



International Center for
Human Development
Մարդկային զարգացման
միջազգային կենտրոն

The Role of Civil Society in EU Integration Processes: Real Engagement through Effective Involvement

**A Collection of
Conference Speeches
22-23 November, 2012**

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• Visegrad Fund
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Prepared for the publication by
International Center for Human Development

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Yerevan:
International Center for Human Development

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About the Project

The project is led by the International Center for Human Development (Armenia) and is implemented together with project partners from V4 countries: Institute for Public Affairs (Slovakia), Policy Association for an Open Society (Czech Republic), European Center for Non-for-Profit Law (Hungary), Association Integration and Development (Poland) and two EaP countries: Laboratory for Legislative Initiatives (Ukraine) and Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (Georgia).

GOAL: The goal of the project is to facilitate European integration processes in Eastern partnership counters.

DONOR: The project is supported by International Visegrad Fund Flagship Project within the V4EaP program (<http://visegradfund.org>). The mission of the International Visegrad Fund is to promote development of closer cooperation among the Visegrad Group (V4) countries - the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia - and to strengthen the ties among people in the region.

OBJECTIVES: The project goal will be achieved through:

- providing access to the unique experience and know-how of the Visegrad Group countries in enhancing the role of the civil society in the European integration processes, and
- strengthening the institutional capacity of the partners from Eastern Partnership countries.

CONCEPT: In EaP countries common citizens are mostly unaware of the course European integration has taken for the last decade. People do not seem particularly interested in the issues of EU integration. In the result, the process seems to have 'stagnated' within the milieu of those who have stuck to the identity of 'a promoter of European values'. Moreover, for many NGOs involved in the integration processes society does not appear to be a real stakeholder, and one of the major issues is the lack of adequate communication channels and tools. Therefore, identifying and implementing effective communication and engagement mechanisms in order to make the general public a real stakeholder in the EU integration process and develop a sense of ownership in EaP

countries has become an imperative. Civil society organizations (CSO) in these countries are the primary players to address this need.

Thus, this project is envisaged to share case studies and lessons learned from all V4 countries which have been successful in engaging their societies in the EU integration processes. Thus a joint conference with built-in breakout sessions for EaP and V4 CSO representatives was organized from 22-23 November, 2012 in Yerevan, Armenia, to facilitate discussions on specific tools and capacities needed for more effective CSO engagement in EaP countries. Based on the outcomes of these sessions local trainings will be provided in each of the EaP partner countries (Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia) to enhance the engagement of local NGOs in the European integration processes.

ACTIVITIES: The project objectives will be achieved through the following activities:

- Joint conference with V4 and EaP partner countries in Yerevan;
- Local trainings for NGOs in Yerevan;
- Local trainings for NGOs in Tbilisi;
- Local trainings for NGOs in Kiev.

Expected outputs:

- Case studies, success stories and lessons learnt shared about the existing gaps of CSO engagement in European integration processes;
- Local capacity building trainings organized in partner EaP countries (Yerevan, Tbilisi and Kiev);
- Enhanced local CSO capacities, specifically in more effective engagement mechanisms in order to facilitate the European integration in EaP countries;
- A project website promoting the project and serving as a platform for sharing experience and further partnership possibilities;
- Publication of case studies, lessons learnt of V4 countries; and gaps/challenges in EaP countries;
- Dissemination of over 100 leaflets on success stories in EaP countries.

Project implementation period: 01/10/2012 - 31/10/2013

International Center for Human development (ICHD)

Established in March, 2000 the International Center for Human Development (ICHD or the Center) is a one of the leading think tanks in the region that brings together a team of highly-qualified analysts and researchers with strong academic background and substantial experience in both public and private sectors committed to professional excellence and ethics.

During its 12 year long history the Center has cultivated a culture of inclusive policy making process, has developed and introduced innovative instruments effective in the regional, national and local policy environment. ICHD is considered as one of the promoters for increasing the level of public participation in the decision making process in Armenia. ICHD is determined to keep on influencing the current state policy opinion. For providing policy input, new initiatives and holding the government accountable, ICHD strives to promote democratic and market-oriented reforms based on shared values.

For more information, please visit <http://www.ichd.org/>

Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS)

PASOS is a network of independent think-tanks in Europe and Central Asia, working to strengthen public participation in policymaking. PASOS aims to promote and protect democracy, human rights and open society values – including the rule of law, good governance, and economic and social development – by supporting civil society organisations that individually and jointly foster public participation in public policy issues at the European Union level, in other European and global structures, and in the wider neighbourhood of Europe and Central Asia.

For more information, please visit www.pasos.org

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS)

Established in December 4, 1998, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) is an independent, non-profit policy think tank dedicated to help-

ing improve public policy decision-making in Georgia through research and analysis, training of policymakers and policy analysts, and public education about the strategic issues, both domestic and international, facing Georgia and the Caucasus in the 21st century. GFSIS activities are aimed at promoting democracy and fostering political and economic reforms; enhancing regional cooperation; creating a friendly and secure investment environment; and providing local private sector and the international business community opportunities to participate in the economy of the Caucasus region.

GFSIS undertakes all efforts to provide the country's political leaders, including members of the Parliament and top administrators of Georgian ministries, with objective information to help them to fulfill their duties more effectively, promote dialogue between the government and the Georgian community. One of the Foundation's main purposes is to train and educate of the next generation of leaders who will shape the future of the country. GFSIS leaders and collaborators provide numerous interviews through mass media, publications, conference reports, seminars, and roundtable discussions in Georgia and abroad.

For more information, please visit <http://www.gfsis.org/>

European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)

The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL) is a leading European resource and research center in the field of civil society law based in Budapest. Its mission is to promote an enabling legal and fiscal environment for civil society in Europe and beyond. ECNL experts have provided support that has directly and positively influenced more than 50 laws affecting CSOs across Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS. ECNL's methodology of work emphasizes participation, transparency and local ownership.

For more information, please visit <http://www.ecnl.org/>

Association Integration and Development (SIR)

Association Integration and Development (SIR) is a Polish Non-Governmental Organisation established on 19 May 2001 by civil society and regional development experts with significant experience in numerous projects in the field of Social and Regional Development - implementation of projects financed from various assistance funds, such

as: PHARE, USAid, Know How Fund, the World Bank, European Social Fund, as well as European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Since 2008 SIR is running European Social Found Regional Centre, which actively supports all public and private entities interested in the participation in EU Human Capital Operational Programme.

Our Association has implemented a large number of projects in the field of education, employment, civil society and entrepreneurship, what makes us one of the most active NGO in the region and the country as well. Thanks to participation in several partner networks (including NGOs, companies, universities and public institutions), effective project management and experienced specialists, SIR's services have obtained favourable feedback from all partners, which is another incentive for further improvements.

For more information, please visit www.sir.com.pl

Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)

Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) is an independent public policy research institute founded in 1997 and located in Bratislava. Its mission is to analyze political, social, economic and other issues of public interest, to make practical recommendations for improved government policy, and to promote the active involvement of informed citizens in public life.

For more information, please visit www.ivo.sk

Agency for Legislative Initiatives NGO (ALI)

Agency for Legislative Initiatives was founded in 2000. It is a national-level think tank, with expertise in the following areas: election and political parties' legislation, anticorruption policy, information policy and media, public finance (subsidies and procurement), budget and administrative decentralisation, and local self-governance.

ALI has multi-year experience of promotion of the European values at national and local level, namely by strengthening the trends of democratic parliamentary practice, local government reform, free democratic elections etc.

ALI has practiced and disseminated a number of methods for cooperation between the NGOs and the government, including good practices systematized by the Council of Europe.

ALI runs two training programmes – ‘New Ukraine’ School of Professional Journalism and Ukrainian School of Political Studies, aimed at debating and promotion of the democratic agenda within the various groups of successful professionals – politicians, journalists, public servants, businessmen, civil society leaders.

Since 2008 ALI supports functioning of the Civil Society Leadership Network (www.csln.info) – a joint project of several think tanks from EaP countries launched together with the Council of Europe.

For more information, please visit Parliament.org.ua

Conference Speakers

Mr. Denys Chernikov

Previously worked for the Ukrainian central authorities, in fields of public finance, international relations and European Integration. At the Agency for Legislative Initiatives NGO manages a number of projects related to transparency and accountability of the public funds, local democracy development and promotion of the EU integration agenda.

Mr. George Tarkhan-Mouravi

George Tarkhan-Mouravi is co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies, a small think tank in Tbilisi, Georgia. Physicist by background, he has worked in a number of areas of social and political analysis, Caucasian politics, democratic transition, ethnicity, security, development and poverty studies. Since late 1980s, has been involved in developing civic sector in Georgia. Currently on the board of the Georgian Political Science Association.

Mr. Vache Kalashyan

Mr. Vache Kalashyan is the President of the Union of Armenian Government Employees (NGO).

Since 2008 Mr. Kalashyan is lecturer at Yerevan State University in the Department of international relations, Public administration Matter of government effectiveness.

From 1999 - 2008 he was member of Public Sector Reform Commission of RA. From 1994-1998 he was Deputy head of Department at the Ministry of Interior of RA. From 1993-1999 worked as Senior Researcher at Physics Research Institute NA of RA.

Vache Kalashyan is an author of various publications.

Ms. Eszter Hartay

Eszter Hartay is a Hungarian lawyer working as a Legal Advisor of the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL). She is specializing in issues related to CSO legal framework, public benefit status and all aspects of the cooperation between the state and

CSOs. Through conducting comparative research and providing in person assistance she has gained in depth knowledge of models and mechanisms of CSO-government co-operation on the national and local level, legal issues pertaining to citizen participation and state funding for civil society, with particular focus to civil society funds. She has participated in several research assignments on topics such as public funding, public benefit status, social economy and transparency and accountability. Prior to joining ECNL, Ms Hartay worked for a law firm and among others gained experience in the establishment and permanent representation of business associations and CSOs. Ms. Hartay holds a Master Degree in law from the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest and passed her bar exam as an attorney in 2009.

Mr. Ján Bartoš

Ján Bartoš graduated in 2006 with a degree in philosophy at the University of Trnava. From 2006 to 2009, he continued with postgraduate studies in the field of systematic philosophy. Since May 2010, he has worked at the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) as an office manager and project coordinator. His field of interest is non-profit sector and civil society.

Mr. Radomír Špok

Mr. Radomír Špok graduated at the Faculty of Law, Charles University and continued his studies at the Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. He deals with the broader aspects of the European Union with focus on EU Regional Policy. In the past he worked as the editor-in chief of the Integrate magazine and in EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy he led several projects focused on educational and research activities. He is responsible for financial and project managements.

Mr. Michal Kowal

Michal Kowal holds a Bachelor degree in Economics and a Master degree in Management, majoring in Financial Management and Accountancy. He is the Director of the Technical Assistance Projects Department at a consulting company EPRD Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development (EPRD), and he has been a member and has been actively involved in the activities of the Association Integration and Development (SiR).

Michal has over 8 years of experience in management and coordination of various projects, including EU-funded technical assistance projects. In the period 2004-2005 he was engaged as a project manager in the implementation of the project funded by the Know How Fund "Assimilation of Roma and their integration with local environment of Swietokrzyskie voivodship" in Poland. During 2006-2008 he acted as the Deputy Project Director in the EU project "Capacity building and grants to civil society organisations in social services in Croatia" implemented jointly by EPRD and SiR. Since 2006 he has been an associated expert of SiR in the area of implementation of international projects and civil society. He has profound knowledge of EC Practical Guide (PRAG) rules and EU procedures, including Project Cycle Management.

Ukrainian Civil Society and European Integration: Challenges and Gaps

Denis Chernikov
Agency for Legislative Initiatives

Ukraine is undergoing a stress test now. There are concerns about the worsening or even freezing of democratic trends in EaP countries, namely in the context of interaction between civil society and the state. Putting some Western-developed patterns on the ground of post-Soviet political culture resulted in the fact that such institutions as public hearings, and public advisory boards, in many cases, became just formal events, devoid of a democratic sense.

Obviously, the EaP countries have been influenced by the global trend of a “democratic recession.” Negative trends in political development were deepened by the global financial crisis. At the same time, having reached some socially acceptable level of legally secured political freedoms and civil liberties, the EaP countries have not paid enough attention to the wide practice and protection of them, namely with the help of citizens engagement, so these democratic achievements were not deeply reflected in political participation and political culture at all levels.

Evaluations have been made at the international and regional levels which provide a distinctive picture concerning adherence to the democratic values in EaP countries by elites and the public.

Firstly, comparative levels of support for democracy in the region, presented by the EBRD “**Life in Transition**” report 2011¹, have risen in all EaP countries, except Ukraine, since 2006.

1) <http://www.ebrd.com/pages/research/publications/special/transitionII.shtml>

Along with that, the **Council of Europe** expressed a “concern over a trust gap between the ruling elites – political and economic – and the rest of society in the Partnership’s target countries, not least because of the widespread public discontent with “money politics”, corruption and the shadow economy”.¹ According to **Freedom House’s** “Nations in Transit” report of 2011², only Georgia and Moldova have improved their democracy score since 2009, while the other three countries have worsened it. At the same time, the **World Economic Forum** Global Competitiveness Index³ (2009 compared to 2011) shows improvement only for Armenia and Georgia in the *Institutions* pillar of competitiveness, that is, the legal and administrative framework within which individuals, firms, and governments interact to generate wealth. This pillar refers not only to the public institutions, but also private ones, and considers the *ethical behaviour* of firms in their interactions with public officials, politicians, and other enterprises.

Such a situation can be explained by the absence of relevant civil infrastructure to protect and practice democratic principles. The democratic developments in EaP countries so far have focused primarily on representative democracy patterns, while keeping aside opportunities for participation and deliberation. Civil society efforts are mostly concentrated on *reacting* to government actions instead of *advancing* them. This state can be characterized as a *minimalist democracy*, which implies a lack or even absence of public joint discussions justifying voting and political decisions. Democratic values remain abstract for the major part of citizens, which leads to conformity by citizens, and in some cases – by civil society institutions – to the adoption of a system of values protected by the ruling non-democratic elite.

The European Union is concerned about cases of selective justice for political opposition leaders, as well as protection of the rule of law principle, which is in a deep and unexpected discord with the multi-year declaration of adherence to European integra-

1) The impact of the Eastern Partnership of the European Union on governance and economic development in eastern Europe. Council of Europe, Resolution of Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, 29 November 2011.

http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/DocListingDetails_E.asp?DocID=13342

2) <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=678>

3) <http://www.weforum.org/reports>

tion by the present Ukrainian political leaders. These concerns are transformed into conditions of signature of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, including DCFTA.

What are the further perspectives of European integration of Ukraine? Will Ukraine become a part of Europe or return to the post-Soviet space? These questions are becoming more pressing.

Indeed, this is the biggest challenge for Ukrainian civil society now and in the near future. We should understand whether our role so far was sufficient, what context we had, and how we should upgrade this role.

The present political situation is characterized by a domination of non-democratic values, with a highly questionable attitude towards European integration, and not speaking about European values. This is a very challenging and uncomfortable environment. However, we should admit that before 2010, when the political situation changed, European integration and relevant civil society activities enjoyed a much more favourable situation.

The Orange Revolution in 2004 marked the end of Leonid Kuchma's rule as a non-democratic leader. Along with that, no grounds existed to consider it as non-EU oriented. The first EU integration programmes, action plans and legal approximation plans, were adopted at the beginning of 2000s.

The period of 2005-2009 was dominated by *Eurooptimism*. democratic government, WTO accession, launch of the DCFTA and association agreement negotiations, and a high intensity of contacts between Ukrainian and European politicians. The DCFTA was even proclaimed as internal reforms roadmap. As most of civil society believed, it was a beginning of the way towards the EU membership.

Therefore, civil society mostly relied on the efforts of state authorities in the European integration process. Its primary role included monitoring and provision of recommendations. Now, obviously, someone should do the hard work, to advocate for European values and demand their protection.

Our perception of Europe and the European Union changed also. A paradigm of welfare in exchange of fulfilment of the formal obligations, which had dominated before the financial crisis, lost its domination. The relevant experience of Greece, Spain and other European countries served as a pattern to follow 7-10 years ago, but now Ukrainian civil society perceives the EU as a community of rights and values, rather than a source of financial assistance.

In this context, we should take into account that EU integration may have different meanings for citizens and interest groups in different parts of Ukraine. In the Western and Central parts, it firstly implies expectations about financial aid, and the availability of structural funds. In the Eastern and Southern parts, there is more concern about competitiveness, retaining control over market share, and, last but not least, retaining access to state support. Therefore, the perception of “just norms” obviously will have different consequences, with stronger euroscepticism in the cases of the Eastern and Southern regions.

So, civil society in Ukraine should adapt to the new reality very quickly, shifting towards the advocacy of the EU values and standards, explaining their value to the broad population of Ukraine and key stakeholders. The NGO sector should do more by itself, to create a very sustainable basis in Ukrainian society, and to protect democratic values. What are challenges and gaps?

First of all, civil society should push the old limits. Civil society should do a lot more than just monitoring and commenting on the progress of reform. If we perceive AA/DCFTA as reform roadmap, the wider public should know everything about its contents and practical usefulness in daily life.

A need of a further understanding of EU principles and values, based on 60 years of experience, not only just copying of legal norms, can be illustrated by the case of competition law. The Ukrainian government has made two unsuccessful attempts to copy EU state aid rules and adopt them by passing a law. The reason in both cases was that most members of the Ukrainian parliament could not imagine at all that competition can be distorted by state intervention aimed at a selective support of businesses. Together with antitrust regulations and public procurement standards, EU state aid rules con-

stitute three pillars of protection for competition. Unfortunately, this principle is not widely understood in Ukraine. Therefore, just importing procedural norms does not guarantee the introduction of such principles.

This case of the failure of the introduction of state aid rules also illustrates some gaps in analytical support by civil society on EU integration. On this particular subject, since 2003 only two comprehensive publications have been published, and only 1 or 2 think tanks are active in this field, with 3 to 5 experts specializing on the topic. Obviously, it is not enough for a country with a strong industrial lobby and a permanent demand for state budget support, tax benefits, state guarantees, etc.

Most of the fundamental research on DCFTA impact on the economic development of Ukraine goes back to 2006-2007. The situation with internal markets and exports has changed, and “informational hunger” deprives the active part of civil society and pro-EU politicians of constructive arguments in defending the usefulness of AA/DCFTA for Ukrainian society.

Another gap is unsustainable dialogue with the state, which heavily depends on the political situation. The state channels interaction with civil society mostly to the advisory panels at executive bodies (ministries and regional state administrations), whereas the parliament majority and presidential administration since 2010 are not keen on permanent dialogue with civil society on matters of European integration, despite the availability of institutional opportunities. In particular, since the 2010, the Civic Expert Council of the Ukrainian part of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Committee hasn't has any joint meetings with top officials. The Coordination Council on Civil Society Development (affiliated with the presidential administration) hasn't approved any significant decisions in the field of European integration. Therefore, after the 2012 parliamentary elections, civil society should work closely as possible with newly elected MPs from pro-democratic factions, supply them with information and analysis on the EU integration agenda, and on principles and values to be disseminated by the Association Agreement and DCFTA.

The Role of Civil Society Organizations in the European Integration Process: Challenges and Gaps¹ (Georgia)

George Tarkhan-Mouravi
Institute for Policy Studies

- 1. Public attitudes related to the European integration process*
- 2. General political developments in Georgia*
- 3. Some cases related to EU Integration (successes)*

In Georgia, the European banner flies alongside the Georgian flag by public buildings across the country - including both the old building of the Georgian Parliament in Tbilisi and in front of the new building in Kutaisi, formally reflecting the country's membership in the Council of Europe and also to symbolize a commitment to joining the EU.

Georgia has certain relationships with a few main Western and European actors. These relationships differs by the goals which Georgia pursues in each case, the level of progress on the way to achieving these goals, and a few objective factors, such as the extent to which international actors welcome the efforts of Georgia to reach its ultimate aims of joining the EU and NATO. The main actors are:

- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- European Union (EU)
- Council of Europe (CoE)
- The World Bank
- UN
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
- European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)
- Individual European States

One of the highest priorities for Georgian diplomacy is integration into NATO. Georgia and NATO relations officially began in 1994 when Georgia joined the NATO-run Part-

1) The text is based on the transcript prepared by GFSIS

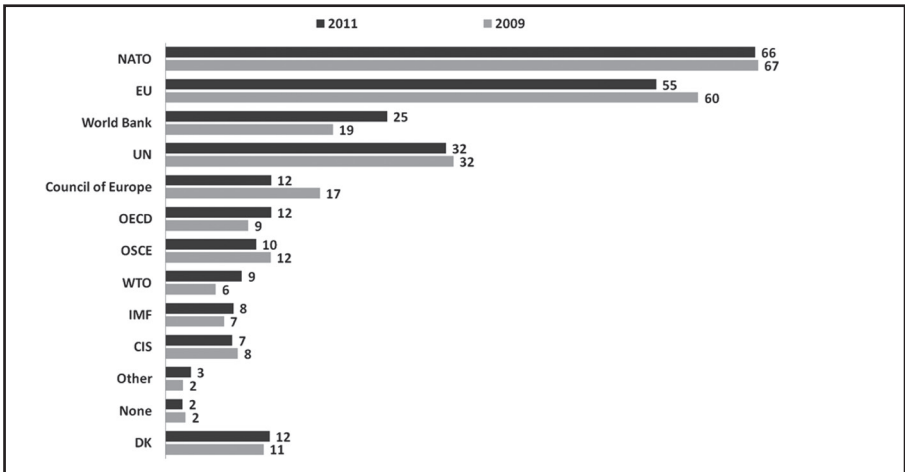
nership for Peace (PfP), which aimed at creating trust between NATO and other states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Georgia hopes that NATO membership will secure her against the aggressive behavior and military plans of the main political and military power in the region – Russia – and thus tensure Georgia's independence and democratic development.

The EU and Georgia are currently negotiating an Association Agreement and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, with the goal of finalizing negotiations in 2013. Georgia also is adhered to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) through a relevant Action Plan. Georgia is one of six members of the Eastern Partnership, which provides an institutionalized forum for discussing strategic partnership agreements with the EU's eastern neighbors and other issues of mutual importance. The EU also initiated the **Black Sea Synergy, which seeks to increase cooperation among and between the countries surrounding the Black Sea**. Georgia has been a member of the Council of Europe (CoE) since 27 April, 1999. According to CoE procedures, Georgia ratified some basic documents.

The main tasks of the OSCE Mission to Georgia, which were gradually increased since its opening in late 1992, have been the following: Politico-military dimension of security, Human dimension of security, Economic and environmental dimension of security, Co-operation with other international organizations.

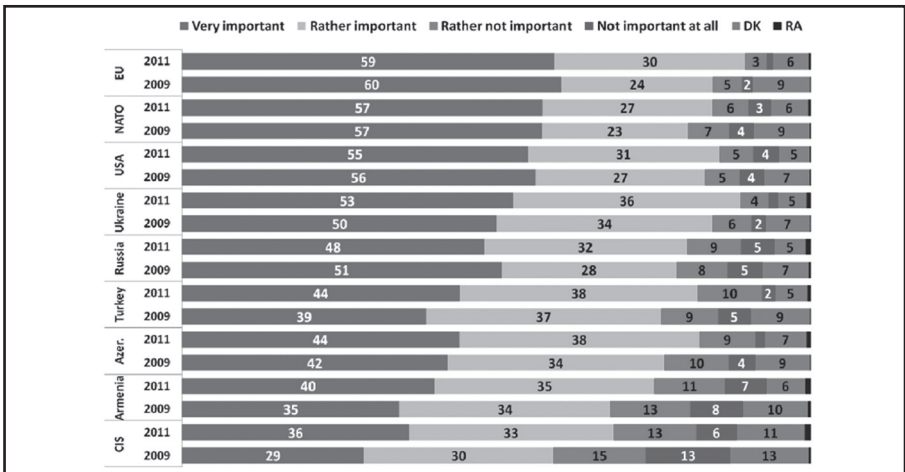
When speaking on public attitudes toward Georgia's integration into different international alliances, it is interesting how Georgians assess the importance of the main international organizations and the EU. According to a public survey (see table 1), the Georgian population gives priority to NATO, maybe because of security reasons, and place the EU and possibly the idea of joining the EU in second place. The popularity of the idea tends to decrease, possibly because of the economic and social crisis in EU member states. At the same time, people who answer these questions often do not fully understand what the EU really means. Sometimes, even experts do not understand in full what EU membership would imply.

Table 1. Q22. Important organizations for Georgia (% of “Yes”)



According to the Table 2, one can see that respondents attach more importance to strengthening ties with the EU than with any other organization.

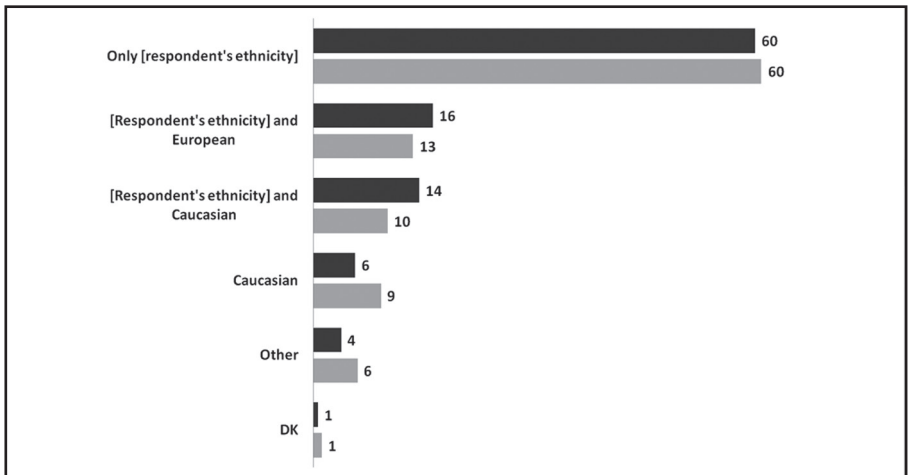
Table 2. Q4. Importance of strengthening ties with... (%)



Another point is whether Georgians identify themselves as Europeans. Former Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania has once stated (in Strasbourg): “I am Georgian, therefore I am European.

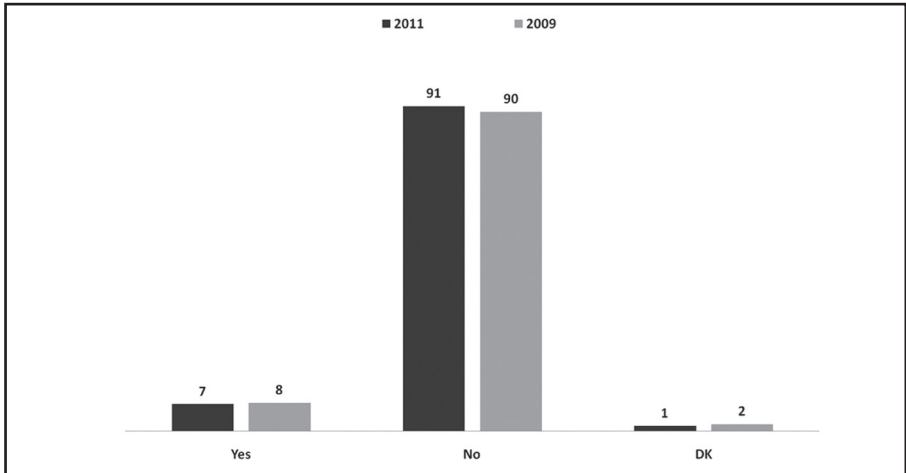
But when we come to the issue of European identity, we can see from Table 3 that Georgians do not fully identify themselves with Europeans and prefer their own ethnic identity. European identity is very weak. The government position is one more of imitation, one more leverage of a political issue to try proving the European identity issue.

Table 3. Q68. How do you identify yourself? As... (%)



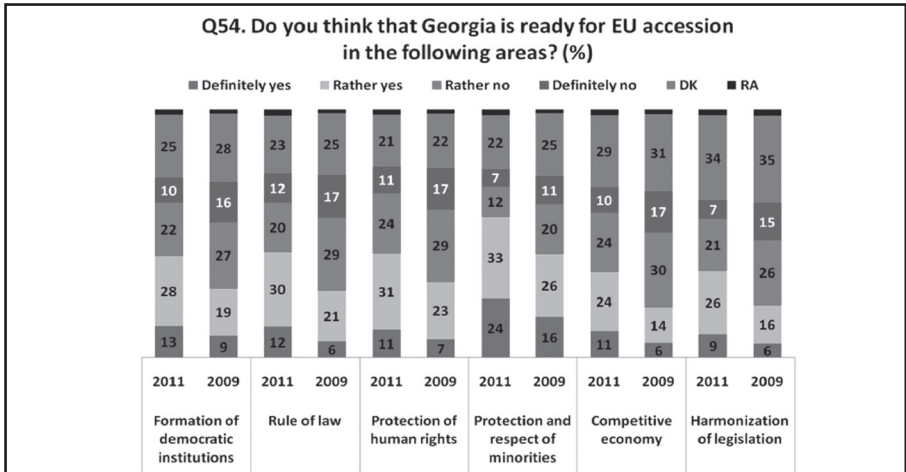
Another interesting point is whether Georgians want to live in EU. According to Table 4, they do not want to live on a permanent basis in any of the current EU countries. And this attitude has not changed since 2009.

Table 4. Q38. Would you like to permanently settle in an EU country? (%)



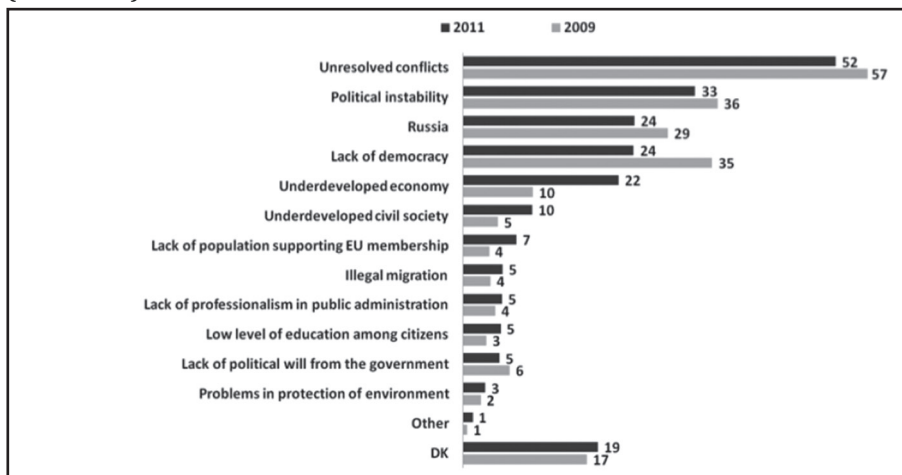
It is also interesting how people assess Georgia's readiness to join EU. There are some doubts about it (see table 5). But these doubts slightly decreased within the period 2009 – 2011.

Table 5. Q54. Do you think that Georgia is ready for EU accession in the following areas? (%)



The next survey results show how people assess barriers to Georgia becoming EU member (Table 6) – its unresolved internal conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, political instability, Russia, and lack of democracy. The table covers the period before 2012 when there was a change.

Table 6. Q61. What are the barriers to Georgia becoming an EU member state? (% of “Yes”)



Georgia and many post-Soviet countries often just imitate reforms leading to adjustment to the EU standards. One may say that in the same way EU also pretends it wants more integration on the part of Georgia. As you move to the West within the EU there is less commitment to integration.

What has the government been doing since independence? It created the impression of overcoming poverty, and of quick and successful reforms., There were many indicators that Georgia was a leader in the process of reforms (the World Bank), but there were also other indicators (brought again by World Bank) about the high level of a shadow economy in Georgia. But there are showcases also arranged by the government. Vivid examples include Batumi, Akhaltsikhe and Mestia. Many good things are done by the government. But there are also comic examples – a new Parliament building in Kutaisi

which cost about \$200 million – another imitation of some kind of activity. One last dubious idea – Lazika – saw the creation of a totally new city on the Black Sea shore.

Along with many positive rapid changes, there were implemented mainly during the first couple of years, successful reforms such as Corruption was reduced dramatically, the budget and GDP grew, and the traffic police bureau was reformed. But there were also some negative trends. There were even attempts of recreate a new personality cult, for Mikheil Saakashvili.

Gay and lesbian parade organizers found their events were unwelcome not only by police, but by civil society also. This is not close to European standards and norms. A certain part of Georgian population is intolerant upon such kind of events. Then, there was a prison scandal, which was followed by protests. Among protesters were parents and relatives of prisoners and students, representing social movements, rather than NGOs.

Now about the European Neighbourhood Policy program in Georgia. On 15 April 2002, the EU Council launched the process of development of what later became the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and subsequently the Eastern Partnership (EaP). Georgia and the South Caucasus were included in 2004. What started as the 'new neighbors initiative' went through several change of names such as 'Wider Europe', 'European Neighbourhood Policy', 'European Neighborhood Policy Plus', 'Black Sea Synergy', 'Enhanced European Neighbourhood Policy' and finally the 'Eastern Partnership', launched in 2009.

The principal objective of EU assistance to Georgia, as broadly outlined in the Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013, is to support the development of increasingly close relations between Georgia and the EU, in the context of Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and ENP AP.

One of the most important and efficient programs is the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia which is an autonomous mission led by the EU under the EU Common security and defense policy (CSDP). It played an enormous role in securing safety in 2008 and still operates. It works along the dividing lines in South Ossetia and

Abkhazia. EUMM has made and continues to make significant contributions in the area of stabilization and normalization of the situation in Georgia - first of all through its monitoring activities, and by promoting communication between the parties via the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM).

And of course we have the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). It defines EC assistance to support the implementation of the EU-partner country Action Plan.

EU priorities include: media freedom, energy issues, association agreement talks, trade, visa facilitation, environment and food safety, conflict and security, social welfare and protection.

ENPI NIP Priority Areas:

1. Priority area 1: Democratic development, rule of law, good governance

1.1. Media freedom, political pluralism, human rights, civil society development

1.2. Justice sector reform

1.3. Public finance management and public administration reform

2. Priority area 2: Trade and investment, regulatory alignment and reform

2.1. Export and investment promotion, in particular through market and regulatory reform; preparations for a future deep and comprehensive FTA with the EU

2.2. Sector-specific regulatory alignment and reforms in line with PCA/ENP AP

3. Priority area 3: Regional development, sustainable economic and social development, poverty reduction

3.1. Social reforms and social protection

3.2. Regional development and sustainable development, including environmental protection 19

3.3. Education, skills development and mobility

4. Priority area 4: Support for peaceful settlement of conflicts.

In accordance with the ENPI National Indicative Programme (NIP) for 2011-2013, Georgia is receiving €180.29 million from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). This includes additional allocations from the Eastern Partnership of €30.86 million for the Comprehensive Institution Building program (CIB) and €7.43 million for regional development programs.

Funding by priority areas:

- Democratic development, rule of law, good governance
€45-63 m (25 – 35%)
- Trade and investment, regulatory alignment and reform
€27-45 m (15 – 25%)
- Regional development, sustainable economic and social
development, poverty reduction €63-81 m (35 – 45%)
- Support for peaceful settlement of conflicts €9-18 m (5 – 10%)

Civil society in Georgia: What is it?

There are different definitions and degree of coverage by the term. We will include in its meaning the following public institutions:

1. Non-governmental, not-for-profit organisations (NGO)
2. Independent media i
3. Social movements
4. Trade unions (TU) virtually do not exist but we included them in the list

5. Community based organizations (CBOs)/grassroots associations. Supported by International donors. As soon funding stops, they usually unfortunately disappear.

6. Social entrepreneurs – a new form

7. Religious associations

Society at large and the civil society

Georgia has been frequently characterized as a society with high “bonding” social capital, but low “bridging” social capital, i.e. strong in-group solidarity and out-group mistrust, - weak civic engagement, low rates of group membership and participation in public events.

According to the 2007 Caucasus Barometer survey: only 0.7% of Georgians had attended a meeting of any sort of club or civic organization in the six months prior to the survey (compared to 1.7% of Azerbaijanis and 2.4% of Armenians); less than 5% of the Georgian population have attended a meeting organized by an NGO, participated in an NGO training, or visited the office of an NGO over the last two years.

Just 1.7% of the population reported belonging to a political party, 1.0% of the population report membership in any officially recognized NGO or professional union, and only 0.77% say that they belong to a cultural or sports club or union.

Ways of influencing policies of integration

How civil society actors in Georgia can influence policies?

They can do this either directly (by addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation) or indirectly (by bringing people into democratic participation individually and collectively, and by interacting with policy designers and implementers).

Also through:

- Working with government agencies
- Lobbying and informal advocacy.

- Monitoring policy implementation and publicizing results.
- Developing and publicizing policy analyses and recommendations.
- Training and building capacity of public servants and decision makers.
- Working and lobbying (domestically or abroad) with external/international agencies and other actors in order to influence policies locally.
- Raising general public awareness through media, education and training.
- Organizing events and public debates.
- Organizing or encouraging protests.

Institutional formats for engagement with the European integration process

There are two main institutional frameworks:

- Coalitions of NGOs, also actions, projects and programs specifically focused on integration
- Coalitions, actions, projects and programs focused on other issues that are relevant for integration

And there are two types frameworks:

- EaP National Platform
- Various coalitions not focused on integration:

Ways of influencing policies of integration

Civil society actors in Georgia can influence policies through:

- Working with government agencies.
- Lobbying and informal advocacy.
- Publicizing analyses and recommendations.
- Working with external/international agencies in order to influence policies locally.
- Influencing policies of external actors towards Georgia.
- Raising public awareness through media.
- Organizing events and public debates.
- Organizing or encouraging protests.

Eastern Partnership and the Civil Society Forum

The Civil Society Forum (CSF) is a relatively new and increasingly popular format for Georgian NGOs to get involved. It provides an extremely useful platform for communicating and networking, having one's voice heard in Brussels and other EaP and EU societies.

However:

- It is not clear, what is the CSF purpose other than establishing contacts, networking, voicing opinions, and traveling, in terms of influencing policies;
- The areas for CSF do not fully reflect the real needs of the EaP societies, or the expertise of local NGOs;
- In fact, the creation of the CSF restricted some possible initiatives of civil society, diminishing pluralism and innovation.

External Involvement: What can be Done?

- Assist in introducing self-sustaining initiatives such as social entrepreneurship.
- Assist in gaining experience of working in international collaborative networks and projects.
- Assist with developing impartial and non-partisan systems of funding civil society actors from local sources, through tax incentives for businesses.
- Capacity building/training of civil society representatives/leaderships in working with EU institutions.
- Supporting mutually beneficial partnerships with civil society actors within EU.

Future Challenges

Many challenges that Georgian civil society encounters are the same as those to be dealt by the society at large – consolidating democracy, defeating mass poverty, reducing a catastrophic income gap, and securing economic growth. The main challenge is the current uncertainty with Georgia's political and economic future.

A more specific challenge is assisting the state in making democratic institutions work properly. It is not easy to replace all the professionals. For example, the court system

is used to serve the executive branch, and making it really independent is both risky and challenging.

Still, the biggest obstacle is to help society develop a democratic political culture and overcome the sad legacies of the past – conformism and apathy, clientelism and corruption, passivity and lack of initiative, lack of civil responsibility, and intolerance towards minorities.

Summary

Georgian civil society, notwithstanding its weaknesses, lack of resources and public support, has achieved a lot in influencing policies that will eventually lead Georgia closer toward European integration. Still, many challenges and gaps remain, and there is a dire need for international support aimed at overcoming existing deficiencies and paucities.

In order to be more effective in influencing the policies to support European integration, civil society needs to both know better the European thinking, plans, procedures and norms. Eastern European civil societies are best equipped to provide such assistance

It does not help that notwithstanding huge financial support provided by the EU, and great importance of such institutions as EUMM in increasing security, there is no clear vision for either Georgia or the South Caucasus in Brussels. Eastern European countries know well all the difficulties transitional societies experience, and are well positioned to lobby and explain the needs and goals of Georgia and the South Caucasus to the leaders of most influential European states.

The Role of Civil Society Organizations in European Integration Processes: Challenges and Gaps in EaP Countries (Armenia)

Vache Kalashyan

Union of Armenian Government Employees

When talking about European integration, the purely political aspect of such integration is usually considered with no mention of its value component. Such an attitude is quite noteworthy, as it incurs the risk of limiting freedoms at the very cost of guaranteeing them. Human history has revealed some similar stages in other periods. For instance, the predecessor to the United Nations, the League of Nations, was formed to bind peace. Its founders finally realized that binding peace is in itself breaking peace.

European values imply the interrelated unity of three guiding principles, namely designated human rights, rule of law and democracy. The three values above are interdependent; thus, human rights are based on private interests and protection of such interests and individual freedoms, while the rule of law is based on the public interest. Obviously, whenever one of these two components predominates, the overall situation deteriorates. Hence, under Communism, for 70 years public interests were considered superior to individual private interests, and we saw what happened. And the practice of using public interests to serve private ones rush to the other extreme, namely a lack of diversity and pluralism, as well as conformist behavior. As for democracy, it reconciles these two approaches. In other words, democracy is first and foremost a process rather than a state and from this viewpoint, it is something constantly sought and never reached. Democracy should always accompany and guide us. Such an approach makes it quite clear that no single exemplary type of democracy exists, but there are a number of democracies, since despite the fact that human rights and freedoms overlap, different communities have different perceptions of the public interest. Therefore, ways to reconcile such perceptions vary greatly, and this gives rise to the diversity of democracies found in the present world. In other words, as a result we get 'diversity based on common values,' one of the core concepts declared by the EU.

In today's world, each individual's role increasingly grows even against their own will, through the so-called "butterfly effect." The idea is that a butterfly's wing movement is the first in a series of cascading steps that eventually generate a powerful weather event, such as a tornado or a hurricane. Today's world has come close to this unbalanced state, which makes it quite possible to develop new trajectories. This is exactly the stage to decide on the stable trajectories for the future of the world, i.e. new development platforms for a universal family. Such gradual growth of the individual's role has also brought about some transformations in the government system largely determined by some developments within individuals, namely citizens' engagement in state affairs. Particularly, in the distant past, the citizen was considered as an object of governance and later a customer of public services. Now, the individual, namely the citizen, acts as the state's partner. The object-customer-partner chain transformation led to an objective review of the meaning underlying the governance. Pyramidal/hierarchical management was replaced by public administration, which implied identifying the subject and object of governance.

It was in these circumstances that the European integration process entered a new phase. In 2007, six post-Soviet states (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia) signed the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Declaration in Prague. The Declaration stated the following key four platforms for the goal of EU integration:

1. Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability;
2. Economic integration and convergence with EU policies;
3. Environment, climate change and energy security;
4. Interpersonal contacts, especially in the areas of education, culture and youth, as well as simplification and liberalization of the visa regime.

The current EaP process differs from the previous stage under the New Neighborhood Plan. Along with bilateral relations between the EU and EaP countries, it envisages developing multilateral ties and relations among those countries in line with the platforms above. Another key difference lies in the new toolkit reflected in the institu-

tional dimension by four working groups formed under the four platforms within new structures at three levels. The structures include:

- 1) A National platform to ensure the design, conclusion and implementation of Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreements between EaP Governments and the EU;
- 2) A EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly to ensure EU activities by parliamentary delegates from EaP countries;
- 3) An EaP Civil Society Forum to support and encourage the EaP Governments to comply with their obligations.

EaP civil society can engage in the EU integration process through the institutional mechanism above only if it establishes feedback with the structures at all the three levels. Such feedback implies simultaneous awareness, involvement and real effect. Otherwise, it will turn into an imitation of feedback, rather than genuine public engagement. The systemic approaches mentioned can be depicted as follows (Figure 1):

Based on the recent Armenian experience with this toolkit, below are described the current challenges at the relevant levels.

CHALLENGES

EU and EaP CSF levels

The European Union should encourage self-management of civil society. To that end:

- a) The election procedure for EaP CSF delegates should be reviewed, to reinforce restrictions on constant engagement and thus ensure the rotation of opportunities for engagement for civil society organizations in EaP countries;
- b) In order to develop the national platforms into real resources, the powers of national coordinators powers should be clearly defined and separated from platform management functions;

c) The relations between EaP CSF and the national platform should not be limited to the institute of the national coordinator, but rather combined with the latter, which entails adopting national platform parity;

d) EU financial and technical support to civil society should be more transparent and predefined by evaluation criteria to exclude corruption risks and manifestations.

EaP Governments level:

- During decision-making, the Governments should turn public engagement from imitative activities into real ones.

a) Results of monitoring by civil society organizations should be released in managerial decisions;

b) Expert resources of civil society organizations should be involved in the decision-drafting process, rather than just being provided with ready drafts;

c) Civil society representatives should also be involved with casting votes in structures directly responsible for public services;

d) Relevant services in the areas where civil society representatives have obviously advanced professional abilities should be delegated to them.

The role of Civil Society Organizations in European Integration Processes: Lessons learned and best practices of Visegrad countries (Hungary)

Eszter Hartay

European Center for Not-for-Profit Law

The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL) is a leading European resource and research center in the field of civil society law, based in Budapest. It aims to promote an enabling legal and fiscal environment for civil society in Europe and to convey European experiences – especially from countries that underwent democratic transition – to other parts of the world. ECNL has unparalleled expertise in helping to develop and implement laws and policies in key areas affecting the development of civil society. These include: government - civil society co-operation, compacts and other policy documents; government funding of civil society; sustainability of civil society organizations (CSOs); CSO participation in decision-making; contracting of CSOs for social services provision; and volunteering, among others. ECNL staff has more than 10 years of experience in promoting CSO law reform and have provided support that has directly and positively influenced more than 50 laws affecting CSOs across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). For more information see www.ecnl.org.

The following paper is based on the presentation delivered by Ms. Eszter Hartay, Legal Advisor of ECNL in Yerevan on 22 November 2012 in the framework of the project *“The Role of Civil Society in EU integration processes: real engagement through effective involvement”* supported by the International Visegrad Fund Flagship Project within the V4EaP programme.

The overall aim of the paper is to provide an overview of the role CSOs played in the European integration, and more specifically the EU Accession process in Hungary and seeks to highlight the best practices and lessons learnt. The paper will shortly present the main milestones of Hungary’s EU Accession process and will summarize the main

features of the civil society sector in Hungary. Afterwards, it will highlight the different roles CSOs played related to the EU Accession process. More specifically, it will explore the role of CSOs in the planning and distribution of pre-accession funds and showcase the experiences of one CSO managing the grant procedures directly. In addition, the paper will also present how CSOs influenced the policy making and raised awareness about the possible impacts of the EU Accession. In both cases the best practices were cited from the environmental protection sector which was probably the most conscious and best organized civil society subsector in Hungary at that time. Finally, the paper will present a successful initiative for monitoring the public consultation process after the EU Accession.

Hungary's EU Accession process

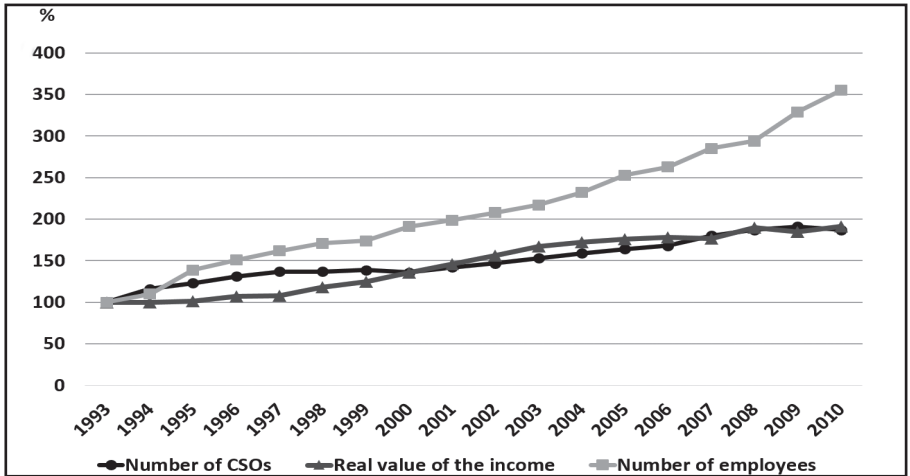
In 1988 Hungary established diplomatic relations with the European Community and signed an agreement with the European Economic Community on commerce, trade and co-operation. A year later the PHARE programme, the EU-assistance project to help Eastern-European political and economic reforms, was launched. After the first free elections in 1990, European integration became the most important foreign policy objective and led to the start of the accession talks. The same year the EC opened a diplomatic representation in Budapest.

The Hungarian prime minister signed the Association Agreement on December 16, 1991 which eventually entered into force on February 1, 1994. In 1994 the Hungarian foreign minister handed over Hungary's formal application for EU membership and the accession talks started with Hungary, as well as Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, and Slovenia 4 years later. In 1999, the 2000-2006 financial perspectives were adopted in Berlin which appropriated funds – a total of EUR 58 billion – for enlargement for the first time. By the summer of 2000, Hungary opened all the accession chapters and the negotiations were finally closed with the ten countries, including Hungary, in December 2002 at the Copenhagen Summit. The referendum on EU accession was held on April 12, 2003 where 83.76% of those participating said yes to EU accession. After the National Assembly had ratified the results of the referendum the prime minister signed the Treaty of Accession at the Athens Summit on April 16. On May 1, 2004, Hungary became a member of the European Union. Three years later, on December 21, 2007, it joined the Schengen Zone.

Main features of the Hungarian CSO sector

The two charts below show the tendencies of civil society development in the past 18 years in Hungary.¹

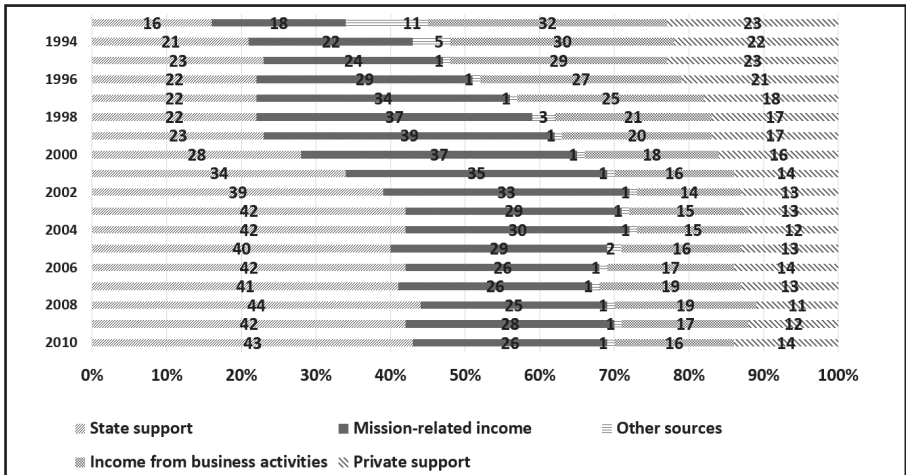
The first chart demonstrates how the number of CSOs (line with circle markers), the real value of the income (line with triangle markers) and the number of employees (lines with square markers) changed between 1993 and 2010.



In 1993, there were around 34,000 CSOs in Hungary, including around 12,000 foundations and 18,000 associations. The chart shows that the number of CSOs increased steadily until 1997, then stagnated and reduced a bit until 2000. After 2000 it started to increase again and reached 65,000 until 2010 when nearly twice the number of CSOs which existed in 1993 were counted. Contrarily, the real value of income reduced in 1993 and 1994 and then started to increase very slowly. It managed to increase more dynamically after 1997, and between 2000 and 2008 it was higher than the increase of CSOs. As the chart demonstrates, the number of employees working in the sector increased the most between 1993 and 2010. In 1993, the sector employed around 48,000 employees, whose numbers increased to 143,000 by 2010.

1) Source: Nonprofit organizations in Hungary, KSH, 2012

The following chart presents how the proportion of different income sources, more specifically, state support, mission-related income, income from business activities, private support and other sources, changed between 1993 and 2010.



While state support was only 16% in 1993, it became the most important source of income and has been staying above 40% since 2003. The increase of state support was due to the adoption of the Strategy Paper on Civil Society in 2002, which identified key objectives concerning state financing. The government wished to increase the amount of funds available to CSOs considerably and decided to raise the proportion of budgetary funds to 40% of the total income of the sector, which was the lowest level in EU Member States, by the end of the government’s term in office. Contrarily, the proportion of business income and private support gradually decreased in the past 18 years.

Still, 43% of the organizations have lower income than \$2,200 and 88% of the organizations dispose only over 35% of the total income of the sector.

Role of the Hungarian CSO sector in the EU Accession Process

CSOs played numerous roles and were present on a number of levels during the EU Accession Process. Not only did they participate in policy-making and provided comments to the National Development Plan, they were members in the monitoring committees and supported the adoption of the Community legislation with their expertise.

They also took part in managing the distribution of pre-accession funds. Recognizing the importance of informing the public about the benefits and challenges of EU membership, CSOs were substantially involved in awareness raising activities, too.

As the Hungarian CSO sector is rather diverse, a number of factors determined the exact role CSOs could play in the pre-accession process. First, the institutional and financial capacity of a CSO largely influenced how actively it could get involved in the processes. Also, the organizations' scope of activity was a relevant factor as some sectors. For example the environmental protection CSOs were better organized and more committed than others. Besides, in some sectors the responsible ministries and state bodies were open for consultation, while in other sectors it was more challenging to influence the decision-making. Finally, those CSOs where the employees spoke languages and managed to acquire project thinking and a long-term, strategic approach were able to engage in the EU accession process more effectively.

The role of CSOs in the EU accession process was in many ways connected to the pre-accession funds. Hungarian CSOs had access to three major pre-accession financial schemes. First and foremost was PHARE, the forerunner of structural funds, which provided support for institutional development and investments, and prepared candidate countries for EU membership by strengthening economic and social cohesion. More specifically, PHARE Access aimed to support the initiatives of CSOs and strengthen their institutional capacity. The objective of PHARE Access was to prepare the CSOs for structural funds and support projects that aimed to enforce the *acquis communautaire* and the satisfaction of social needs. Its main areas of priority were environment and health protection, economic development, social services, enforcement of human rights, consumer protection, and so on.

The other two funds were ISPA, the forerunner of the Cohesion funds, which provided assistance for environmental protection and transport projects, and SAPARD, the scheme that was the forerunner of agricultural funds and supported sustainable agricultural and rural development.

Public participation in the planning and distribution of pre-accession funds

In general, around the time of accession the CSO sector was poorly organized in Hungary, with the exception of some subsectors, including environmental, social and employment CSOs. There were no institutional mechanisms in place for participation in the planning process and co-operation was incidental.

CSOs were not even involved in the preparation of the Preliminary National Development Plan, which was supposed to coordinate pre-accession funds until the National Development Plan was prepared. In 2001, ministries jointly compiled the Preliminary Plan without having involved CSOs in the process. The document was prepared in English and when CSOs asked why, promoters of the Plan said that it had been prepared primarily for the EU and not for the use of local CSOs.

Although CSOs could not influence the Preliminary National Development Plan, they were involved in the distribution of pre-accession funds. For instance, the Autonómia Foundation was responsible for the PHARE Democracy programme and the Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights (Demnet) was managing PHARE Access for a certain period of time. So-called steering committees were established under the competent ministry of a specific programme and served as advisory bodies. These provided professional advice during programme planning and monitored implementation. While experts and CSO representatives from respective areas were represented in the Committees, their selection criteria, rules and process were not open and transparent.

The influence of the managing CSOs on the planning of programs was different: some of the managing CSOs were actively participating in the planning process while others rather had administrative roles and raised mostly technical issues for the consideration of the steering committees.

Other than the mechanisms outlined above, the CSOs were not really involved in the planning process, and programme ideas were initiated by the government and got approved by Brussels. CSOs were generally more interested in issues affecting their everyday life, such as timing of payments or the amount of paperwork, rather than advocating for being involved in long-term strategic planning processes.

Case study - Distribution of PHARE grants, Autonomía Foundation

The Autonomía Foundation was established in 1990 to promote civil society development. Five years later, it received the Right Livelihood Award (an alternative to the Nobel Prize). The Foundation managed the PHARE Democracy Programme between 1995 and 2001 and distributed grants for minority programs, development of local democracy, etc..

The EC Delegation considered the Foundation an equal partner. The Foundation not only provided technical support but the programming was undertaken together by the Foundation and the EC Delegation each year and the distribution of grants was decided based on the recommendation of the Foundation. It was an effective model as the Foundation was more aware of the needs of the people than the EC Delegation. In addition, it was an important improvement that the grant procedure was administered in Hungarian, rather than in English, as was the case previously with the Delegation managing the procedure directly.

The Autonomía Foundation made several recommendations based on their experiences gathered during the management of the PHARE programme. First, they find it vital to strengthen and build the capacity of those NGOs which manage pre-accession funds. For instance, the Foundation received a specific percentage of the distributed amount and had to maintain their operations from this amount. Also, they recommended organizing road shows, forums, trainings and familiarizing people with funding opportunities, not just publishing them in a newspaper and waiting for proposals to arrive. Especially in the case of a weaker and less professional civil sector, it is also helpful to assist applicants in how to put together a proposal and educate them about the tendering culture. Also, it proved to be a good practice to organize at least one field visit related to each project thus supporting CSOs during the implementation. Another recommendation was to organize consultations during the programming phase, though it might require the organization of the sector itself. Therefore whoever undertakes to involve the public in the programming may also need to take up the task of organizing the sector.

The Foundation found it important to mention that pre-accession funds were not always able to reach their purpose and they can even have negative effects. Some CSOs

may become complacent and fail to create reserves and spare money. Also, the access to EU funds may overshadow the importance of human capital and civil ethos and CSOs tend to forget that some problems can be solved simply via co-operation. Unfortunately, it turned out to be an illusion that a new generation would grow up with project thinking and a civil attitude. According to an assessment of the Autonomía Foundation, there was no self-awareness in the civil sector at the time and beneficiary CSOs failed to understand that the ultimate aim of the pre-accession funds was to strengthen the civil sector as a whole. Also, there was a huge difference between the amount of money distributed before and after the accession: currently, there is a limited number of small projects since a project cannot be implemented economically under a specific budget.

Participation in the policy-making

Besides the distribution of funds, CSOs were also participating in policy making. Since the middle of the 1990s, numerous cross-sectorial advisory councils were established which served as consultative, proposing and opinion-making bodies of the government on specific fields. Just to name a few: the National Environmental Protection Council (1996), the National Disability Council (1999), the Elderly People's Council (2002), the Council on Roma Issues (2002). Ministries consulted with the competent councils on sector-specific issues, councils commented on draft laws and regulations, including those implementing Community legislation. Some of the councils also took part in the elaboration of the National Development Plan for 2004-2006. As an example, a representative of the National Environmental Protection Council was invited to the National Development Plan working group.

Case study – The Green movement in Hungary and the involvement of environmental protection CSOs in policy-making

The Hungarian environmental CSO sector has been well organized since the beginning of the 1990s. Uniquely in the CSO sector, National Environmental and Nature Conservation NGO Gatherings are held annually since 1991, where any registered environmental protection and nature conservation CSO can participate after registering for the event. The purpose of the annual meetings is to facilitate social dialogue, exchange information on different environmental topics between the representatives of CSOs, state bodies and the business sector and get to know each others' work. Besides, the environmental protection CSOs use the annual meetings to elect representatives to

various committees and governmental bodies and to release joint statements on environmental issues.

Environmental CSOs were involved in the EU accession process on a number of levels. First of all, they engaged in the monitoring of the pre-accession funds. A government decree was adopted in 2001 (166/2001. (IX.14.) Gov't decree regulating monitoring committees) which regulated the operation of monitoring committees. According to the definition, a monitoring committee is a "*body of professionals consisting of the representatives of central budgetary organizations and civil organizations*". Nevertheless, it was not clarified whether civil organizations mean the private sector or civil society.

There were monitoring committees on different levels: Central Monitoring Committee, National Monitoring Committee, Sectoral Monitoring Committee, Regional Monitoring Committee, Project Monitoring Committee and Programme Monitoring Committee, in which "*representatives were appointed by social and economic shareholders*". Environmental CSOs sent letters to different ministries asking for the opportunity to participate in the committees. The National Monitoring Committee and the Monitoring Committee under the Ministry of Economics did not allow environmental CSO representatives to be involved, but two representatives in the Sectoral Monitoring Committee at the Ministry of Environment were accepted.

Environmental protection organizations were actively involved in the elaboration of the National Development Plan (2004-2006) as well. The NDP Process started in late 2000 and civil society pressured the government to release the draft Operational Programme for Regional Development. As a result, there were 3 commenting periods: on the regional aspects of the NDP, on the situation survey and on the measures, and several CSO comments were incorporated.

Also, the biggest green umbrella organization, the National Society of Conservationists, had a Working Group on Regional Development Policy for 10-12 years and aimed to influence development policy on the regional and local level. In each region there was a local CSO which tried to influence the Regional Development Councils and participated at monitoring committees, thus ensuring the participation of environmental protection organizations in policy-making.

Awareness raising about the possible impact of EU accession

Environmental protection CSOs also had a role in raising awareness about EU accession. As an example, a booklet was prepared jointly by 6 environmental protection organizations on the possible impacts of the EU accession of Hungary on democratic rights, social welfare and environmental protection. It covered areas of sustainability, globalisation, social welfare, employment, transportation, agriculture, water management, environmental protection and waste management. In addition, environmental CSOs hosted conferences on environmental politics as well as regional EU forums and issued an EU newsletter. Recently, the National Society of Conservationists supported a very successful international awareness raising initiative in the course of which a website was set up jointly by WWF, CEE Bankwatch and Friends of the Earth (www.wellspent.eu). The site features an EU map with the best practices of Cohesion Policy Investments between 2007-2013 to influence the planning for the 2014-2020 period. It also has a video introducing some of the specific projects.

Following the EU Accession

Following the EU accession, the Hungarian civil sector became more conscious. One of their successful initiatives was the “NGOs for the Publicity of the National Development Plan (NPNDP)”. NPNDP is a loose, “action group”-kind of organization without legal entity. It was established in 2005 by 15 CSOs after it became obvious that the planning and the public consultation of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 was being delayed. The objective of the NPNDP is to monitor and analyze public participation concerning the National Development Plan and to work out recommendations concerning the actual implementation. It does not intend to intervene in the content of the NDP. So far, NPNDP has prepared 10 reports (available on <http://cnny.honlaphat.hu/>).

The role of civil society organizations in European integration processes: Lessons learned and best practices (Slovakia)

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Introduction

As a part of civil society, the nonprofit nongovernmental sector in Slovakia has gone through several phases of development since the change of regime in November 1989. Over the last 23 years, the third sector has developed into a phenomenon of diverse functions. It has created an intellectual foundation for social reforms, supported checks and balances against the use of power by the elites, defended the interests of various groups of citizens, provided forums for previously unheard voices, offered useful services and participated in resolving environmental, social and health issues. Thousands of organizations, initiatives, associations and volunteer groups have demonstrated their usefulness and undertaken work that no one else could do.

1. Civil society in Slovakia

1.1 The beginnings of freedom in 1989 and European themes

The Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution in 1989 is often recollected by ordinary people in their memories, as they were standing on streets during protest events, in an atmosphere of happiness and strong hopes for the future. At that time, when they tried to consider these substantial changes in terms of broader European context, a simple idea usually came out. “We will live as the Westerners live” – they were saying, without a notion of what it means or what it takes. European themes had been, from the beginning, in the minds of people represented by two simple values, thought to be soon adopted at home: freedom and economic prosperity. This can be illustrated by a symbolic one-day event named Hello Europe. On December 10, 1989, former dissidents organized a walking trip from Bratislava to nearby Austrian villages – 150,000 people crossed the barbed wire borders and “breathed the freedom”.

But the European integration process of the country was not a main topic during first years. Slovakia struggled with domestic problems and the challenges of transformation. Substantial changes went on in all areas simultaneously, and huge efforts were needed in these fields. Also, the arrangement of the Czech and Slovak republics in the federation soon became a problem for politicians, and resulted in separation. From 1993, we faced a transition as an independent state; we had to define the Slovak state internally and externally. These years were times of political instability, growing nationalism, political polarization of the society, and crony privatization. Slovakia was *de facto* expelled from the prepared enlargement to the European Union and NATO. In the end, our transition was a success story, in terms of European integration. After significant political changes, Slovakia entered NATO and the EU in 2004.

1.2 The beginnings of freedom in 1989 and the emergence of civil society

After the change of the regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989, an explosion of civic activism occurred. New initiatives and associations aroused. “The citizen was born” – this slogan was one of the first reflections of a new era. During next two decades, the continuously growing third sector (nonprofit nongovernmental sector) in Slovakia has manifested its credibility, flexibility, vitality, expertise and professionalism of the sector leaders, along with the power to get people involved, to motivate and facilitate, and the ability to control the exercise of political power, as well as the ability to cooperate with the governmental sphere and policy makers. The gradual creation of self-governing structures resulted in the establishment of a third sector steering committee called the Gremium of the Third Sector. The second half of the 1990s was a more problematic time when a semi-authoritarian regime attempted to limit the sector’s independence. Nongovernmental organizations, however, joined with other civil society actors to engage in a battle over the democratic character of the state and contributed to the victory of democratic forces. The success story of the European integration of Slovakia can be directly linked to some of the achievements of the civil society organizations.

1.3 Civil society organizations in numbers and in public perceptions

There were hundreds of organizations before 1990, but officially controlled and with no autonomy. They served one communist ideology and were joined together under the so-called National Front under patronage of the Communist Party. After 1990, the process of development of civil society organizations was reinforced by a liberal Law on

Association of Citizens. In 1993, up to 6,000 organizations were registered. Ten years later, the number increased to 22,000. By 2010, 37,000 organizations existed. We can estimate the number of entities in 2013 to 40,000 registered organizations. For 2012, 11,000 of the organizations have applied for the tax assignment (2%) mechanism, so we can consider them as active organizations.

Considering the structure of legal forms of CSOs, 85% of them are civic associations, 4% are nonprofit organizations providing public benefit, 1% of them are foundations and 1% non-investment funds. Nine percent of them are registered under other forms.

Regarding public opinion, during last 10 years, 45% of citizens of Slovakia considered non-government organizations as trustworthy and 45% of citizens distrust CSOs (on average). The positive image of civil society organizations is linked to their charity activities and assistance to people in need, to environment protection activities and to anti-corruption efforts. By contrast, negative associations are based mainly on suspicions of non-transparency in the handling of funds and of self-seeking motives of some few individuals working in CSOs.

1.4 Organizations of the third sector as civic participation promoters

Certain shifts in the general forms of how people act in the public sphere can be identified. New forms are emerging (internet activism) as others are decreasing. Participants of focus groups carried out in 2008 praised individual freedom and the chance to make choices, but they did not connect them with their personal responsibility for public affairs. Public opinion polls showed a decrease of civic engagement. For example, in 1994, 84% of respondents said that they voted in elections in past 10 years. In 2004 this dropped to 82% and four years later only 78% of people said they voted. In 1994, 26% of people said they took a part in a protest event; ten years later 15% acclaimed this activity and in 2008 this number dropped to 10%. Similar decreases are visible in other spheres.

The reasons for the apparent decline of participation activities can be identified as individualism linked with a free market economy, a crisis of the elemental trust between people, and an effect of the access to European Union ("it is finished"). Facing this situation, civil society organizations in Slovakia provide positive images of doing

well, promote volunteerism and prevent the emergence of negative forms of activism (extremism and antidemocratic groups).

2. Joint campaigns of the organizations of the third sector in Slovakia

Civil society organizations in Slovakia have regularly constructed broader alliances and carried out joint campaigns. Perhaps the most successful example was the 1998 nationwide movement for free and fair elections under the name OK '98. Other examples are the Third Sector SOS campaign, election campaigns in 2002, endeavor for a good Freedom of information act in 2000 and the People to People campaign in 2006. Even when an essence of a campaign seemed to be the internal defense of the sector (or the tension between the state and the third sector was the case), some activities were effectively targeted to the public, with the aim to show the friendly face of the sector and that the final goal is to do good for society, and the campaigns thus attracted the broader audience.

2.1 Third Sector SOS campaign

The third sector's most critical period was its dispute with the government of Vladimír Mečiar in the mid-1990s. An unscrupulous politician with autocratic inclinations, Mečiar built his popularity and power on promises that he would solve the country's problems if only he were allowed to rule as an uncontested leader. In 1995, sporadic attacks from the government parties against some representatives of civic organizations grew into systematic crusades. In 1996, the government suddenly decided to pass a repressive version of the law on foundations. The third sector decided to act in a 1996 campaign called Third Sector SOS. Actions were coordinated by the Gremium of the Third Sector. Press conferences were arranged and newspaper articles were published, and explanatory letters to 1,500 CSOs and embassies were written. Experts from the sector prepared an alternative law. Activists organized discussions in regions and demonstrations in Slovak cities. The campaign was noticed abroad by foreign organizations and verbally supported by some personalities (ambassadors and EU representatives). Nevertheless, the government managed to pass the law anyway, only with tiny improvements. The campaign had great significance for the self-confidence of the CSOs. They "came out of the shadows" and publicly identified themselves with others. It meant a hardening of civil society and was a test of maturity.

2.2 Political change in 1998 – back on the track to the EU

The late 1990s were characterized as a story of self-disqualification of a candidate. Slovakia was not invited to negotiate NATO access at the 1997 Madrid summit. During the European Council meeting in Luxembourg in December 1997, Slovakia was expelled from the group of 7 candidates of the next EU enlargement. But thanks to the political change of 1998 and subsequent reforms, Slovakia entered NATO in 2004 and joined the EU together with our neighbors in 2004. The consistent effort of CSOs and election campaigns were essential for this change.

Looking at the data, the turnouts of the parliamentary elections can be interpreted as a nonlinear decline, with a anomalies in 1998 and 2002. Thanks to the information and mobilization campaigns of civil society organizations, the pro-European, pro-democratic and pro-reform political parties won and two governments of Mikuláš Dzurinda followed. The public opinion polls showed that in 1998 9% of respondents claim that the campaign of CSOs persuaded them to vote (overall turnout was 84%). In 2002 (turnout 70%), the turnout of young voters increased by 20%, thanks to the campaigns.

2.2.1 Civic campaign OK'98

Civil society organizations took it as their moral responsibility to contribute to ensuring that citizens take part in the political process and to monitor the course of the elections in 1998. A consolidated platform of CSOs launched the civic campaign to increase citizens' awareness about the elections, to encourage them to vote and to guarantee a fair ballot. "OK 98" stood for "*Občianska kampaň 98*" (Civic campaign). The acronym signaled optimism that, if people got involved, everything will come out good.

Dozens of CSOs organized educational projects, cultural events, concerts, discussion forums and issued publications, video clips and films. Thousands of volunteers across the country were involved. Over sixty independent information, education and monitoring local and nationwide projects were prepared. The majority of these were of a regional character, but there were also several larger projects with nationwide impact, often oriented at young people. For example, Road for Slovakia was 15-day march, in which 350 civic activists covered more than 850 towns and villages across Slovakia, distributing 500,000 brochures to inform voters about the elections. Public forums,

debates and discussions were organized by a variety of CSOs. More than fifty meetings brought together citizens and the candidates for election were held.

Thanks to the massive public mobilization and civic activities, as well as cooperation between democrats in different parties, Vladimír Mečiar was defeated and a broad coalition of pro-democratic forces came to power. CSOs thus became one of the actors in the struggle for a democratic Slovakia.

2.2.2 Election campaigns of CSOs in 2002

Four years later, a part of civil society was again engaged in specific election-related activities. However, unfulfilled expectations gave rise to skepticism among many who had supported democratic change four years earlier. Feelings of tiredness, skepticism and disenchantment prevailed; a depressed social climate gave rise to concerns that radical and national populist parties would receive strong support, with likely negative effects on further democratic reform and Euro-Atlantic integration. In spite of a certain disappointment with politics, many people realized that the 2002 elections were critical for Slovakia's Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations.

CSOs activities in the 2002 elections were more elaborate and sophisticated. Projects were aimed at specific target groups (youth, Roma, women) and themes (social policy, foreign policy, economic reform, rural development). A new feature of the campaigns was the usage of electronic media and internet. The plurality of campaigns brought minor tensions between some groups of activists, although they shared the same goal. The turnout dropped compared to previous elections, but thanks to the campaigns, not so significantly as expected. The election result was a surprise and new pro-reform orientated government came to power.

2.3 What Is Not Secret is Public

What Is Not Secret is Public is the nationwide campaign for a good Freedom of Information Act, carried out in 2000, supported by over 120 CSOs and bringing together over 100,000 members. Thanks to it, Slovak citizens obtained one of the best laws in Europe, which obligates state administration officials to provide information. The most important activities of the initiative included elaborating the legislative bill, organizing an international seminar on citizens' right to information, initiating and launching

a mail campaign, creating a special website and publishing articles and opinions in print media.

2.4 People to People

The financial support from the tax assignment mechanism for civil society organizations is quite easy to arrange and widely used. The total assigned 2% of tax culminated in 2009, when 55 millions Euro went for CSOs. It's no surprise that the state authorities continuously try to limit this mechanism with the goal to return some of these sources to the state budget. The legislative initiative of the Finance Ministry in 2006 to exclude legal entities from the income tax assignment mechanism would reduce the income from this mechanism by approximately 75%. Thousands of small organizations, which depended on the existing system, were at a stake. The 2006 third sector campaign People to People: 2% of Taxes for Public Benefit Purposes was an attempt to arouse public opinion and force members of parliament to reject the proposed amendment and preserve the status quo.

At first, a big conference of nongovernmental organizations was held in Bratislava, attended by 200 activists from all around Slovakia, with a number of prominent speakers from the fields of sports, culture, religion, and business. Letters for each of the 150 members of parliament were composed, containing lists of activities of CSOs from the MP's home region. A book on the 2% was assembled, which contained case studies on how organizations spent the funds generated by the tax assignment mechanism. A "Week for Non-Governmental Organizations" brought a public presentation of CSO activities, in order to increase awareness of the broad range of this type of work. Over 100 recipients of the 2% of income tax held presentations in various towns around Slovakia. The People to People campaign met a good media response. At the end, active citizens won their dispute and the attempt of the government was unsuccessful, and the problematic parts of the law were not adopted. Thanks to this, a discussion began not only about the future of the third sector and public funds, but also about the importance of civil society in general.

3. Civil society organizations and some of the most urgent social problems

3.1 Human rights advocacy and anti-discrimination movement

A number of civil society organizations focus on the rights to human dignity for all, which means also protection against discrimination. A legal framework is given in the Anti-discrimination Act of Slovakia. Many positive changes in this field were promoted by the European Union as well. Some of the CSOs in Slovakia provide direct support to victims of discrimination and advocacy activities. Others raise awareness among the public and increase sensitivity of citizens about their rights. CSOs also try to remove stereotypes, sensitize the general public and deepen knowledge, in the forms of in-depth research, public opinion polls, and collecting data and analyzing data. Finally, they give voice to the voiceless in the form of presenting case studies of particular vulnerable groups based on the different forms of discrimination.

The coordinating and consultative body called the Government's Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equity comprises eight representatives from CSOs. Civic association The Citizen, Democracy and Accountability carries out educational and publicity activities in the field of human rights and anti-discrimination. In December 2012, the Slovak nongovernmental organization Center for Civil and Human Rights from Košice was awarded the distinguished Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

3.2 Marginalized Roma communities

It is estimated that 7% of the population of Slovakia are Roma. A part of them live in poor marginalized communities. Local civil society organizations provide social work for them, because the state itself lacks sufficient capacities. Some think tanks used their expert potential to elaborate alternative approaches to the insufficient public policy in the field. Nowadays, the government is proposing a "Roma reform" – package of legislative changes, and there is a vivid debate about the topic between the state and experts from nonprofit organizations. Other CSOs try to raise positive attitudes and overcome stereotypical images of Roma among the public and promote the inter-ethnic tolerance.

ETP Slovakia developed micro-lending, savings programs and mentor programs oriented toward active individuals in Roma communities. Others distinguished organizations in this field are Milan Šimečka Foundation, People in Need, NOS-OSF, Center for Civil and Human Rights, and People Against Racism.

3.3 Transparency efforts of watchdog's organizations

The Slovak public is very sensitive to issues of corruption, clientelism and disadvantageous contracts. Experts from CSOs often speak to the media about current affairs and corruption cases. The three most visible organizations are Transparency International Slovakia, Fair-play Alliance and VIA IURIS. The first mentioned CSO elaborates anticorruption strategies and implements anticorruption programs. Fair-play Alliance aims to push for ethical, transparent, professional and effective public administration and political representation. VIA IURIS is an alliance of lawyers helping citizens protect their rights and participate in decision-making on public affairs; they also try to participate in the reform of the Slovak judicial system. The last two mentioned organizations created the *White Crow Award* for individuals who defended truth, justice and the public interest, and because of these risky activities, they faced threats, criminal complaints or job loss. Greater transparency is also in the scope of some Slovak think tanks.

4. Achievements and fields of recent developments

4.1 Reasons why the third sector is successful

The notions of continuity, persistence, and experience meant that a group of people worked for the organizations of the third sector from the early 1990s. In addition to that, they are experts in their subjects, they know each other and communicate with each other. These moral authorities form an imaginary “hard core” of the third sector, although they don't always share the same opinions on some topics. Also, there are hundreds of other experienced workers, analysts, project managers, philanthropists, and human right activists in the third sector. Their expert potential has become a real and effective source of alternative approaches to public policy.

A second reason can be identified as the ability to engage in self-reflection and self-definition. One scope of the civil society organizations is the third sector itself. Analyses of

what is happening in the sector, and how the trends are, are continuously elaborated. In discussions between the state and the sector, people from CSOs are well prepared; the sector is able to define itself. A yearbook, the Global Report of the State of Society (published since 1995), contains every year a 30-page chapter on nongovernmental organizations and volunteerism. In 2011, two studies, first on the state of civil society in Slovakia, and the second on the trends in the development of civil society, have been written by dozens of experts from CSOs.

The third factor for success is the existence of umbrella organizations and a good infrastructure and services for the third sector organizations. The aforementioned Gremium of the Third Sector provided a top level platform for all organizations. Nowadays, 40 different platforms, federations and ad hoc coalitions of CSOs exist, associated on the basis of common social or regional interests (Socioforum, Ekoforum, The Slovak Youth Council, Donorsforum, Association of Slovak Community Foundations, Slovak Disability Council, etc.). The whole sector magazines Non-Profit and Efekt provided news, interviews and practical advice for thousands of readers. Among web portals, changenet.sk is a widely used information portal for CSOs, with an online petition sections. Website 1nsc.sk is a portal of the first Slovak nonprofit service center, a full-fledged central portal for CSOs, providing mostly law services. In addition to this, hundreds of handbooks, manuals, guidebooks were prepared and published in Slovakia. Several CSOs are specializing in trainings, focusing on communication, management, fundraising, development of human resources and brandraising.

4.2 Foreign policy and democracy assistance

Cooperation between the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil society organizations in the field of foreign politics has been developed. Prior to NATO membership, fifty CSOs helped to shape public opinion to be more positive towards the Atlantic Alliance. Organizations of the third sector also took actions in the processes of integration with the European Union, especially during the referendum campaign in 2003.

A leading think tank in this area is SFPA - The Slovak Foreign Policy Association. SFPA offers discussion forums on international affairs and foreign policy issues and opens spaces for a free exchange of opinions and ideas. The Research Centre of SFPA prepares

expert analyses of Slovak foreign politics, publishes books and periodicals (*Yearbook of Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic*).

Think tank Slovak Atlantic Commission elaborated a concept for an international security conference eight years ago and their GLOBSEC – Bratislava Global Security Forum has become a unique foreign policy and security platform, giving a Central European twist to the strategic debate on transatlantic foreign policy, economy and security. It has acquired a stable position among the elite club of major conferences.

Another aspect of foreign politics is democracy promotion. The Slovak story of the 1998 elections and successful CSOs campaigns has become an inspiring example. The experience of OK '98 was used in 1999 in Croatia, in 2000 in Serbia and in 2004 in Ukraine. Moreover, in recent years, several international democracy assistance projects were implemented by Slovak CSOs. Nonprofit organizations have proven that they are the main generators of ideas in the field of democracy assistance, regarding topics, issues and methodology, and they serve as the engine of the whole endeavor.

4.3 Think tanks in Slovakia

During last 15 years, several civil society organizations have helped in the field of realization of economic and institutional reforms and improving governance. MESA 10 – Center for Economic and Social Analyses is an economic-oriented think tank founded in 1992, with the main aim to support an independent market economy. During the reform years 1998-2006, the main agents of reforms in the areas of public finance, decentralization, and health care were the people from the environment of MESA 10.

Other significant Slovak think tanks are INEKO – Institute for Economic and Social Reforms; M. R. Stefanik Conservative Institute; SGI – The Slovak Governance Institute and INESS – Institute of Economic and Social Studies. Institute for public Affairs (IVO) is a think tank founded in 1997 with the aim of promoting the values of an open society and a democratic political culture in public policy and decision-making. The think tank deals with the issues of domestic politics, democracy, public opinion research, migration, civil society, foreign politics, media, disadvantaged groups and digital literacy. The Institute realized over 160 projects, and has published 120 books. The Global Report on the State of Society is a complex yearbook issued by the Institute since 1997.

4.4 Notable legislative advances in 2011

Iveta Radičová, prime minister of Slovakia in 2010-2012, is a professor of sociology and she was active in the third sector, too. In 2011, the Slovak government under her leadership introduced a completely new post - Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Development of Civil Society. It's an advisory body responsible for coordinating civil society. New plenipotentiary Filip Vagač has prepared a conception of civil society development, a document that was approved by the Slovak government in February 2012. The new plenipotentiary also arranged that Slovakia become a member of the Open Government Partnership. This initiative aims to promote transparency, effectiveness and accountability of the public administration and give citizens the opportunity to actively participate in governance.

Available data shows that the total public support for volunteering is growing – tens of thousands volunteers work for CSOs. Yet the concept of “volunteer” was not present in the law until 2011. A new law on volunteering has inserted the volunteer status into the legislative system and enabled exemption from several kinds of local tax, as well as other provisions that should support the development of volunteering.

The next improvement is represented by an obligation to publicize any contract online. A website run by the Government Office of the Slovak Republic is a central registry of all (commercial) contracts made by the state sphere, no matter the value. According to new law of 2011, every single contract must be publicized to be valid. It is an effective mechanism that helps to avoid disadvantageous contracts.

5. European integration of Slovakia

5.1. The way of Slovakia into the EU and public opinion

The European Union has always had a positive image in the eyes of the public. The high public support for Slovakia's EU membership was driven by the conviction that Slovakia and its citizens could obtain a ticket into a solid and prestigious club. People in public opinion surveys had attributed to the European Union more “good points” than to Slovakia itself. The European Union's strong points were not limited to economic prosperity, although this is the category where the difference between Slovakia and the EU is perceived the strongest. In general, Slovaks believed that the European Union

offers a higher quality of life and associated it with a higher level of democracy, greater willingness to help others, greater social and environmental sensitivity, and less bureaucracy. Moreover, citizens of EU countries were perceived as more modern, more liberal, and much more self-confident than Slovaks.

After the accession, Slovaks were satisfied and optimistic about their country's membership in the European Union. A year after Slovakia joined the EU, its citizens continued to perceive this step positively, and 80% of respondents approved of it. Public perception of Slovakia's EU membership has been influenced by the fact that the pre-accession expectations of most Slovak citizens were cautiously optimistic – in the expectations, advantages for the country as a whole prevailed, as opposed to personal advantages and the positive expectations were projected onto a rather distant time horizon.

But soon after the accession to the EU, wide political consensus and postponed, underdeveloped and non-conflicting discussion about the European future of Slovakia led to a lower interest of the public. The first European parliament elections in 2004 in Slovakia brought a record in the lowest voter turnout in the history – 17%.

5.2 Civil society and European integration efforts

The contributions of the civil sector and Slovak nonprofit organizations to the EU integration of Slovakia were significant, but not so visible at first sight. The aforementioned efforts and success stories were factors of considerable development of civil society, needed for the growth of the country as a whole. The most important concrete activities of civil society organizations were campaigns for preserving and improving democracy in 1998 and 2002.

Based on these facts, we can globally discern several periods with different main activities. From 1993 to 1999, civil society organizations struggled for democracy and fostered political change. For next couple of years, CSOs were a vital part of society, which was moving to the right path, undertaking democratic, institutional and economic reforms. From 2002 to 2006, we can recognize the culmination of educational, research and promotional activities related to the EU accession in 2004. From 2006, some CSOs began to participate on EU projects and some monitored EU funds. From

2009, themes of economic crisis and economic prosperity within the EU became much more discussed, providing more space for economy-oriented organizations.

Think tanks, advocacy CSOs and other already mentioned nonprofit organizations carried out also activities linked to the European integration. We can add to the list much more of them. The Centre for European Policy was directly oriented to the issues of EU integration, organized seminars, lectures, publications and analyses. Paneuropean Union Slovakia is an international organization with a branch in Slovakia. They are trying to foster European patriotism. Several web portals spread European themes and provided news, with the most visible being ww.euractiv.sk. Many foundations provide grants for projects promoting Europeanism and European values, e.g. the International Visegrad Fund, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Slovakia, Central European Foundation, and others.

Conclusion

We will conclude this article with the assertion that the fruits of association and philanthropy raised the quality of life in Slovakia and contributed to the European integration of the country. The results can be summarized in five points. First, the third sector in Slovakia took on the profile of control of power, and still continues to carry it out, together with advocacy and opinion making functions. Secondly, civil society organizations demonstrated their expert potential by becoming a source of alternative approaches to public policy, by creating alternative proposals together with critical review of existing ones. Thirdly, a segment of the sector established itself as a service provider. These activities mean more alternative offers to choose from. Next, CSOs have been also a well of innovation, a kind of “experimentation laboratory”; they work with a certain “social risk capital”, which allows them to test new approaches on a small scale. Lastly, some nongovernmental organizations began to engage in humanitarian projects and democratic change outside the borders of Slovakia.

We have seen that there are several reasons, why the development of civil society in Slovakia can be considered as a success story, giving also some hopes for the future or reasons to think that it can be inspiring for others. After all, the whole story is determined by individuals, by people, who decide to participate in something meaningful

that brings benefits to themselves, in something profound what serves the common good as well, far beyond their individual fates.

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Civil Society Organizations in European Integration Process (Czech Republic)

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Summary of presentation held at the conference "The Role of Civil Society in EU Integration Processes: Real Engagement through Effective Involvement," Yerevan, Armenia, November 2012

Civil society has a long tradition in the Czech Republic, a tradition which was interrupted and, to a large extent, damaged by forty years of a Communist regime. Before World War II, there were hundreds of foundations functioning in Czechoslovakia. Only one of them survived the fall of communism. Nevertheless, the revival of foundations, civil organizations in general and charity activities was quite rapid after the end of the old regime in 1989.

During the 1990s, there were two approaches towards civil society. The first one, fully promoted by the first Czech president Václav Havel, assumed a positive role for civil society in general, a role which must be based on active and engaged citizens. The second approach was represented by Václav Klaus, Havel's successor. Klaus preferred political parties and elected bodies to be dominant powers in society and had a deep mistrust of various unelected initiatives and civic organizations. Despite this theoretical dispute, civic organizations have gained a solid position in the perception of Czech citizens. According to one recent poll, 53 percent of Czechs donated to a NGO in 2011. However, only 6 percent of Czechs do so on regular basis (e.g., once a month).

For cooperation between the government and state administration and the non-governmental sector, an official platform called the Government Council for NGOs was established in 1992. It serves as a permanent consultative body whose aim is to discuss legislative materials affecting the NGO sector and makes recommendations to the gov-

ernment. While most of the members of this Council are representatives from the NGO sector doing this work pro bono, there is a small secretariat coordinating all activities.

The link between business and the NGO sector is very important. In order to cultivate the philanthropy of corporations, a donor's forum was founded in 1998. It focuses its activities on private companies, foundations and endowment funds. The donors forum promotes philanthropic activities through consultancy, training and providing a platform for mutual meetings. One of crucial outcomes of the forum activities is the Donor's Message Services (DMS). In close cooperation with mobile-phone providers, the system was set up in 2002 after floods hit a large part of the Czech Republic. Millions of Czech crowns (CZK) have been raised in this way, which is very donor friendly. There is only one phone number and a short symbol identifying an organization which gets funds. A fixed price of 27 CZK goes to this public collection, while 3 CZK goes to phone operators to cover their costs. The whole service is exempted from the value-added tax.

In the nineties, the Czech Republic was in a state of political transition and economic transformation. Thanks to its geographical position and historical ties with Western Europe, it seemed to be automatic that the country would join such political structures of the West as NATO and the European Union. There was no real political alternative other than to associate with the European Union, apply for membership, start negotiations and finally become a member of this club.

There were several reasons why striving to be a member of the EU appeared to be crucial.

First was political stability and obtaining a stronger global position for the country in its relations with the wealthy economic group of fellow states. These political reasons were often connected with memories of the cruel history of two major wars in the 20th Century which had almost destroyed the whole of Europe.

Second were economic reasons, benefits which were supposed to come with membership, the open market, an export-oriented Czech economy, interconnection with the

strong German economy and last, but not least, economic transfers from the EU for national and regional projects.

Third (and here we can see the role of civil society) was a transfer of know-how, especially in the area of good governance. This aspect was emphasized by many watch-dog organizations even though it is doubtful that such good examples were transferred to the Czech Republic.

Eight years after the accession, many Czechs are disappointed by the European Union and its failure to resolve the economic problems of the Continent. This low trust in the EU and its institutions matches the sentiments expressed by citizens of other EU countries.

With regard to the general environment for the NGO sector after the accession to the EU, much has changed. Many private international donors decided to move eastward and were replaced by the EU as a source of funding. However, such money is typically administered under national schemes which are usually tailored to either public bodies or private companies. Consequently, NGOs face such new challenges as excessive administrative burdens, a need to pre-finance and co-finance funds, etc. In general, EU funds offer opportunities for many Czech NGOs, but not all of them. A certain expertise and experience with management of these funds is needed. On the other hand, we need to stress that Czech membership in the EU opens opportunities for various cooperative projects between Czech NGOs and their counterparts from other EU countries. Joint projects, transfer of knowledge and competences, involvement in large European projects and new contacts are some of the benefits which civil society automatically obtains.

In order to conclude this short presentation, let us mention some of successes of civil society in the Czech Republic.

First, it is important to note the professionalism of many NGOs and their ability to effectively work in society and shape public policy. Second, the increasing role of private foundations (established by business entities) to support different areas of activity, known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Despite the narrow priorities of such

activities (which are often focused to more publicly attractive topics, such as those affecting children and animals), there are business initiatives that target some politically sensitive issues as corruption, transparency, etc. The Endowment Fund against Corruption, established by a private businessman, is a good sign for further development in this field. Third, we would like to emphasize that a large area of opportunities exist which can be explored by Czech NGOs. This means cooperation with business (e.g. improving fundraising activities), with other European NGOs through EU projects and last, but not least, developing the segment of so-called social enterprising. This is an area which helps NGOs generate funds, diversify their finances and results in the higher sustainability of NGOs.

The role of Civil Society Organizations in European Integration Processes: Lessons learned and best practices of Visegrad countries (Poland)

Mr. Michal Kowal
Economic Policy and Regional Development (EPRD)

In our presentation we tried to be really to the point. At the beginning, we will give some general overview of the civil society sector in Poland, and then we will move on to the examples of good practices related to the European integration process. Obviously, there are quite a lot of examples, so we selected those which in our opinion went along with the idea of the presentation.

INTRODUCTION

Before 1989 Polish civil society was a reflection of the political situation in which it was operating. The focus of activities was "against the state", not working „together with the state". Civil society went underground and officially never existed. However, I am sure you are all aware of "Solidarność" (Solidarity), originally a trade union which later became a symbol of peaceful transformation and a social movement – and a source of many political parties now active.

As far as legislation is concerned, it did not cover the whole sector and the acts of law were related only to specific aspects of civil society, such as: Act of 6 April 1984 on foundations, or Act of 7 April 1989 on associations.

After the fall of Communism in 1989, more possibilities for development of civil society appeared. There was a dynamic increase in the number of civil society organisations as instruments of rebuilding civil activity.

POLISH ACT ON PUBLIC BENEFIT AND VOLUNTEER WORK

Nowadays, the comprehensive legal regulations related to civil society organisations (CSOs) in Poland are covered by the Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit and volunteer work (amended in 2011).

The Act defines the term “public benefit work” as the work performed to the benefit of the public and society by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) within publicly assigned tasks. Public tasks sector includes the field of, *inter alia*, “social welfare, including aid offered to families and individuals with social problems, and work to offer equal opportunities to such families and individuals”¹. The Act stipulates that public administration authorities shall provide support whenever public tasks are performed by NGOs engaging in statutory work in a specific area. Moreover, the Act provides that public administration authorities shall entrust the performance of public tasks to NGOs.

The Act defines:

- conditions for creating and functioning of CSOs,
- rules of cooperation of public administration with CSOs,
- spheres of social and economic activity of CSOs,
- legal and institutional basis for civil dialogue,
- rights and duties of volunteers and their beneficiaries.

The Act provides for creation of a new category of non-profit organisations - a Public Benefit Organization², which shall be granted special privileges, but simultaneously will be subjected to detailed public control³. Public Benefit Organizations have been given the possibility to collect 1% of individual income tax. Every citizen is given the right to donate 1% of his or her income tax to a selected organisation to provide NGOs with additional source of financing.

1) Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit and volunteer work, Article 4, clause 1

2) To acquire the status of a Public Benefit Organisation, a CSO must have a legal personality and submit an application to the National Court Register.

3) For example, such organisations must submit to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy annual reports on their activities (technical and financial) and also publish these reports on their websites.

The mechanism mentioned in the last bullet point has already been discussed by other speakers with regard to how it functions in their countries. In Poland, this donation can be realised when submitting a tax declaration for a given year - each person may insert the court registry number of a chosen Public Benefit Organisation (sometimes also a note about a specific goal for which the money should be spent). That way the money goes straight to that organization.

To give you an idea how this functions in Poland and how the scale of this action changed over the years, let me give you some statistics:

Year	Number of people who donated 1% of income tax	Overall amount of 1% of income tax donated (in PLN)
2003	80 320	10 365 000
2005	1 156 510	62 332 000
2007	5 134 675	291 594 363
2009	8 623 928	357 141 279
2011	11 165 578	457 315 813

Obviously there are large disproportions in terms of distribution of this money among different organisations. For example, almost 25% of the amount from 2011 (108 million PLN or 25 million EUR) went to a single organisation – Foundation for Children “Be on time with your help” (providing assistance to children with disabilities).

The Act also established the Public Benefit Works Council – the counselling, analyst, and assistant body of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - composed of representatives of central administration (5 persons), local self-government (5 persons), and CSOs (10 persons).

The main Council’s tasks include:

- issuing opinions on matters concerning the application of the Act;
- issuing opinions concerning governmental draft laws in the field of public benefit and volunteer work;
- offering assistance and issuing opinions in case of any dispute between public administration authorities and Public Benefit Organisations;

- participating in audit procedures, and collecting and analysing information on audits performed and their results;
- issuing opinions on issues concerning public tasks, on the process of commissioning such tasks to be performed by NGOs, and on recommended public task performance standards;

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLISH CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR

We will now move on to present the main organisational forms of Polish CSOs, their main fields of activity as well as the main sources of income.

Civil society organisations are mainly NGOs, and among them:

Organisational forms	Number of registered entities in 2010
associations	82.000
foundations	11.000
churches and religious communities	44.000
volunteers	
trade organisations	
other	
TOTAL	137.000

As we can see, the most numerous are associations and foundations, and this is probably the case in other countries as well. Usually, when we talk about any analysis of the sector, it mostly refers to associations and foundations. We have to remember that approximately 25% (some analyses say that even more) are inactive organisations, so we can talk about 65.000 active foundations and associations in Poland.

As far as the main fields of activity of foundations and associations are concerned, they are as follows:

- sport, tourism, hobby – 36%
- education, upbringing – 15%
- culture, arts – 14%

- social services – 7%
- health care – 7%
- local development – 5%
- other –16%

As to the main sources of income, the situation is as follows:

The main sources of income	The percentage of CSOs using a particular source of financing (2009)
Members contributions	61 %
Public resources	57 %
Donations (individual and institutional)	50 %
1% of personal income tax	17 %
Own assets	16 %
Economic / chargeable activity	15 %
Other CSOs	14 %
Foreign public funds	12 %

There is no visible tendency for the CSOs to rely very much in their financing on the donations of 1% of personal income tax. CSOs can also carry out economic / chargeable activities – these two are a little different. The normal economic activity can be performed by CSOs but the profits cannot be distributed among the members but have to be spent on status goals. The chargeable (payable) activity is also done to realise status goals but is usually connected with reintegration of elderly or disabled people into the society.¹

Let's mention some figures regarding the yearly income of Polish NGOs:

- average NGO income is around 20.000 PLN (5.000 EUR)
- 17% of NGOs have income below 1.000 PLN (250 EUR)
- 37% of NGOs have income 10.000 – 100.000 PLN (2.500 – 25.000 EUR)
- 5% of NGOs have income over 1.000.000 PLN (250.000 EUR)²

1) This can take the form of e.g. running a cafe or a library where the long-term unemployed elderly/disabled can come and work part time.

2) These 5% of NGOs obtain 75% of all income of the 3rd sector.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN POLAND IN COMPARISON TO OTHER COUNTRIES

If we want to compare Polish CSOs with the situation of this sector in other countries we can *inter alia* use the following two sources:

- research of The Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies Centre for Civil Society Studies
- CSOs Sustainability Index

Research of The Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies Centre for Civil Society Studies consider what share of all people economically active are employed by CSOs. Some selected examples are given below:

- Netherlands – 9,2%,
- UK – 4,8%,
- France – 3,7%,
- Spain – 2,8%,
- Czech Republic – 1,3%,
- Hungary – 0,9%,
- Slovakia – 0,6%,
- Poland – 0,6%,
- Romania – 0,4%

As we can see this research reveals that in Poland only a fraction of all people are employed by CSOs so from this point of view the picture of our civil society looks grim.

However, if we consider the CSO Sustainability Index – an analytical tool for measuring the level of development of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia – the situation looks much better. The idea behind this index is that each country is scored from 1 to 7 in several areas (legal environment, organisational capacities, etc.) where 1 is the biggest stability and 7 - the smallest.

The table contains the total scores from 2011:

Country	CSO Sustainability Index	Country	CSO Sustainability Index
Estonia	2,0	Hungary	2,8 (2010)
Poland	2,2	Ukraine	3,5

Czech Republic	2,7	Armenia	4,0
Slovakia	2,7	Georgia	4,2

If we look at the attitude of Polish people towards the EU, recent studies (2011) show that:

- 83% of Poles support Poland's membership in the European Union, which places us at the forefront in Europe
- 48% of Poles positively associate the EU¹ (Poland is among top six Member States)

Part of the credit for this goes to Polish CSOs and their activities on issues of the European Integration Process.

GOOD PRACTICES FROM POLAND

We will now move on to discussing some selected examples of good practices related to the role of the civil society in the European integration process. Our idea of the presentation was to present these cases of good practice according to the functions of CSOs.

These functions of CSOs can be classified as follows:

- Cognitive function;
- Organisational function;
- Integrative function;
- Lobbying function.

Good practices: cognitive function

Cognitive function: means that through the activities of CSOs, government institutions and institutions of the EU may gain knowledge about the degree of social acceptance (or denial) of their current policies as well as past and future decisions. They can gain knowledge about gaps and shortcomings in these aspects, and about the sources of these gaps. In many cases CSOs also emphasise possible negative results of such decisions.

1) For example in the UK, this attitude has only 22% of citizens and in Latvia - 26%.

The cognitive function also includes the research conducted by CSOs with regard to their own members – the research on important social problems, e.g. through questionnaires, opinion polls, setting the hierarchy of needs or problems, etc.

What we want to talk about is the organisation which is probably known to you – **Institute of Public Affairs (ISP)**.¹ This is a leading Polish think tank and an independent centre for policy research and analysis, established in 1995, having an experienced team of in-house researchers/policy analysts and an extensive network of associate experts. Their research papers, experts' reports and recommendations concern the main aspects of public life and are useful for all citizens and state institutions – they are broadly disseminated among members of parliament, government officials and civil servants, academics, journalists and civil society activists.

We will now present a few examples from a vast range of publications issued by the Institute which fit into the topic of the presentation.

EXAMPLE #1

A study for the Office of the Committee for European Integration: “The concept of co-operation between the government administration and the third sector in Poland with regard to informing the society about Polish Presidency in the EU Council” which was presented at a conference organised by the Office in 2009.

The concept included:

- lessons learned from previous information campaigns
- main objectives and assumptions of the campaign
- tools of the campaign, including an internet portal
- engaging other entities in the campaign
- efficiency of the campaign – challenges, risks, evaluation

A considerable part of the publication was devoted to the aspects of cooperation of the civil society and the public administration with regard to conducting this campaign – in particular it contained recommendations for running the campaign, leading the public debate, creation of a coalition of organisations carrying out the campaign, etc.

1) www.isp.org.pl

EXAMPLE #2

The second example is a publication entitled: “Polish deputies for the European Parliament. Their activities and influence on Polish politics.”

The goal of this report was to show the activities of Polish deputies in the European Parliament and their influence on the position of Polish parties and the directions of public debate in Poland. The conclusions were based on desk research and interviews with selected deputies.

The report contains a lot of analytical material and is a good springboard to reflect on the role which Polish deputies should play in the European Parliament. This publication was issued in 2007 and is also available in the English language.

EXAMPLE #3

Another good example is the publication: “Towards a European Demos? Polish 2009 European Parliament Elections in Comparative Perspective”

The publication contains an analysis of the campaign in Poland. As I mentioned earlier, Poles are Euro-enthusiasts and the majority of Polish society strongly supports the EU. However, in June 2009 only around 25% of Polish citizens took part in the elections to the European Parliament.

The publication is an attempt at understanding why such a pro-European society does not want to participate in the possibilities for co-creation of the shape of Europe and what conclusions may this have for the whole Europe.

EXAMPLE #4

Another example is the organisation by the Institute of a series of “European Debates”, the goal of which was the promotion of knowledge about the Treaty of Lisbon and reforms of the EU institutions. The debates were held in 2011 and the participants were representatives of the EU, European Parliament deputies, university academics and experts from ISP.

The debates in Poznan entitled „*Polish presidency and the Treaty of Lisbon – institutions and challenges*” were organised in cooperation with the Centre for European Policy of the Economic University in Poznan.

The debates in Wroclaw were organised together with the Center for German and European studies at the University of Wroclaw – the topic was: “*Common Policy of Foreign Affairs and Security after the Treaty of Lisbon with regard to the Eastern Partnership. Opportunity or threat?*” After the debates, ISP published on their website the experts’ papers on the topics discussed at the debates.

EXAMPLE #5

The last example of the activity of the Institute of Public Affairs which we want to mention is the creation of the radio show “*Euro Zone*” devoted to economic issues in the European Union. The broadcast has been implemented by ISP, in collaboration with the Radio PiN since February 2011.

“Euro Zone” has been speaking about a number of issues, *inter alia* the following:

- How the EU fights the global economic crisis?
- Why in the preparation of the EU’s strategy to minimize the effects of the crisis, the major role is envisaged for the European Parliament?
- The priorities for the Polish government during the Polish Presidency.

The programme included interviews with politicians and experts, reports on EU economic initiatives, current information from the European Parliament.

EXAMPLE #6

As a conclusion of the “cognitive function” of CSOs, let’s now look at another association “**Europe and We**”¹⁾ which in the framework of their activities has been organising workshops, training sessions, meetings and conferences on EU membership.

1) europaimy.org

Among the largest and most important projects was the one organised together with the College of Humanities from Pułtusk – the conference “Was it worth it? – The balance the effects of the first year of Polish membership in the EU” with the topics:

- shaping European awareness of Poles and participation of CSOs in the European integration
- international position of Poland after the EU accession and participation of Poland in shaping the European Policy
- profits and costs of the integration – implications for the economy

This conference was only one of many conferences organised in Poland on this topic at various levels: local, regional and national.

Good practices: organisational function

Organisational function: its existence is manifested in the fact that individuals and groups with similar aspirations and goals get together and organise themselves in order to articulate and achieve these goals. The lifespan of such organised cooperation is usually short, depending on how fast the objective is reached. Such organised actions have an important role to play in the particular matter which unites their members, but they do not have in mind any broader social context.

EXAMPLE #7

A perfect example was the **Citizens’ Initiative “YES in the Referendum”** which was founded by representatives of different social groups and was realised in March-June 2003.

The idea behind the initiative was to create a common platform for action to convince the citizens to participate in the EU referendum and make them vote “Yes”. This included activation of various social groups, youth CSOs, the business community and employers, for the exchange of information and experiences and mobilizing social activity. The initiative had one main goal – to unite, under a common theme, people regardless of age, place of residence, education, wealth and ideas (especially political), and help them understand the importance of the idea of Polish accession to the EU and European integration.

The partners were among others¹:

- Regional Centre of European Integration Studies,
- Polish Foundation of Robert Schuman,
- Stefan Batory Foundation,
- Polish Confederation of Private Employers,
- Foundation “Union and We”

In the framework of this initiative, numerous activities were organised, including informational and promotional meetings, seminars, thematic workshops, panel discussions with experts, distribution of awareness material, radio and TV spots, etc. The initiative was successful and eventually 58,85% of all citizens took part in the referendum² – 77,45% of them said “yes”, 22,55% said “no”.

Good practices: integrative function

Integrative function: in the united Europe it is the CSOs who are and will be the key players of integration, not only social and cultural, but also the integration into the society of people with disabilities and for different reasons excluded from society. The main goals of this function are social equality, acceptance of others and their attitudes, and above all the rejection of xenophobia and nationalism.

In this place we would like to mention the **Association Integration and Development (SiR)**³ on behalf of which we are here. It was established in 2001 by civil society and regional development experts with great experience in numerous projects concerning social and regional development funded from various assistance funds, such as: PHARE, USAid, Know How Fund, the World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and European Social Fund.

The main activities of SiR are:

- Support for extending forums of social dialogue between local communities and other institutions from the country and abroad

1) In total nearly 300 organisations participated in this initiative.

2) 50% was required

3) www.sir.com.pl

- Working in favour of European integration and development of cooperation with CEE countries
- Assistance for groups socially disadvantaged, marginalised and endangered by social exclusion
- Integration of people connected with idea of the CSOs' European Network
- Enhancing European dialogue for experience exchange and cooperation

EXAMPLE #8

In order to promote the competitiveness of the regions and international cooperation in European Union, 9 regions of the Central Europe have established the “European Regions for Joint Actions” network. The kick-off conference took place in Debrecen, Hungary in January 2005 and the participating countries in 2005-2006 were: Finland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Poland¹, Latvia, Slovakia, Estonia, and Czech Republic (as observer). The overall objective was to build the basis for joint social and institutional capital.

The project was addressed to organisations, including CSOs, and institutions specialized in supporting local development and entrepreneurship, particularly to universities, local and regional authorities, chambers of commerce and enterprises.

The activities of the network were to:

- Development of cooperation in order to strengthen democratic and human rights principles
- Introduce partnership concept as an advanced form for regional and institutional cooperation
- Familiarize the regions of the new member countries with the effects of full membership in common market

In the framework of this project, one of the regions of Poland represented by Association Integration and Development (SiR) set up a partnership with one of the regions of Finland² which lasts until today and is realised by common initiatives on various fields.

1) Association Integration and Development (SiR) representing one of Polish regions – Swietokrzyskie Voivodship

2) Central Finland region with the capital city of Jyväskylä

EXAMPLE #9

Another example is the participation of Association Integration and Development (SiR) in the national network of 49 Regional Centres of European Social Fund located throughout Poland. The Association has been leading one Regional Centre of ESF with the aim to assist the beneficiaries of the Centre – potential project promoters, mainly CSOs, training institutions, associations of the unemployed, universities and research and scientific centres, etc. – who are *inter alia* active in the area of European Integration, and who have ideas for projects of international scope.

Through the activities of the Centre, the Association has been providing advisory services related to projects preparation, elaboration of applications and project management.

The activities are focused on:

- encouraging local CSOs to elaborate high quality project proposals,
- helping CSOs to find partners from abroad,
- promoting and informing about ESF and other EU funds

Good practices: lobbying function

Lobbying function: this is connected with one of the most important objectives of CSOs activities – protecting the basic values of any democratic society such as: freedom, pluralism, respecting the rights of all social groups, etc. Therefore, acting often for the benefit of their own members, CSOs cannot forget about a wider social aspect of these activities, including the realisation of civil rights. The most efficient are pro-ecological and large business organisations whose lobbying, realised in different ways, can often successfully influence government policies and legislation.

EXAMPLE #10

Here we want to mention a very recent example of Polish foundations and associations who want to have more to say on the EU funds in the period 2014-2020. A special working group has been set up, composed of networks of CSOs – for the first time such diverse representation of various associations of various backgrounds worked together.

The working group elaborated 5 main postulates and 12 specific postulates, concerning future organisation of European funds in Poland.¹

In August 2012, the working group submitted their demands on the principles of programming of European funds for the CSOs to the Polish Ministry of Regional Development. They postulate to rationalize and simplify procedures related to the availability of funds and grants to smaller CSOs.

Thank you very much for your attention. If you would like to receive any specific data/statistics regarding the topic of our presentation, please submit them to sir@sir.com.pl and our colleagues from the Association will be glad to respond and provide additional information.

1) <http://isp.org.pl/uploads/filemanager/Program%20Prawa%20i%20Instytucji%20Demokratycznych/Obywatel%20i%20Prawo/12postulatowngowsprawieFS1420.pdf>

Local Trainings

The second phase of the project foresees organizing local capacity building interactive trainings for CSOs in EaP countries involved in the project: Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. In order to properly meet the needs of these organizations, the participants of the conference from 22-23 November, 2012 in Yerevan, held a separate session to identify the necessary capacity gaps in the three EaP countries. Accordingly, the following training needs in each country were selected for the development of training modules:

Topic	Receiving country	Providing country
Public participation techniques and mechanisms, e.g. Town Hall Meetings	Ukraine	Hungary
Use of ICT for better communication between various stakeholders, such as local and international NGOs, public agencies, etc.	Georgia	Poland
Effective communication and PR tools, with a focus on construction of narratives for diverse audiences	Armenia	Slovakia

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