

Background note

Programming 2018-2020

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) component of the DCI/CSO-LA thematic programme

The DCI Thematic Programme "Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities" (CSO-LA) has an indicative allocation of 1,907ml € for 2014-2020. A first Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) was adopted for 2014-17. A second MIP is foreseen for 2018-2020. This note gives a few ideas for discussion and its preparation.

1. Lessons learnt from the MTR

The programme has allowed strategic achievements (e.g. FPAs, EU Roadmaps, unforeseen crises). Nevertheless, there are still too many dispersed primacies involving too many actions without aggregated perspectives and impact. Actions focus much more on CSOs as traditional implementers of aid rather than as actors of development policy. The programme needs to focus more on priorities and added values.

The space for civil society has shrunk. Civic freedoms are under threat in more than 100 countries and CSOs are regularly the subject of violent crackdowns or physical attacks. It is therefore essential that EU support integrates this increasing challenge, the constraints it bears and continues to reinforce and further adapt its support to the CSOs enabling environment.

The strong focus of the programme on supporting CSOs as actors of governance calls for reinforcement in graduated countries and states affected by fragility.

2. Challenges for 2018-2020

Civil Society has become a major actor in development. While this is a positive sign of citizen interest and desire to invest in development initiatives, it also resulted in an outburst of the number of CSOs. One concern is that the programme cannot reach out directly itself to small organisations. Therefore, it will have to rely on proper indirect mechanisms, intermediaries and partners.

CSOs shrinking space might create disruption of activities, request radical adaptation and results in complex situations where a partner is targeted.

3. Proposals for prioritisation

a) Strengthen CSOs as actors of governance

Continuing to support partnerships with CSO networks through FPAs/networks with an agreed international mandate; consolidate multi-stakeholder dialogues, in particular through the Policy Forum on Development.

b) Support CSOs development work in the field

Continuing to support country priorities, in particular those identified by EU Roadmaps. EU support would continue to ensure the largest coverage of countries, including a solid support in graduated and fragile countries. The programme would concentrate, with flexibility, on its own added values through two threads:

- To support CSOs in country as actors of governance, focussing on supporting their participation, their enabling environment, or their capacity building;
- To support CSOs in country as implementers of assistance, focussing on the areas of gender, the root causes of migration (including job creation), fragile states, and climate change.

c) Invest in new dynamics

- Complement existing EU tools on the most difficult parts of the CSOs shrinking space, with an additional programme supporting & promoting good practices developed in third countries.
- Support dialogue & interactions between CSOs and cooperative regional orders (i.e. regional or sub-regional organisations such as ASEAN, or ECOWAS).
- Contribute to the empowerment and quality employment of youngsters through a youth initiative supporting the employment of Young Experts in CSOs.

Do you agree with such potential analysis and orientations? Would you have any other suggestion?

If yes, what would be for you the main considerations for a good implementation of such orientations?