priority in terms of capacity building activities for CSOs in Armenia.

2 CURRENT EU ENGAGEMENT

2.1 STRUCTURED DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Consultations in the framework of the Single Support Framework (SSF) Preparation

In 2012, Armenian civil society organizations were involved in the consultations within the Single Support Framework preparation. A workshop was organized in July to introduce new programmatic cycle for the period 2014-2020 and discuss past experiences and perspectives for future EU-CSO relations. Another meeting held in November 2012 allowed discussing a variety of topics and gathering comments and proposals formulated by CSOs under the ENP AP eight priority areas.

Civil Society Dialogue consultative online tool

In 2013 the Delegation created a **website** aimed at enhancing the dialogue between the EU and the civil society of Armenia and creating a platform enabling the civil society actors to exchange their views on a number of issues relevant and important for the future development of EU-Armenia relations. The website intends to improve the Delegation's understanding of civil society's particular interest in different policy aspects, which will help to conduct more focused consultations. It also allows for regional CSOs to be consulted on the topics raised during the consultative meetings. In order to participate in the consultations organizations are required to register online, which also gives an opportunity to create a comprehensive database of CSOs in various sectors. The website is available both in English and Armenian and the submissions are accepted in both languages.

The Delegation has web-based consultations on regular basis. Topics range from draft political and operational documents to consultations on ad hoc initiatives and establishment of priorities of programmes that civil society might be interested and have a role in. Once each consultation is closed, all contributions to individual consultations are posted on the website.

Almost seventy organizations have already registered to the website; unfortunately, they are not so active in making contributions to the published consultations. The Delegation will continue promoting the new interactive tool for consultations aiming at receiving numerous and quality contributions from the civil society.

Civil Society Dialogue consultative meetings

In June 2013, the Delegation inaugurated a cycle of meetings with Civil Society Organizations – Armenian National Platform's members and beyond. The meetings aim at discussing both EU sectoral assistance, as well as human rights situation in the country. Armenian National Platform's relevant working groups as well as other relevant CSOs are invited to attend. So far the Delegation has organized meetings on: involvement of CS in budget support, regional development and the future CSO-LA in development project,

upcoming calls for proposals under EIDHR Country Based Support Scheme and CSO/LA thematic programmes gender equality issues as well as consulted the CSOs on the priorities and actions for the Roadmap. So far CSOs have demonstrated quite big interest in the meetings and the room is usually full (around 35 people). However, these are often the same CSO representatives attending.

The materials are usually provided by e-mail a week in advance, together with the invitation. Minutes of the meetings are taken and there is institutional memory to ensure necessary follow up.

Within the framework of its revised public diplomacy strategy, the EU Delegation is organising since end of 2013 at least one visit per year to each region of Armenia. Such visits include consultation with local/regional CSOs.

Consultations for preparation of the ENP Progress Report

Armenian civil society representatives are invited to contribute to ENP Progress Report on annual basis. In October 2013 the thematic consultations were held. First session focused on the issues related to Human Rights, Justice, Freedoms and Security, including migration, and revealed CSOs dissatisfaction with the lack of significant progress in areas of independent media, freedom of religion, LGBT rights and freedom of elections. Relevant CSOs are also consulted on social-economic and environmental issues.

2.2 POLICY DIALOGUE FOR AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The EU Delegation has taken steps to reinforce the civil society involved in pursuing the EaP goals in Armenia and promote its structured dialogue with the Government. In December 2012, a non-paper on strengthening the role of the EaP Civil Society National Platform in Armenia (ANP) was initiated and submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. The non-paper stressed the importance of ANP's role in increasing government's accountability, engaging citizens in policy making and giving more visibility to the EaP. It was suggested that a regular structured dialogue could be established between the representatives of civil society and authorities, in order to monitor and follow-up the implementation of the EaP Roadmap and ENP Action Plan and to enable civil society to express an opinion on the national legislative process related to the implementation of the EaP agenda.

The reaction to the non-paper has not been received by the Delegation. In May 2013, the MFA provided the ANP with a list of 20 officials mainstreaming the flows of information on actions foreseen by the Road Map in accordance with competence areas. The Ministry expressed an expectation that the cooperation with the ANP on elaboration strategy for raising the awareness of a wider public on EU – Armenia Association process will be continued. To date, no final decision was taken to set up a structural dialogue between the Government and the ANP. It is also unclear whether the Armenian authorities are willing to

engage in this exercise following the declaration of the President in September that Armenia intends to join the Customs Union. On 21 December 2013 the ANP issued a public statement calling on the leadership of the Republic of Armenia to meet the ANP before January 2014 and to present concrete grounds for substituting the European integration with the Eurasian, and to discuss the mechanisms of cooperation between the RA Government and the ANP (including the idea of "structured dialogue" and the control mechanisms over budget support provided to Armenia by the EU). A brief response stating that the statement was taken into account was received from the MFA and followed by the ANP National Coordinator meeting with MFA Deputy Ministers. According to the ANP National Coordinator, the MFA informed about the possibility to include the certain role of the civil society only under the condition that the document replacing the EU-Armenia Action Plan will be signed.

2.3 MAINSTREAMING CIVIL SOCIETY

Programming

Armenian civil society organizations were involved in the consultations within the Single Support Framework preparation in 2012. A large number of CSOs took part in a workshop organized to introduce new programmatic cycle for the period 2014-2020 and discuss past experiences and perspectives for future EU-CSO relations. The second meeting gave opportunity to discuss a variety of topics and gather comments and proposals formulated by CSOs under the ENP AP eight priority area.

The CSOs are also consulted on the thematic programmes. Over 35 CSOs participated in a consultation session organized before the preparation of the concept note for the CSO-LA and EIDHR CBSS 2013 guidelines (October 2013). They were also offered the opportunity to submit their suggestions through the online tool. The suggestions and comments were taken into account in the relevant documents.

In the past the CSOs were consulted during all programming missions (CSP, NIP and AP formulation), however, participation was not inclusive enough and was limited to a smaller number of CSOs.

Thematic and geographic instruments

Thematic instruments are mainly addressed to non-state actors such as NGOs and local authorities on topics such as Democracy and Human Rights, Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development, Migration and Asylum, and others. Since 2008, the EU has pledged over € 5 million to these projects.

Within the NSA/LA Programme on average 9-10 contracts have been implemented till now under each call for proposal, covering poverty reduction, rural development, elderly people, health and social needs. Within EIDHR on average 10-11 projects have been contracted that tackle the issues of trade unions and labour rights, exclusion of torture, fundamental rights and freedoms, women empowerment/development, judiciary, elections, adolescent and children's rights.

Armenia also benefits from the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility (ENPI). The last Call for Proposals with CSF funding was launched in May 2013 with a budget of € 1.7 million, which was granted to two projects in the fields of (a) training civil society in budget monitoring, in particular in social and agricultural sectors, as well as (b) improving civil society's capacity to act as a watchdog in the fight against corruption.

Budget Support Operations

The Delegation is currently putting more efforts in order to strengthen the civil society involvement in the budget support operations.

A proposal to include CSOs in the policy dialogue of the BS Operations has been submitted in July 2012 to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Ministry of Economy (MoE) within the draft proposal for a draft MoU regulating the Steering Committees meetings of the BS Operations. The MoE (EU Aid coordinator) initially demonstrated reluctance to invite CSO to Steering Committees meetings, although the involvement of CSOs as stated in the FA is a contractual obligation. The first Joint Budget Support Governance Board Meeting was organised in October 2013 without the participation of the civil society, however, as also agreed in the minutes of the SCM, the MoE agreed to consider the invitation of selected CSOs to the future Steering Committee Meetings. The procedures for selection and invitation of civil society to participate in Budget Support steering committees are currently being drafted in consultation with the MoE.

In June 2013, selected CSOs were invited to the EUD to an information meeting on BS in general. The idea of a working group with selected CSOs to monitor BS progress has been put forward. Six CSOs: Oxfam, Transparency International, Open Society Foundation, Armenian Young Lawyer Association, the Union of the Armenian Government Employee and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry are already taking part into the drafting and monitoring of the Budget Support Conditions in the area of PFM, Anticorruption and Civil Service Reforms.

Civil Society is being consulted during the development of the action fiche and of the complementary actions for the Budget Support in Agriculture (ENPARD). CSOs are also envisaged to be invited to the stakeholders meeting and as members of the Steering Committee.

The civil society was involved in the formulation of the "2012-2016 Strategic Programme for Legal and Judicial Reforms in the Republic of Armenia", which will be supported by the Budget Support. As reflected in the "Complementary Support" of the TAPs, the complementary support inter alia will focus on capacity building of relevant CSOs. Therefore, the technical assistance component will, among others, support the capacity building of relevant CSOs, particularly in evaluating and monitoring the budget support conditions, as well as the overall implementation of the justice reform. Furthermore, the Steering Committee of the SPSP chaired by the Minister of Justice is enhanced by Representatives of civil society.

Other programmes

Civil society organizations will be mainstreamed in Pilot Regional Development Programmes under the Eastern Partnership. They will be invited to join Marz Development Council, organization based on the Marzpet Decree.

AAP 2013 Framework Agreement - CFP Reinforcing of Civil Society

The Call for Proposals will aim at reinforcing capacity of Armenia's civil society in promoting and monitoring EU-Armenia cooperation in the area of human rights covered by EU-Armenia Agreements. A TA component of 0.2mln is envisaged to provide regular training seminars for EU grant beneficiaries (civil society) in project and financial management, as well as organize information sessions for applicants.

2.4 COORDINATION

Currently, there is no permanent coordination of international donors organisations' activities related to support of the Armenian Civil Society. The EU coordination, usually, take place at the EU HoMs or EU Deputy HoMs level.

2.5 LESSONS LEARNT

The development of CSOs in Armenia has been mainly determined by the donor's policy and strategic priorities. Donor grants are the main and in most cases the sole source of their income. The areas and type of activities of CSOs has been shaped by local needs but also to a large extent by the policy priorities of international donors. The majority of CSOs work mostly to fit the donor's agendas and priorities in order to get funding.

Despite the concerns over possible decrease in donor's funding in the future, CSOs tend to continue relying on grants and therefore hardly get involved in different assistance instruments of the Delegation, unless grants are provided. During the consultations, CSOs repeatedly raise the issue of the complicated application procedures of the grants, project-based assessment (they would prefer to be assessed on other grounds than a sole proposal), lack of small grants for less experienced and smaller NGOs and language barrier. Some CSOs even share a view that EU funding should be more clearly directed towards EU-oriented NGOs.

Unable to implement unrealistic requests for operational changes, the Delegation considers provision of bigger grants allowing re-granting, which can be managed mainly by bigger international NGOs able to demonstrate necessary capacity. In relation to the smaller grants, the EU Delegation regularly recommends that Armenian CSOs/ CBOs/ civic movements to direct their applications to the European Endowment for Democracy, which was created to support smaller initiatives on more flexible and less bureaucratic basis.

Deficiencies in professional and institutional capacity as well as lack of financial sustainability hamper CSOs involvement in diverse EU assistance instruments. During the recent consultations, the CSOs expressed their interest in cooperation and institutionalized involvement of the monitoring of Budget Support operations, but again would welcome the financial support for the implementation of such activity. As a result, a very few professional CSOs with better capacity and better understanding of the EU assistance instruments are gradually being involved in the drafting and monitoring of the Budget Support Conditions.

The recent consultation meetings only partially answered to the questions put forward for the discussion and related to CSOs' involvement in different sectors of EU assistance. The CSOs tend to focus on describing particular problems they face, but have troubles formulating their broader needs and expectations towards cooperation with the EU in clear and structured manner. In order to make the consultations more effective in terms of the results, the setting of the meetings could be re-considered so as to allow for more fruitful discussions and conclusions. The consultative online tool where the consultations are held in parallel to the meetings progressively receives more inputs; however, a preference to be consulted in form of the meetings still prevails.

As for the engagement in the CSO policy dialogue with the Government (structured dialogue), the CSOs have insisted that the EU Delegation assists them more in dialogue with the Government, underlining the lack of interest that they receive and insufficient leverage that they have. However, the CSOs themselves differ in their opinions whether they should try to maintain the dialogue with the Government or not.

3 PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1: Enhance efforts to promote a conducive environment for civil society actors in Armenia.

Priority 1.1: Enhanced open and free space to operate for civil society actors

Indicators:

- 1 The rule of law and the principles of participation, transparency and accountability are generally recognized and the space for participation and policy influence has substantially increased;
- 2 The legislation regulating activities of Civil Society Organisations in Armenia is in full compliance with international and European human rights standards and practice;
- 3 Legislative initiatives coming from the Armenian CSOs are in compliance with the EU-Armenia ENP Actions Plan (or other respective documents) regulating EU-Armenia relations;
- 4 Increased number and variety of civil society interventions, actions at central and local levels and in various sectors of societal issues;
- 5 Existence of the structural dialogue between Armenian government and civil society on implementation of reforms' agenda.

Priority 1.2: Enhanced active citizenship culture towards democratic state building

Indicators:

- 1 Increased number of democratic and rights based high quality educational and awareness raising programmes on active citizenship at national education system, at public and private medias, specific focus on youth;
- 2 Increased number and level of variety of independent CSOs and civic groups adopted and carry out democratic, transparent and accountable internal governance system in the organisational development.

PRIOROTY 2: Promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of Armenia, in the EU programming cycle and international processes.

Priority 2.1.: CSOs effective participation in public policy processes, including formulation, implementation and monitoring

Indicators 2.1:

- 1 Number of sectors in which consultations and sectoral dialogue processes between non-state and state actors are established
- 2 Number of CSO initiatives involved in formulation, implementation and monitoring of public policies

Priority 2.2: Stronger, strategic CSO participation in EU assistance in Armenia, including involvement all along the cycle of EU Budget Support Operations

Indicators 2.2.:

- 1 CSOs input is provided at all EU programming stages (on Identification Fiche, Action Fiche and Technical and Administrative Provisions)
- 2 NGOs are involved in dialogue in Budget Support Operations: broad number of sectoral CSOs provides their input at Budget Support stakeholders meetings; CSOs selected by EU and line Ministries are invited to Budget Support Steering Committees
- 3 CSOs are monitoring the implementation of sector reforms
- 4 Working groups including sectoral CSOs meet regularly to monitor BS progress of specific targets for the disbursement

PRIORITY 3. Increase Armenia's civil society actors' capacity to perform their roles as independent development actors more effectively.

Priority 3.1: Improved operational and management capacities of CSOs with a particular emphasis on grass root level regional CSOs

Indicators 3.1:

- 1 Number of support initiatives implemented in the field of internal project/organization management
- 2 Number of support initiatives implemented by grass root CSOs in remote regions
- 3 Increased level of operational and management capacities of CSOs

Priority 3.2: Effective engagement of CS actors in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring supported

Indicators 3.2:

- 1 Number of support initiatives implemented to raise awareness of CSOs on policy formulation, implementation and monitoring
- 2 Transparent, inclusive and effective dialogue/cooperation mechanisms established between CS actors and the Government
- 3 Number and types of laws/strategies/policy documents effectively consulted and owned by the CS actors

Priority 3.3: CSOs and civic groups efforts to develop joint initiatives, build platforms and coalitions are promoted

Indicators 3.3:

- 1 Level and quality of joint initiatives/campaigns and other forms of interaction among CSOs developed
- 2 Platforms/networks/ coalitions and issue-based alliances exist and operate effectively
- 3 Increased number of CSOs from the regions, remote areas including under-populated border areas of Armenia participating in the platforms/networks/coalitions

Priority 3.4: Improve financial sustainability of CSOs through increased access to alternative funding and opportunities of social entrepreneurship

Indicators 3.4:

- 1 Existence of revised regulatory framework enabling implementation of social entrepreneurship activities
- 2 Existence of consistent national policy and funding mechanism for development of CSO sector
- 3 Number of CSOs engaged in commercial activities (social entrepreneurship)
- 4 Number of CSOs receiving alternative funding (outside donor grants scheme)
- 5 Level of financial independence of CSOs
- 6 Existence of clearly defined budgetary allocations for CSO development in the state budget

4. ACTIONS

Priority 1: Enhance efforts to promote a conducive environment for civil society actors in Armenia.
Indicator(s)
Priority 1.1: Enhanced open and free space to operate for civil society actors Indicators: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 The rule of law and the principles of participation, transparency and accountability are generally recognized and the space for participation and policy influence has substantially increased;2 The legislation regulating activities of Civil Society Organisations in Armenia is in full compliance with international and European human rights standards and practice;3 Legislative initiatives coming from the Armenian CSOs are in compliance with the EU-Armenia ENP Actions Plan (or other respective documents) regulating EU-Armenia relations;4 Increased number and variety of civil society interventions, actions at central and local levels and in various sectors of societal issues;5 Existence of the structural dialogue between Armenian government and civil society on implementation of reforms' agenda. Priority 1.2: Enhanced active citizenship culture towards democratic state building Indicators: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Increased number of democratic and rights based high quality educational and awareness raising programmes on active citizenship at national education system, at public and private medias, specific focus on youth;2 Increased number and level of variety of independent CSOs and civic groups adopted and carry out democratic, transparent and accountable internal governance system in the organisational development.
Actions:
A. Studies, mappings and research

- Toolkit to support CSOs in the policy dialogue with the Government produced and distributed
- Regular evaluations of civil society involvement in specific policy processes should be undertaken in order to facilitate a culture of learning, which continuously improves the tools and mechanisms for civil society dialogue.
- EU Delegation, Member States and civil society organizations all have important roles to play in promoting a more strategic and systematic collaboration at all levels between EU, civil society and Armenian Government.

Responsible: EU DEL, EU Member states, Civil society

A. Dialogue, consultation and facilitation

- A more structured and strategic EU cooperation with civil society will potentially improve the impact of EU actions and ensure consistency and synergy.
- EU Delegation should develop clear and predictable schedules and guidelines for consultations, which ensure that civil society gets the necessary documentation, sufficient time for preparations and proper feedback and follow-up. The institutional mechanisms for dialogue should be agreed with Armenian Government.
- A permanent co-operation platform should be established to facilitate dialogue between the Armenian Civil Society National Platform and EURONEST MPs in Armenia. Thematic working groups of non-government experts and stakeholders (e.g. business, human rights watchdogs) should be established to link civil society, EU Delegation, and state agencies regulating corresponding policy areas.
- A public awareness campaign around democratic values and the mutual benefits of closer European integration must be given a priority.
- Engagement in the adoption and proper implementation of the legislation providing stronger leverage of the civil society in their advocacy work within specific areas (transparency of the Government, gender equality, domestic violence, etc.);
- Keeping emphasis in the EU-Armenia relations on the democracy, human rights issues through the defining the priorities in the engagement with the civil society, as well through inclusion of them in the agenda of budget support. Prioritizing free and fair elections, freedom of association, assembly and expression, gender equality and rights of minorities/vulnerable groups EU will subsequently provide more opportunities for the Armenian civil society to play stronger role in the country.

- Armenian Civil Society Organisations should demonstrate a strong commitment to the country CSO roadmaps and engage in a constructive dialogue with the EU Delegation, where CSOs themselves promote broad participation from local CSOs and community-based organizations by providing technical expertise and capacity building.

Responsible: EU Delegation, Armenian Civil Society National Platform, Armenian Government.

B. Operational support including mainstreaming

- EU-Armenia political dialogue;
- Capacity support to enable/empower CSOs as effective actors in representing citizens' interests and in engaging with the state.

Responsible: EU Delegation

Priority 2: Promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of Armenia, in the EU programming cycle and international processes.

Indicator(s)

Indicators 2.1:

- Number of sectors in which consultations and sectoral dialogue processes between non-state and state actors are established
- Number of CSO initiatives involved in formulation, implementation and monitoring of public policies

Indicators 2.2.:

- CSOs input is provided at all EU programming stages (on Identification Fiche, Action Fiche and Technical and Administrative Provisions)
- NGOs are involved in dialogue in Budget Support Operations: broad number of sectoral CSOs provides their input at Budget Support stakeholders meetings; CSOs selected by EU and line

<p>Ministries are invited to Budget Support Steering Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CSOs are monitoring the implementation of sector reforms - Working groups including sectoral CSOs meet regularly to monitor BS progress of specific targets for the disbursement
<p>Actions:</p>
<p>A. Studies, mappings and research</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toolkit to support CSOs in the policy dialogue with the Government produced and distributed - Up to date mapping of various local CSOs, with the special focus on their sectoral specializations to be produced <p>Responsible: EUD, DEVCO</p>
<p>B. Dialogue, consultation and facilitation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued dialogue with the CSOs in the framework of Civil Society Consultations meetings established by the EUD, with the more focused and sectoral approach - Consultations with civil society at all EU programming stages - www.eu-cso-am. promoted and used in parallel to the consultation meetings - Meetings with CSOs to explain Budget Support Operations different sectors and the entry points for practical civil society engagement to be organized by the EUD - Steering Committees and Stakeholders Meetings in all sectors of Budget Support to take place on regular basis <p>Responsible: EUD, Government of Armenia</p>
<p>C. Operational support including mainstreaming</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Armenian National Platform members supported in their involvement in monitoring of Budget Support operations - Capacity support to enable/empower CSOs as effective actors in representing citizens' interests and in engaging with the state - Use of funds available for CSO initiatives under MSBS Budget Support Complementary Actions, also with an aim to build partnerships between Armenian and European CSO networks involved in monitoring of EU programs - Allocation of a part of future Budget Support to be directly implemented by CSOs, to facilitate CSOs role in budget oversight - Provision of trainings on reforms monitoring and advocacy/public campaigning

Responsible: EUD, DEVCO

Priority 3: Increase Armenia's civil society actors' capacity to perform their roles as independent development actors more effectively.

Indicator(s)

Indicators 3.1:

- 1 Number of support initiatives implemented in the field of internal project/organization management
- 2 Number of support initiatives implemented by grass root CSOs in remote regions
- 3 Increased level of operational and management capacities of CSOs

Indicators 3.2:

- 1 Number of support initiatives implemented to raise awareness of CSOs on policy formulation, implementation and monitoring
- 2 Transparent, inclusive and effective dialogue/cooperation mechanisms established between CS actors and the Government
- 3 Number and types of laws/strategies/policy documents effectively consulted and owned by the CS actors

Indicators 3.3:

- 1 Level and quality of joint initiatives/campaigns and other forms of interaction among CSOs developed
- 2 Platforms/networks/ coalitions and issue-based alliances exist and operate effectively
- 3 Increased number of CSOs from the regions, remote areas including under-populated border areas of Armenia participating in the platforms/networks/coalitions

Indicators 3.4:

- 1 Existence of revised regulatory framework enabling implementation of social entrepreneurship activities
- 2 Existence of consistent national policy and funding mechanism for development of CSOs

sector
3 Number of CSOs engaged in commercial activities (social entrepreneurship)
4 Number of CSOs receiving alternative funding (outside donor grants scheme)
5 Level of financial independence of CSOs
6 Existence of clearly defined budgetary allocations for CSO development in the state budget
Actions:
A. Studies, mappings and research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feasibility study on establishment of National Foundation for Support to Civil Society or other alternative sources of CSO funding (private, endowments, etc) - Study on legislative amendments required to regulate and foster volunteer movement - Mapping of inclusion of civic education component at all levels of educational system - Study on establishment of legal framework for effective mechanism for cooperation between mass media and CSOs - Study on expansion of the scope of legal framework on provision of social services and on possibilities to outsource social services to CSOs by state and local self-governance bodies.
Responsible: EUD
A. Dialogue, consultation and facilitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued dialogue with the CSOs in the framework of consultation mechanism established by the EUD - Facilitate the dialogue with the Government on policy formulation and monitoring through meaningful involvement of CSOs in the Budget Support Steering Committees - Support the organization of annual conferences to summarize the results of tripartite dialogue between the Government, EU and civil society.
Responsible: EUD, Government of Armenia, CSOs sector
B. Operational support including mainstreaming
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide operational support through thematic programmes (local and global calls) EIDHR and NSA-LA, as well as Civil Society Facility. - Provision of capacity building measures with multiplier effect (ToTs) on financial management and reporting, project management, strategic planning, human resource management, fund raising, advocacy and writing skills, communication skills, social entrepreneurship, English language. - Provision of targeted trainings on EU assistance instruments with a particular focus on Budget

Support operations.

- Provision of trainings on procedures for EU grant application and management.

- Support to effective operation of the CSF Armenian National Platform for continued involvement and monitoring of priority areas of EU-Armenia cooperation.

- Launch a public awareness campaign (media outreach) on policy formulation and reform monitoring, freedom of information as well as other relevant issues in Yerevan and regions.

Responsible: EUD, DEVCO

1 DASHBOARD

Country:		
Process		
Area	Indicator	Achievement
Involvement of Member States in Roadmap Process	Number of Member States actively involved in the formulation of the Roadmap process	
Dialogue with local civil society	Structured dialogue with local civil society carried out to inform Roadmap analysis and priorities	
Mainstreaming	Number of actions involving mainstreaming of civil society into sector programmes, policy dialogue or similar	
Outcome		
Priority	Indicator	Achievement
[Insert ...]	[Insert ...]	
[Insert ...]	[Insert ...]	
[To be continued as relevant]	...	