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INTRODUCTION

This study is one of eight country assessments of civil society capacities conducted as a preliminary activity within the EC-funded project Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) in the IPA Countries (EuropeAid/127427/C/SER/Multi/5), implemented by SIPU International, during the period August 2009 – July 2011. The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive assessment of civil society in Croatia and the environment that it works in, including its strengths and weaknesses, and its impacts to date and the challenges it faces to its further development. The study is based upon a combination of desk research embracing all relevant documentation, including legal and financial legislation applicable to civil society, previous civil society mappings and evaluations, situation analyses, policy documents and country-specific academic literature, and a consultative stakeholder analysis carried out by means of focus groups, interviews and questionnaire surveys with civil society organisations (CSOs), government actors, donor organisations and other institutional players. The study is an integral part of the project inception and it provides the premise for the majority of other project activities by serving as the basis of the development of regional as well as national work plans to be implemented during the project's duration.

In line with the project's Terms of Reference and SIPU's technical proposal, the study understands civil society in the following two complementary ways:

1. All organisational structures whose members have objectives and responsibilities that are of general interest and who also act as mediators between the public authorities and citizens. This definition clearly emphasises the associational character of civil society, while also accentuating its representational role. Civil society would include a variety of organisational types, including, NGOs, mass movements, cooperatives, professional associations, cultural and religious groups, trades unions and grassroots community groups (CBOs), etc.
2. A space for views, policies and action supportive of alternatives to those promoted by government and the private sector. This definition places the emphasis on social inclusion, social and political pluralism and the rights of expression in developing a participatory democracy.

The paper is composed of four sections:

- Section one provides an analysis of the civil society environment, including the legal framework governing CSOs and their work, the current donor opportunities and other sources of civil society funding, the government mechanisms for cooperation with and support of civil society and the policy framework determining government-civil society relations and public perceptions and support for civil society and its activities.
- Section two gives an overview of the main features of civil society: the types of organisation represented and their key organisational characteristics, the types of

activity they carry out and their main sectoral interests, their geographical distribution and way they are structured within an overall civil society architecture. CSOs are assessed according to their technical, organisational and institutional capacities, including human resources and technical skills, strategic strengths, analytical capabilities, external relations with other actors including other CSOs, government and the community, and material and financial stability and resilience.

- Section three summarises the main achievements of civil society to date, noting key milestone achievements and broader social impacts, and also identifies shortfalls in civil society performance in need of strengthening and further development.
- Section four sums up the most important institutional and organisational capacity needs of civil society in the country and identifies key strategic issues for the implementation of the project. By way of conclusion, recommendations are made for both the project's regional work plan and country-specific work plan.

1. THE CIVIL SOCIETY ENVIRONMENT

1.1. Legal framework - an analysis of relevant law and financial regulations

In Croatia a wide range of not-for-profit, non-governmental associational forms are recognised and regulated in national law. These include associations, foundations, funds, political parties, national minority councils, trade unions, economic interest associations, institutions, and religious organizations.¹

The most important organisational types for the formal gathering of citizens around shared interests and the promotion of not-for-profit activities, reflected in the sheer numbers of registrations, are those commonly conceived of as NGOs² (non-governmental organisations) under the legal terms associations.

Overall, Croatia has developed a generally supportive legal and financial framework for governing the establishment and operations of NGOs, which complies with international standards and represents some of the best practice regionally. Certain tax benefits are available to enable NGOs to generate their own income, whether through economic activities or by accessing philanthropy and tax incentives, albeit limited in scope, are also provided for would-be supporters of civil society.

¹ A full list of relevant laws and financial regulations can be accessed from the "Documents" section of the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs' website, www.uzuvrh.hr.

² This is evident from the official English translation of the Croatian Office for Cooperation with NGOs, in which the term 'NGOs' is substituted for the Croatian word *udruge* or "associations"

Areas of concern remain regarding the lack of clarity surrounding “public benefit” status and its restricted application, as well as the use of discretionary powers by the Tax Administration to apply financial regulations governing the economic activities of CSOs. It is expected that Law on Public Benefit Organisations, prepared by the GOFCNGOs as draft version for public consultations to be held in early 2010, will facilitate work of CSOs qualifying as public benefit organisations.

Associations

The law defines an association as a voluntarily established legal entity consisting of a minimum of 3 people (or legal entities), operating on a not-for-profit basis with the intention of promoting specific social or culture purposes. These purposes may include the lawful advancement of “issues of public or mutual interest, environmental, economic, humanitarian, informative, cultural, ethnic and national, educational, social, professional, sports, technical, health care, scientific and other interests and goals.”

An association may conduct income-generating activities so long as any profit gained is devoted exclusively to advancing the purposes set forth in the association’s charter.

While an association is prohibited from direct participation in formal politics; that is, participating in political campaigning for public office, there are no restrictions on an association’s attempts to influence legislation and public policy or from engaging in the political process as an election monitor or watch-dog of the wider institutions of democracy.

Foundations and Funds

A foundation provides the legal framework for the management of property or financial capital permanently assigned to serve an unspecified set of social and cultural purposes which are deemed "generally beneficial" or "charitable." A fund is a temporary foundation with a fixed lifespan no longer than five years.

The law accords the registration authority, the Ministry of Public Administration, undue discretionary control of registration and influence over the internal governance of foundations. Consequently, it can be noted that currently there are only 145 foundations officially registered in Croatia, as compared to the almost 40,000 associations.³

Public Benefit status

Under a further law, associations and foundations which provide certain free social services and charitable relief⁴ may be classed as “Humanitarian Organisations” by

³ See below: Section 2.1., table 1. CSOs registered with the Ministry of Public Administration

⁴ Humanitarian assistance is defined as, the charitable giving of material goods and money, psycho-social assistance, services to the disadvantaged (identified elsewhere in government regulations), victims of natural disaster and catastrophes, and the poor (those with earning below the national poverty threshold).

government bodies charged with social care.⁵ A broad subset of Humanitarian Organizations can then qualify for “public benefit” status, which entitles them to tax relief and exemption from paying customs duty. CSOs eligible to apply for public benefit status include those working in the areas of health promotion, the improvement of the quality of life (especially with regard to housing and nutritional standards), education, reconstruction and the renovation of private and public buildings, and work with children, youth and people with learning disabilities.

Adoption of the law governing status of public benefit CSOs is one of the measures in the National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2006-2011. It is expected that draft law will be presented for public consultations in early 2010.

Economic activities

Associations and foundations may undertake economic activities and are exempt from tax on profit⁶ on the income generated by these activities on the proviso that the exemption does not give the organisations an “unjustified privileged position in the market.” As the law is unclear as to what constitutes “unjustified privilege,” the Tax Administration operates with discretion in this sphere, and therefore economic activity for NGOs always carries a degree of uncertainty and financial risk.

Deductibility of Charitable Contributions

Businesses and individuals may deduct donations to NGOs which carry out cultural, scientific, educational, health, humanitarian, sporting, religious and other activities, against tax up to a limit of 2% of income. However, this provision is not widely publicised and take-up of its use is at a low level.

Value Added Tax

Associations and foundations are broadly speaking subject to the same VAT regulations as commercial enterprises. All organisations with an annual turnover in excess of 85,000 HRK (approx. 12,100 EUR) must register for VAT, currently payable at the rate of 23%.⁷

Croatian law provides few VAT exemptions for NGOs. The import of humanitarian aid is exempt. Humanitarian Organizations and amateur sport clubs need not pay VAT for the import of goods given as donations or purchased out of foreign monetary donations, or for deliveries of goods and services paid for out of foreign monetary donations.

Voluntarism

⁵ These are: the Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Inter-generational Solidarity and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

⁶ Currently at 20%.

⁷ Increased from 22% on 1 August 2009, as part of a package of tax changes designed to combat the current recession.

In May 2007, a Law on Volunteering was passed which seeks to regulate *organised volunteering*, to ensure the protection of the volunteer and enable mutually beneficial relations between the volunteer and the organiser of the volunteer activities. The law was developed in support of the National strategy for the creation of an enabling environment for civil society development, but to today its impact is undermined by the failure to amend the Labour Law accordingly. The Labour Law does not recognize the volunteer status of formally unemployed persons and requires the state to withhold financial support to the unemployed while they are volunteering (USAID 2009).

1.2. Donors and funding opportunities

Significant funds available from state sources – both central and local – provide the major part of CSO finance in Croatia. Other domestic sources, including membership fees, corporate philanthropy and income from services, collectively provide the next largest share of CSO funds, although individually they remain relatively poorly developed.

In recent times most foreign donors, including USAID, DfID and SIDA, have phased out their support to civil society. European Union funds, mainly in the form of pre-accession assistance, are now the only important foreign funding source in the country. However, these monies, supplemented by smaller, less predictable foreign support, usually sourced externally (often from private foundations in donor countries) continue to play a “stabilising role in ensuring that reform and advocacy-oriented, politically independent CSOs and initiatives survive” (Škrabalo 2008).⁸

Central government funding sources

The Croatian government provides considerable CSO funding through various ministries and state offices. In 2008, overall central government funding, including grants awarded by the NCFSD, amounted to 86.7 million EUR. This represents a 33% increase from 2007 and continues a trend for increased government support to civil society.⁹ While this would have once included both direct budgetary transfers and *ad hoc* funding of projects and service delivery, today it is required that all funds are allocated by means of public calls for proposals according to transparent and previously defined criteria. The grant-making process is regulated by a “Code of Good Practice, Standards and Benchmarks for the Allocation of Grants for Programmes and Project of NGOs,” adopted

⁸ See Škrabalo 2008 for a comprehensive analysis of CSO funding in Croatia in the period 2004-2007 with strategic recommendations to CSOs, donor agencies and other potential funders for the future.

Information on donors and current funding opportunities is available in the Croatian language on websites of the Government’s Office for Cooperation with NGOs, National Foundation for Development of Civil Society, as well as on web portals of associations (e.g. www.smart.hr, www.donacije.info), and non-profit media (e.g. www.zamirzine.net, www.h-alter.org).

⁹ In 2007, central government support to CSOs from the central budget amounted to 470 million HRK or 64.2 million EUR, which is 31.59% higher than the support provided in 2006 (Škrabalo 2008).

by the Croatian Parliament in February 2007 and coordinated by the government's NGO Office for Cooperation with NGOs.¹⁰

Opportunities are available to CSOs to finance activities by competing for direct service contracts from both local and national governments. CSOs have been awarded many such contracts at both levels for services to the elderly, victims of domestic violence, PWDs, and the homeless. The contracting of social services, however, remains unregulated and in general the field remains undeveloped.

In 2008, people with disability were the most frequent direct beneficiaries of government project funding, followed by children, youth and war veterans. The most commonly funded projects were those focusing on informal educational activities and training (25%).

National Foundation for Civil Society Development

The NFCSD is a public foundation with a broad mandate to promote and develop civil society in the Republic of Croatia. In addition to providing a range of capacity-building assistance to CSOs and conducting research on civil society, the NFCSD has become a major grant-making facility. Its main source of funds is the state lottery, but it has also received support from the state budget and a number of foreign donors, including USAID, DfID, EC and the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation. In 2008 its annual income amounted to 46 million HRK (approx 6.3 million EUR), of which 43 million HRK was provided by the lottery.

As a public funding entity, it is unique in the region in its ability to act independently from state government, owing to the inclusion of a majority of civil society representatives on its governing body.¹¹ Since its establishment in 2003, it has contributed significantly to an increase in CSO funding available from grant programmes. In 2008, the NFCSD disbursed 22 million HRK (approx 3 million EUR) in grants issued by public calls for proposal. It is the largest donor oriented towards institutional support, enabling CSOs to concentrate on the development of longer-term programmes and the challenges of organisational strengthening. It is also an important patron of development NGOs working in areas such as human rights, the development of democratic institutions, sustainable development, and the rule of law, which are otherwise often overlooked by government and private donors in Croatia. In 2007, the NFCSD decentralised its grant-making function by delegating responsibilities to four

¹⁰ In 2008 only 4.36% of government funding was allocated on the basis of a direct decision by the head of the supporting institution. In all other cases, awards are made on the recommendations of independent expert panels set up by the supporting institution charged with assessing proposals according to set objective criteria.

¹¹ The NFCSD's governing board is composed of nine members, appointed by the government: five members are civil society representatives, three are from state ministries, and one is from local/regional government.

regional foundations established by local resource NGOs, in order to respond better to CSO needs at the local level.

Local government funding sources

Non-central government support for CSOs is considerable; in 2007, 46 million EUR was allocated by county administrations to CSOs, while municipalities contributed a total of 60 million EUR. This support is critically important to maintaining a national architecture of viable CSOs.

There are some imbalances in the areas targeted by both central and local governments for CSO support. 66% percent of total government support to CSOs is allocated to culture and heritage and sport, while in third place, receiving only 11.5% of the total, are CSOs representing the socially vulnerable and those with disability.¹²

Corporate philanthropy

Corporate donations are growing in importance as a source of civil society funding. More than 10 Croatian companies now issue annual calls for proposals for civil society projects, predominantly in the fields of children, youth, culture and sport (USAID 2009). However, overall funding from the business sector is still at a relatively low level. In 2005, when the last comprehensive research on civil society in Croatia was carried out (Bežovan et al. 2005), 33.8% of CSOs surveyed reported receiving funds from the business sector, but this support did not exceed 18.2% of the average of their annual budgets. The report also calculated that corporate finance represented only 6.5% of the total of civil society finance available in Croatia.

EU pre-accession funds

Since 2006, EU pre-accession funds to Croatia have been provided through the Decentralised Management System (or DIS) which devolves disbursement to national government institutions. CSO funding is managed by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs. As of 2009, most of the EU funding to Croatia is provided by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). Under IPA, CSOs are principally catered for by IPA component 1, Institution Building, through a recently established Civil Society Facility which provides support in three main areas: capacity-building, exchange of knowledge and experience with EU institutions, and partnership actions between beneficiary and EU CSOs. There are also sizeable grant allocations available under IPA 2, Cross-Border Cooperation. As a candidate country, Croatia is now in receipt of additional EU support under IPA components 3, 4 and 5 for Regional Development, Human Resources and Rural Development respectively. CSOs can potentially gain support from these components through their inclusion in broader projects and social partnerships.

¹² Figures calculated from 2007 figures from CSO support from central and regional governments alone (Škrabalo 2008).

Some of the current EU funding opportunities include¹³:

1. **PHARE** – ongoing grants programme of 36 projects, to a total of EUR 2.734.750,00, in the areas of environmental protection and sustainable development, democracy and human rights and youth. All projects will be completed by April 2010
2. **IPA 2008 Croatia** – three grants schemes (awards currently pending) to a total amount of 3.33 million EUR for a total of between 25 and 50 grants ranging in size from 50,000 EUR to 250,000 EUR for capacity building of CSOs for monitoring, advocacy and policy dialogue in the following fields:
 - sustainable development, natural resource management and regional development;
 - implementation of EU acquis regarding the fight against corruption, transparency and public accountability;
3. **IPA 2009 Croatia** - calls for proposals expected in the period May – September 2010 in the thematic areas: social policy (service delivery policies), human rights, democratisations and minorities.
4. **Cross-Border Cooperation** - Small grants to CSOs and municipalities for a range of socio-economic two-country partnership projects, with all EU and potential EU member countries. In 2009 programme investments to Croatia totalled 15.9 million EUR, and 2010 this will grow to 16.2 million. Calls for proposals were issued in 2009 for Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia – Serbia, Croatia – Montenegro and for the Adriatic Programme (embracing all member states and potential candidates).
5. **Community Programmes.** The following programmes in which Croatia participates as a EU candidate country provide CSOs opportunities for funding and partnership: Culture, Progress, Lifelong Learning Programme, Youth in Action and 7th Framework programme on Research.

The community programme Europe for Citizens has also recently opened to applicants from Croatia: fostering collaboration and exchange of knowledge between CSOs in EU Community. Target groups: CSOs and networks, think tanks, local self-governments.

¹³ Information on EU funding available for CSOs in Croatia is regularly published by the GOfCNGOs. Two central institutions for implementation of EU funded projects in Croatia, Central Office for Development Strategy and Coordination of EU Funds (CODEF, <http://www.strategija.hr/en>) and Central Finance and Contracting Agency (CFCA, www.safu.hr) also provide useful information for CSOs and their potential partners (public administration bodies, local government, private companies etc.).

1.3 Government mechanisms for civil society – government cooperation and the policy framework determining government – civil society relations

Croatia has established an innovative and comprehensive set of institutions for mediating relations between the government and civil society and supporting civil society development. The system, which now rests upon three pillars - **the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, the Council for Civil Society Development and the National Foundation for Civil Society Development** – and the combination of centralised policy-making with decentralised support to civil society, was dubbed *The new Model of the Organizational Structure for Civil Society Development in Croatia*. It was initiated in 1998, at time when relations between government and civil society had been predominantly antagonistic for some considerable time. Consensual development of the system since that time by state actors, in cooperation with civil society partners, has resulted in a jointly-owned institutional apparatus which guarantees substantive participation of civil society, particularly in the field of policy making, and a clear set of agreed policy instruments defining civil society's role in Croatia's development, as well as the government's responsibilities towards civil society.

Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs (GOfCNGOs)¹⁴

The institutionalization of civil society-Government cooperation in Croatia began with the establishment of the GOfCNGOs in 1998. The Office's primary task was to build confidence and develop cooperation through financing, consulting, educating and information sharing. It also established working groups on various legislative initiatives affecting NGOs. According to the effective Regulation on Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, the task of the Office is to coordinate the work of ministries, central state offices, Croatian Government offices and state administrative organizations, as well as administrative bodies at local level in connection with monitoring and improving the cooperation with the non-governmental, non-profit sector in the Republic of Croatia.

Council for Civil Society Development

Government-civil society cooperation was further advanced with the establishment of the Council for Civil Society Development (CCSD) as a governmental advisory body in 2002. The Council is composed of 10 appointees from state administrative bodies, 10 representatives of civil society, elected by CSOs themselves, and 3 civil society experts. The Council is primarily responsible for the development and implementation of government strategy in support of civil society, acting as an expertise advisor to the government, but it also has a key role in monitoring the monetary support provided by the state for financing NGO activities.

¹⁴ This and the following sub-sections on the Croatian institutional framework refer to Gerasimova 2005 and Hadzi-Miceva 2008.

The CCSD is the most important institutional mechanism for government-civil society cooperation as it provides a forum for a direct and formalized dialogue between citizens' associations' representatives and public administration, on issues directly related to civil society development. Under a revised mandate, as of 2010, it will also include representatives of foundations and trade unions in order to do more justice to its own name and to the diversity of civil society organizing.

National Foundation for Civil Society Development

The National Foundation, whose functions are described above in Section 1.2., is the third pillar of the Croatian civil society support framework. With its establishment, in 2003, the New Model was effectively initiated.

National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for CS Development

Currently, government support to CSOs and policy concerning civil society is outlined in The National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2006-2011 and detailed in its yearly action plans. The strategy, if fully implemented, would significantly strengthen civil society's capacity to act as an agent of social change; in particular it would secure its role as a meaningful promoter of participatory democracy and human rights and as a competent monitor of civic liberties public policies in the context of Croatia's final phase of accession to the EU and beyond (EC 2008).

Code of Good Practice and Standards for the Financing of Programs of Civil Society Organizations out of State and Local Budgets

Developed by the GOfCNGOs and adopted by Croatian Parliament in 2007, this code regulates the basic standards and principles of practice of state administration bodies in the procedure of awarding of grants to CSOs. It is an important tool for the monitoring of government performance in this area, ensuring efficient resource use, transparency and due process.

Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts

The Code, adopted in November 2009, establishes general principles, standards and measures for conducting consultations with the interested public, in the procedures of enacting laws and adopting other regulations and acts of state bodies which regulate matters and take positions of interest for public benefit (protection and promotion of human rights, public services, the justice system, environmental protection, etc.). The purpose of the Code is to offer all bodies involved in the process of enacting laws and adopting regulations guidelines stemming from the concrete practical experience to date of dialogue and cooperation between the public authorities in the Republic of Croatia and the interested public. The ultimate goal of the Code is to facilitate

interaction with citizens and representatives of the interested public in the democratic process, and encourage more active participation by citizens in public life.

1.4 Government (local and national) institutional capacities for engaging civil society

In the last decade the government has opened up for cooperation, as it was set out in the “Programme of Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Non-government, Non-for Profit Sector in the Republic of Croatia,” released in 2001. That programme emerged from an intense interaction between the civil society actors (primarily individual activists, some of them with organisational affiliations and others acting independently) and the government that started increasingly to recognise potential of engaging in dialogue with organised citizens. Not only did the Programme establish a transparent national instrument for the state financing of CSOs, it also provided a base for all subsequent strategic policy documents regulating relationships between government and civil society.

The government’s institutional capacities for engaging CSOs, however, are often not matched with the comparable capacities of the CSOs to engage with government. That is, CSOs often are not able to respond to invitations to participate in the consultative processes initiated by government. Civil society representatives often claim that the openness for cooperation is primarily on the government’s own terms. That is, if there is a will on the side of the public sector, the civil actors are able to provide services and even improve the performance of the public actors (in welfare, health, informal education, and a variety of other fields). However, very seldom they are able to exercise a considerable impact on the public agenda setting. The recent research on participation of citizens’ association in the legislative process suggested that the public sector often lacks understanding of benefits resulting from broader consultative processes. The associations, on the other hand, need to increase their knowledge on the legislative process and develop capacities for providing appropriate inputs (Vela, 2009.)

Central government

CSOs have participated directly in the development of national strategic documents on a regular basis. Civil society has played a significant role in several strategic processes (to mention just a few: National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development; National Programme of Action for Youth; establishment of the current institutional framework for the advancement of gender equality).

Civil society representatives are included as experts and advisors in various consultative bodies, on the level of central government, government offices, agencies and ministries, and also on the level of parliamentary committees.¹⁵ The level of their influence varies

¹⁵ Database of civil society representatives with the state institutions and advisory bodies is available at: <http://www.uzuvrh.hr/drzavnatijela-savjeti-clanovi.aspx>, 30.09.2009

considerably from one body to another, depending to a large extent on the overall resources available for their specific functions.

Recent research on the contribution of the CSOs to democratisation processes shows that majority of associations with the mission of promoting human rights, environmental protection and democracy (89% in the sample of 90) have organized a significant number of public campaigns, were involved in legislation initiatives related to different laws and had direct access to policy-makers through their representatives in the Croatian Parliament committees and various other consultative bodies to the Government.¹⁶

The most recent addition to the institutional mechanisms for engaging civil society is the Government's acceptance, in November 2009, of the Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts. The initial draft Code was prepared over a year ago, after a lengthy process of consultations with CSOs. The adopted version, however, was altered without the agreement of the CSOs which participated in drawing up original draft. This resulted in an open letter of protest to the government, signed by several of the most prominent NGOs, in which the willingness of government to engage CSOs is strongly criticized¹⁷. The Code, however, does represent potentially powerful instrument for a continuing dialogue between CSOs and authorities. It is hoped that Implementation Guidelines for the Code, prepared by the GOfCNGOs, will help to all of the concerned parties to utilise the Code's potential.

Local government

On the local level the institutional mechanisms for engaging civil society need further improvement. While almost half (39.5%) of the local government units (towns and municipalities) have some kind of advisory boards including civil society representatives, there are very few with formalized agreements on cooperation between local government and civil society organisations (18.1%) (GONG 2009.).

1.5 Public perceptions and support of civil society and its various segments

The public image of civil society in Croatia is generally favourable, although public knowledge and understanding of the sector is at best partial. Active support of CSOs by citizens, including voluntary participation in activities, remains at a low level, and the involvement of the majority of those who come into direct contact with a CSO is limited to receiving advice or gaining easier access to essential information.

¹⁶ Kunac, Suzana (2006) Vrijednost vrednota: civilno društvo i hrvatska demokratizacija [The Value of Values: Civil Society and Croatian Democratization]. Zagreb: Grupa za ženska ljudska prava B.a.B.e.

¹⁷ Open letter from the civil society organizations to the Croatian government - Public consultation code passed without public participation, <http://www.cesi.hr/en/news/1327-public-consultation-code-passed-without-public-participation/>, 15.12.2009.

Public awareness of civil society in Croatia, however, continues to improve gradually, as CSOs make increasing efforts to inform the public about their activities and their role in society, particularly by means of dedicated not-for-profit media.¹⁸ In 2007/2008 alone, NFCSD supported 20 projects focused on not-for-profit media, broadening the audience for information about NGO activities.

Media coverage of CSO activities is mostly positive, and NGO leaders are recognised by the Media as experts in specific areas, such as election monitoring, environmental protection or combating violence against women.

The only comprehensive data available on public perceptions in Croatia of civil society date back to a nationwide public opinion survey conducted in 2005 (Franc, R., Šakić, V. et al. 2006). The surveys main conclusions and findings are that:

- While the majority of Croatian citizens recognise the term “association/NGO” (88.3%), only a minority (43.3%) understood its meaning.
- Citizens generally had little knowledge of particular CSOs working in specific fields. CSOs gaining the most public recognition were Associations of the Homeland War¹⁹ (39.2%), followed by those involved in environmental protection (36.2%) and election monitoring or political campaigning. CSOs with the lowest public profile included those representing national minorities, civil society development organizations and educational associations.
- A majority of citizens expressed satisfaction with the contribution of CSOs to raising awareness of human rights, and the development of civil society. They were less positive concerning civil society’s contribution to solving their (individual) socio-economic problems and in improving the quality of life.
- Citizens are most likely to contact a CSO in regard to issues of environmental protection, sexual orientation and gender inequality. A majority of the public, however, thinks that CSOs can achieve most in the areas of service provision and humanitarian aid, followed by the Environment, health, legal affairs and politics.

2. CSO ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITIES

2.1 Overview of the civil society community in Croatia

Structure of civil society

Official figures for CSO registrations show that civil society is overwhelmingly composed of citizens’ associations. Currently there are almost 39,000 registered associations in Croatia, comprising 93% of the total of all kinds of registered organisations recognised

¹⁸ See Annex 3 for a list of the main non-for-profit and civil society media web resources in Croatia.

¹⁹ This is a category in the current Registry of the associations; it includes 1991-1997 war in Croatia veterans, war victims associations, associations of families of missing persons etc.

in Croatia as belonging to civil society, including, funds and foundations, national minority councils and faith-based organisations.

In addition to the organisations listed in the official register (see below Table 1), there are a variety of trades unions, gathered formally under three main umbrella associations.²⁰ Despite the size of their membership, trades unions are weak, disunited and relatively ineffective. The various employers' associations are somewhat more influential. However, as the majority of them are clients of the state, they are disinclined to promote alternative views to those of the government of the day. In addition, there are private non-profit institutions that also need to be considered as a form of civil society organisations.

Table 1. CSOs registered with the Ministry of Public Administration in November 2009.

CSO category	Registered organisations
Associations	38,822
Catholic Church legal persons	1,972
Religious communities	50
National minorities councils	308
Foundations	145
Foreign associations	129
Funds	11
TOTAL	41,731

Source. Min. of Public Administration: [www.uprava.hr/Registar/](http://www.uprava.hr/Registar*/)*

Faith-based organisations typically do not act independently from their respective churches or religious communities and in this regard, might be disregarded as a part of an active civil society.

Even allowing for the probable inactivity of a large majority of registered associations, in a population of fewer than 4.5 million, civil society is well developed in terms of the number of CSOs per capita.

CSOs are active in all parts of the country, but there is a clear concentration of activity in the capital city, Zagreb, and the surrounding central region, where almost 60% of all associations are located. CSO representation across the country's other two regions – Slavonia in the north-east and Dalmatia and Istria which comprise the littoral or coastal region – is relatively even geographically, with the exception of higher than average

²⁰ The three main trades union umbrella organizations are: the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia with 230 000 members, the Independent Croatian Trade Union, with 90 000 members, and the Croatian Association of Trade Unions, with 55 000 members.

numbers of CSOs in the two regions' main urban centres and seats of administration, Osijek and Split, respectively.²¹

Typically, the Croatian CSO is a small, more-or-less voluntary outfit, lacking professional infrastructure, with limited access to financial resources, working at the grassroots. These organisations are likely as not consider the whole community as its target group, but a high proportion of CSOs are dedicated to the special interests of youth and children, women, people with disability and also pensioners.

Organisations representing people with disability (PWDs) are an identifiable sub-group of CSOs in the sense that they are often the inheritors of a long tradition going back into the communist regime, under which they enjoyed a special status, since the regime delegated to them responsibility for certain services relevant to their members. Their attitudes towards the state, which are replicated more generally amongst the population, tend to be those of passive reliance, born out of a continued belief in the role of the state as “protector” and “benevolent provider” of basic needs, rather than the guarantor of human rights and equitable access to resources. Thus, disability groups and the vast majority of service-oriented CSOs working in the community are concerned primarily with securing the further extension of existing, but often inadequate and even disempowering services to their members, rather than promoting “second generation” rights to tackle issues of social exclusion, injustice and inequality.

As might be expected, there is a concentration of well developed, highly visible and fully professional NGOs working in Zagreb at the national level, usually carrying out advocacy and capacity building activities on a range of rights-based issues. In particular, Croatia is well furnished with NGO champions of human rights and, by extension organisations monitoring governance and the democratic process, as well as holding the government accountable.²² Many of these NGOs grew out of the anti-war movement of the early 1990s and may indeed continue actively to promote peace, non-violence and regional reconciliation. Croatia also has a prominent CSO sub-sector active in pushing a progressive agenda for gender equality and promoting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender rights.

The ability, however, of the civic sector to influence public and political opinion and shape social policy is rather limited. Organisations with the necessary capacities to promote alternative views in public are low in number. They do not enjoy broad-based public support and government remains relatively resistant to new ideas which challenge the status quo.

²¹ See 5 for details of CSO numbers according to region and county.

²² It should be pointed out that there are also important professional NGOs in the other main urban centres; e.g. The Centre for Peace and Human Rights in Osijek, Mi in Split, and SMART in Rijeka. In part the presence and strength of CSOs depends on the past deployment in the 1990s of international NGOs. In Eastern Slavonia, including the towns Vukovar and Osijek, there was a particularly large presence of international NGOs. Consequently, many local CSOs emerged and a number have emerged as viable, professional associations since the exit of the foreigners.

Throughout the country there are a good number of NGO support organisations and CSOs ordinarily working in other areas, but which dedicate resources and skills to providing CSO capacity building. These organisations benefit from substantial funding for activities from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development (NFCSD), which is currently implementing a Programme for Regional Development and Strengthening of CSOs, with the aim of strengthening organisational capacities (including those of informal groups) at the local and regional levels. This Programme is implemented by five regional networks of capacity-building CSOs, which cover the whole territory of Croatia.²³

As a sector, civil society in Croatia is poorly integrated. There is no CSO body or network which can coordinate the diversity of civic voices and interests in order to represent civil society in public and on the political stage. At the sub-sector level, leadership is not in evidence. Whatever networks exist²⁴ tend not to be used as a basis to establish collective strategy, and the legitimacy of high-profile professional NGOs which might aspire to fulfil a leadership role within their field of expertise²⁵ is not accepted in wider CSO circles.

Field of operation / activities

The classification of CSOs by area of work in the Registry of Associations reveals that half (49.59)% of all registered organisations carry out either sporting or cultural²⁶ activities. A further 18.45% of CSOs are occupied in “economic” (9.95%) and “technical” (8.5%) fields, the exact meaning of which in both cases is difficult to define. The register also shows the diversity of other activities undertaken by CSOs and the relative equal representation given by civil society in Croatia to the range of social and cultural needs and interests.

Table 2. Primary field of work as recorded in the Associations’ Registry in November 2009.

Area of work	number	%
Sports	13,620	35.32
Culture	5,503	14.27
Economic	3,835	9.95
Technical	3,276	8.50
Other associations	2,630	6.82
Social associations	1,395	3.62

²³ See Annex 6 for details of the Programme’s networks.

²⁴ See below section 2.5

²⁵ These might include: Croatian Helsinki Committee for human rights organisations, Green Action among environmentalists, B.a.B.e. among gender equality organisations and GONG in the area of political rights.

²⁶ The term “cultural activities” tends to denote traditional or “folk” culture.

Health associations	1,099	2.85
Protection of children & youth; family assoc.ns	998	2.59
Associations of Homeland War	965	2.50
Humanitarian	885	2.30
Hobby	657	1.70
Environmental protection	631	1.64
Education	537	1.39
National minorities	504	1.31
Protection and gathering of woman	431	1.12
Science	417	1.08
Rights protection	411	1.07
Ethnic	345	0.89
Spiritual	282	0.73
Informational	137	0.36
TOTAL	38,558	100

Source. *Min. of Public Administration: www.uprava.hr*

A major mapping of Croatian civil society and its capacities, conducted on behalf of the National Foundation for Civil Society Development in 2007 (Hromatko 2007)²⁷ proposes a different classification, based on field work with a sample of 745 CSOs, which excluded all sports clubs. As Hromatko's research targeted active organisations, it presumably gives a more accurate picture than the Registry of what CSOs *actually do*. Her data is significant for revealing key differences with, but also in confirming the broad gist of the registry data. That is, that culture comprises the most common CSO field of activity (28%), and secondly, that Croatian CSOs cover a very wide range of other interests and that there is a relatively even distribution between all the possible activities. On the other hand, it suggests that a very large proportion of Croatian CSOs are active in social welfare and humanitarian assistance (a combined total of 25%), and that technical activities are in fact insignificant (0.2%).

The vast majority of CSOs concentrate on service delivery in the community, which in most cases include training and informal education (70.8%) as well as counselling and specialist professional services (46.9%). Roughly a quarter of all CSOs (23.7%) report undertaking some form of advocacy activity and almost 10% are engaged in monitoring the political process and the work of public administrations. An evaluation, carried out in 2007, of a major USAID-funded CSO capacity-building programme²⁸ observed that

²⁷ Data from this study, generated from a sample of 745 CSOs, are used extensively here in this chapter (2. CSO Organisational Capacities). The National Foundation is currently undertaking further research according to the same methodology, the results of which will be published in Spring 2010.

²⁸ Blair H. et al (2007) Final Evaluation of USAID's project for "Support to Croatia's Non-Governmental Organizations" (CroNGO), 2001-2007; 19 August 2007

CSO advocacy in Croatia is now “ubiquitous,” and should no longer be viewed as the exclusive domain of larger, fully professional NGOs working at the national level. However, in contrast to these larger national organisations which are motivated by rights-based values, the grassroots advocates focus on the satisfaction of the interests of their members in the medium or short-term vis-à-vis the extension of services to the community. In this way, very many local-level CSOs are engaged in advocacy or rather lobbying of public administrations for improvements in public infrastructure, such as water supply, gas and electricity.

2.2 Human resources and technical skills

Croatian civil society overall is highly dependent on voluntary labour and CSOs, even the more developed and long-established NGOs, retain compact professional staff teams of limited size. Hromatko found that almost 53% of all CSOs had no paid employees, while the greater part of the remainder (43.2%) employed between only 1 and 9 people. Greater organisational development and sophistication does not necessarily correlate with greater organisational size. In 2007, it was observed that the NGO GONG, a major political monitor and promoter of democracy was “certainly one of the largest [NGOs], with 18 employees, several regional offices, and an annual budget of almost 4 million HRK (approx. 700,000 EUR) (Blair et al 2007).” However, many other professional NGOs of similar stature had markedly simpler structures and smaller staff sizes.

A great many of those employed at any one time in a CSO will be on temporary contracts tied to specific project activities. At the same time, CSOs of all sizes, but particularly the smaller ones, rely on the services of volunteers for carrying out many routine administrative and programme activities. A CSO which employs one person is likely to also have at its disposal the services of three or four volunteers who will work on a weekly or more frequent basis.

The principle of voluntarism is well developed within civil society and many smaller organisations are founded on volunteer action, which is often a pillar of organisational strategies to achieve sustainability and also to maximise the application of scarce project resources to concrete actions.

The general public views voluntarism positively and there is an increasing number of people willing to work in the community on a voluntary basis (Ćulum et al. 2009). Croatia is remarkable in the region in having a well developed architecture of volunteer centres and other CSOs dedicated to the development of voluntarism, as well as volunteer-involving organisations which engage volunteers on a formal basis within a properly managed agenda of work and training.

Management of human resources in the sector is relatively well advanced. In most of the associations (81.4%) the employees have job descriptions, while in more than half (66.5%) there is some kind of systematic evaluation of employees.

Associations continue to actively invest in their organizational capacities and the quality of services. Almost 50% of all CSOs have received training in basic technical skills (49.8%), particularly in project writing, but also often in strategic planning, financial management, project management, fundraising and advocacy (Hromatko 2007). That being said, CSOs frequently draw attention to challenges they experience in fundraising owing to lack of experience in project writing, difficulties with filling out complex donor applications and low numbers of suitably trained staff.

An area of progress generally in the sector is that of public relations (PR). While not many CSOs have a person responsible for PR activities, many have developed a PR strategy and numerous CSOs are improving their PR capacities through various training programs. Larger NGOs have developed close relationships with journalists and work hard to maintain them. Many CSOs promote their transparency and openness through websites, annual reports, and public events (USAID 2009).

It appears that CSOs need further training and education in advocacy and lobbying skills, especially in the areas of presenting their position effectively to the state administration.

There appears to be a high level of proficiency among CSOs in computer skills (64.2%) and foreign languages (63.8%).

As a whole, the civil society workforce is highly feminised. Although a small majority of CSO directors are male, CSOs primarily engage young or middle-aged women possessing either high school or university education.

2.3 Strategic strengths of CSOs in Croatia

Croatian CSOs appear to place considerable importance on their strategic direction. Almost 91.1% of associations have clearly defined mission and vision statements, while 61.9% associations report having developed strategic plans. However, the extent to which the strategic process is fully understood, as a long-term positioning of the organisation within the context of organisational strengths and projected opportunities in the working environment, is less certain, as many organisations interpret the term “strategic planning” to mean a one-year organisational plan.

An examination of decision making in CSOs suggests that, routinely, there is a division in place between strategic decision making, undertaken by governing bodies (assembly, board of director etc), and the management of daily activities and projects, carried out by executive staff members and project teams. Again, there is another side to this issue, as it has often been noted that internal democracy is often absent in CSOs – either

because governing boards function weakly, or because in small organisations by default all functions and decisions may be carried out by a single executive officer.

2.4 Analytical capacities

A relatively broad spectrum of CSOs in Croatia, primarily professional advocacy NGOs, routinely carry out social research and thematic studies with the aim of contributing to CSO capacity building and public policy dialogue. There are several Croatian institutions and organizations engaged in regular research on various aspects of civil society development, including CSOs needs assessments. (e. g. National Foundation on Civil Society Development, CERANEO – which undertook the Civicus Index), while CSOs produce thematic policy or briefing papers in their areas of work.

Subjects of social research primarily concern rights-based issues and are carried out by organisations specialising in these areas (e.g. women’s rights, human rights, voluntarism, election law etc)²⁹.

2.5 External relationships – networks and partnerships

The majority of associations are members of either domestic or international networks, although in most cases networks are informal and operate as information-sharing circles. Some new networks of service providers are emerging, focusing on community and rural development, but their activities are still largely project-driven.

Formal networking, national and international, is strongest among advocacy-oriented organisations, in particular those working in the fields of women’s rights, the protection of children, the Environment, youth empowerment and human rights.³⁰

A need has been identified, however, to improve the quality of networking generally in order to increase the influence to be gained through concerted action. Inexperience in network management is a key impediment to effective CSO lobbying and advocacy in Croatia (Pavić-Rogošić 2008).

2.6 Material and financial stability and resilience

Financial viability continues to be the weakest aspect of CSOs’ sustainability in Croatia. The principal challenge is gaining access to sufficient funds to cover a meaningful programme of continuous activities.

²⁹ Specific examples of recent policy research includes: Voluntarism (Ćulum 2009) conducted by University in Rijeka, Association SMART, Volunteer Centre Zagreb & Volunteer Centre Osijek; Teen Dating Violence (2004 & 2007), Association CESI; Equal Opportunities in the Labour Market, Association CESI; Social exclusion, Centre for Women’s Studies; Rights of national minorities, Serbian Democratic Forum.

³⁰ See Annex 7 for a list of some of the most well-established and visible CSO networks.

Over two thirds of organisations remain dependent to a large extent on short-term project funding. For the majority of organisations, particularly those providing services in the community, this funding is available from state sources. Most of the smaller and medium sized CSOs find it difficult to access the increasing supply of EU funds on owing relatively inferior project development and writing skills and low absorption capacity.

However, Hromatko found that the majority of Croatian CSOs were able to secure sufficient finance to ensure survival from one year to the next. In addition, 59.5% of all CSOs are in receipt of some form of institutional support from sources such as the NFCSD, but membership fees are also an important source of finance of core organisational non-project activities. This should, of course, be placed in the context of often very small CSOs largely reliant on volunteer labour and part-time working, which to some extent the meaning of “survival” and “sustainability.”

An encouraging aspect of the sector is that few CSOs are dependent on only one source of funding. In 2005, only 10% of CSOs had a single donor or the source of funding, whereas roughly one third of the total had four or more sources (Hromatko 2007).

Although service delivery is the predominant mode of CSO activity, few actively recover the cost of these services through fee charges or similar means. Even fewer associations use self-financing activities as their primary source of funding. Training organizations continue to be the most successful in terms of cost recovery. There are also recent examples of social enterprises founded by some associations (NGO ACT, Čakovec; NGO RODA, Zagreb)

Most CSOs gain a degree of material stability through access to relatively favourable infrastructure and equipment. Somewhat less than half of all CSOs in Hromatko’s research sample enjoy rent-free premises (43%), a further 34% pay rent, approximately 10% own their own office space, leaving only 12.8% without working space.

While most CSOs express dissatisfaction with their technical equipment, the vast majority have the minimum provision (computer, printer, telephone line and internet access) necessary to run a small-scale operation.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENTS, IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES

3.1 Milestone achievements and impacts in the country

Institutional framework for civil society

The single most important achievement of civil society in Croatia has been the establishment over the last ten years of a comprehensive institutional framework for cooperation between government and CSOs, with an accompanying strategy for the development of civil society. The framework includes effective civil society participation and representation in all its structures, and strategy rests on broad-based consultation with CSOs. The ongoing process has been the major factor in overcoming previously

confrontational relations between local and state governments and civil society.³¹ Early on, inclusion of CSOs often owed much to pressures imposed by international actors. However, today, political acceptance of civil society's place in the governance process in Croatia, as well as practical support from public administrations for the development of civil society, has been secured.

Influence on the social policy agenda

Rights-based NGOs are an effective leader of public debate and instigator of public policy in those areas of social and human rights policy which remain controversial. Civil society has been the prime mover in policy debate in the following areas:

- Gay lesbian bisexual and transgender rights;
- Animal rights;
- “Dealing with the past” (that is, issues of national and regional reconciliation, truth and justice, documenting the past, and peace building, in the aftermath of the recent Balkan conflicts and Croatia's part in them);
- Re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Croatia and Serbia after war.

NGO advocacy campaigns have been instrumental in bringing about certain positive changes in public opinion in favour of marginalised groups and against anti-social behaviours:

- Greater public awareness and intolerance of violence against women;
- Support for anti-corruption measures;
- Awareness of disability rights and support for PWDs;
- Awareness of other minority issues.

Civil society has also influenced institutional change and the drafting and adoption of key legislation through its inclusion in policy-dialogue at the national level, such as the Gender Equality Act (which created institutional gender equality mechanisms) and the Law on the Access to Information.

3.2 Shortfalls in CSO performance

³¹ On occasion, these relations remain antagonistic. In August 2009 the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Construction, brought a court case against Croatia's leading environment NGO, Zelena Akcija (Green Action), threatening its closure with a fine of 50,000 – 110,000 EUR for a peaceful protest held in front of the Ministry drawing attention to the Ministry's failure to implement measures for the safe disposal of paint under the Law of Waste. The case has become a *cause celebre* within the national and international NGO community, with pressure growing for the bringing a case against the Croatian government for violation of the Aarhus Convention.

Leadership of civil society

There is no effective civil society forum or national network which provides the whole sector collective leadership, and the individual CSO a mechanism for participating in sector-wide debate and communication. The closest thing in Croatia to a representative body for the whole of civil society is the CCSD. However, while it has a role in facilitating CSO opinion, it is ultimately a government institution and not an autonomous civil society organisation.

Mobilising constituency support

Despite fairly high recognition of civil society and its activities amongst the public and the importance of voluntarism to CSOs maintaining adequate numbers of human resources, CSOs are poorly supported by the community and many do not have broad membership base. This impacts directly on two areas of civil society.

At the grassroots level, poor performance by CSOs in communicating with the community, including local stakeholders in strategy and programme planning, in order to building their constituencies, has a negative effect on organisational sustainability. Greater community support would translate into various forms of material and financial assistance, lowering dependency on project support and aiding longer-term financial planning.

Low public mobilisation also contributes to difficulties for CSOs engaged in watchdog activities. This is a problem encountered more by national NGOs promoting human rights, minority issues, anti corruption campaigns and the like, for which gaining majority public awareness of, and active support is difficult. By definition, watchdog activities imply a partnership between citizens and CSOs in order to bring pressure to bear; the watchdog combines, in effect, public advocacy and formal monitoring. As watchdog activities bring the CSOs into a relationship of tension and potential conflict with the state, the government is ordinarily unwilling to fund these activities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Summary of strategic issues of relevance to the project

The existence of a well-developed institutional framework aimed at securing environment supportive of civil society development, is a key strategic resource for the project. All the services planned within the SIPU Project are already being delivered within the framework with the support of the government or independently. Thus, in Croatia, the project needs to adapt its approach, to offer support to the existing institutional structures to the largest extent possible and to avoid creating parallel service structures or duplicating services. Support and synergy are the two key elements of approach that we believe can produce long-lasting results in Croatia.

4.2 Needs assessment conclusions

The civil society environment

- Croatia has developed a generally supportive legal and institutional framework for governing the establishment and operations of CSOs, which complies with international standards and represents some of the best practice regionally.
- While currently there is no law governing public benefit status and its precise definition remains unclear, it is expected that draft law will be presented for public consultations in early 2010.
- There is a need to improve the legal framework regarding social contracting and social entrepreneurship.
- Significant funds available from state sources provide the major part of CSO finance in Croatia. Most foreign donors have phased out their support to civil society, leaving the EU as the most important international funding source for CSOs.
- Knowledge on grant-making within public administration bodies may be improved. In particular, there is a need to promote understanding and implementation of the Code of Good Practice, Standards and Benchmarks for the Allocation of Funding for Programmes and Projects of NGOs.
- Corporate philanthropy is underdeveloped in Croatia, largely as a result of lack of awareness among both businesses and CSOs of tax deductions available for businesses wishing to donate.
- A National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development, with yearly action plans is in place for the period 2006-2011. The Strategy's full implementation would significantly secure civil society's role as a meaningful promoter of participatory democracy and human rights and as a competent monitor of civic liberties public policies in the context of Croatia's final accession phase.

- Work remains to strengthen good governance and transparency within the public sector and also within civil society. Work in this field could contribute to fight against corruption and to prevention of discrimination.
- There is a need to increase public participation in decision-making and strengthen CSOs' interaction with a variety of state institutions (e.g. Parliament).
- Although the public image of civil society in Croatia is generally favourable, active support of CSOs by citizens, including voluntary participation in activities, remains at a low level. Advocacy and rights-based CSOs in particular do not enjoy broad-based public support.

CSO organisational capacities

- Civil society in Croatia is well developed in terms of the number of CSOs per capita.
- The capacity of civil society to influence public and political opinion and shape social policy is still rather limited. Organisations with the necessary capacities to promote alternative views in public are low in number.
- There is a concentration of well developed, highly visible and fully professional NGOs working in Zagreb at the national level, usually carrying out advocacy and capacity building activities on a range of rights-based issues. Croatia is well furnished with NGO champions of human rights and, by extension organisations monitoring governance and the democratic process, as well as holding the government accountable.
- Internal democracy is often absent or poorly developed in CSOs, impacting negatively on organisational strategy and accountability, often owing to weakly functioning governing boards and over-dependence on strong executive officers.
- Although most CSOs participate in some form of informal network, civil society is not exploiting the potential influence of networking to be gained through concerted action on the decision-making process. There is a need for the development of formal issue-based coalitions and networks which strive to achieve long-term programmatic objectives.
- Most CSOs do not have the requisite technical and absorption capacities to access EU funds and to implement EU-funded projects.
- CSOs have limited monitoring and evaluation capacities regarding both their own project activities, and activities of public administrations (especially the delivery of public services)

4.3 Recommendations for the regional project work plan

- Establish a regional advisory group of local experts drawn from the 8 IPA countries, covering a range of technical skills and knowledge of use in the application for, and

management of, EU projects; for example, project cycle management, project preparation, and the administration of the projects.

- Organise regional fora of CSOs and various other joint CSO activities with the aim of strengthening and encouraging regional networking of CSOs and dialog between CSOs in the project region.
- Supply capacity building to CSOs working at the regional level in advanced project and financial management, fundraising and PCM skills etc – via training, workshops, conferences and study visits – in order to raise their capacity to absorb EU funds.
- Facilitate better communication between different grant-making organizations (national and local government, business sector) with CSOs and encourage their cooperation.
- Ensure that best practice from project countries is shared by national offices, while ensuring that differences in context between the countries are recognised and taken into account.

4.4 Recommendations for the country specific work plan

- Supply training and education on grant-making and the management of grant schemes to those civil servants in ministries and public institutions charged with cooperation with civil society and public employees.
- Support ongoing initiatives in public administration bodies to increase their capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation – of CSO activities and CSO implementation of government-funded projects and contracts.
- Assist the GOFCNGOs to support Ministry of Public Administration in improving the existing Registry of associations (which is the most comprehensive database of CSOs), adding a greater range and depth of information on each entry. The development of the Registry could assist the analytical capacities of public administration bodies which make use of the Registry's data. At the same time, the Registry could become a valuable tool for increasing CSOs' visibility.
- In order to enhance CSO capacities to access EU funding, establish mechanisms for ensuring that CSOs are fully informed about EU funding opportunities, rules and guidelines. Provide direct assistance to CSOs in project preparation and during project implementation (in particular regarding project visibility and project administration), possibly by means of introducing Quality Assurance System for Non-profit Organisations.
- Arrange a one-day CSO workshop or conference to present best practices identified by the Office for Cooperation with NGOs in a recent evaluation of 23 projects

financed under CARDS 2003 and CARDS 2004.³² The workshop would serve to disseminate information, but also to identify lessons for the future, which could then be included in the final publication;

- Arrange a series of study visits and one-day seminars between CSO project implementers of PHARE 2006 (whose projects are all to be completed by April 2010) and CSOs awarded grant support from IPA 2008 (new of which is expected during the first half of 2010) in order to assist knowledge transfer to improve project management and ultimately, enhance chances and quality of project impact.
- Assist the GOfCNGOs in programming future support to CSOs in Croatia. For example, by facilitating the CCSD meeting that should provide input for the sectoral analysis for IPA 2010, October 2009).
- Provide opportunities for increased CSOs visibility, especially in the context of EU integration. Of particular relevance would be greater publicity for civil society projects to strengthen good governance, as well as efforts from CSOs to increase civil society's transparency and accountability. The project could assist particularly through research and the issuing of publications.
- The National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development covers the period 2006-2011. The CCSD has a remit to conduct regular monitoring of the Strategy's implementation. The project could assist in the final evaluation of the Strategy implementation, as well as in the preparation of the new strategy on civil society, for the period after 2011, including participation in sectoral analyses and planning events, scheduled to start from autumn 2010.

³² The GOfCNGOs is preparing compendium of best practices from the 23 projects, which are in the areas of good governance and the rule of law, NGOs as social service provider and the capacity-building of CSOs working in the areas of environmental protection and sustainable development.

Annex 1 Acronyms use in the text

CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction Development and Stabilisation
CESI	Centre for Education, Counselling and Research
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DfID	UK Department for International Development
DIS	Decentralised Management System
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
GOFCNGOs	Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
CCSD	Council for Civil Society Development
NFCSD	National Foundation for Civil Society Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PHARE	Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies
PWD	Person With Disability
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Annex 2 Research methodology

The needs assessment is based primarily on desk research conducted in the period between September 21st and October 16th, 2009 by Ms. Aida Bagić, SIPU International Resident Advisor for Croatia, and Ms. Irena Slunjski, SIPU International Project Officer. The aim of the research was not to give a comprehensive overview of the current status of civil society development in Croatia, but to provide the most important information on the context in which the TACSO project will need to operate. The list of references is provided in the Annex 9.

Desk research was supplemented by direct consultations with relevant civil society actors, either through individual or group interviews, in person or via telephone and e-mail. Most of the consultations took the form of semi-structured interviews, without recourse to a set of uniform, direct questions. The main topic of each interview, however, was the opinion of the interviewee as to how the TACSO project could contribute to current efforts towards strengthening the capacity of CSOs in Croatia. 31 people were consulted in total from 23 organisations which included leading national NGOs from the capital city, NGOs from smaller towns and rural areas, NGOs from the most developed Croatian regions and from the war-affected areas, as well as representatives of public administration bodies, civil society development consultants and other interested parties.

Due to the time constraints and limited resources owing to the late establishment of the TACSO Croatia office,³³ it was not possible to carry out a series of CSO focus groups, as suggested in the project methodology. Instead, the consultants used opportunities at various civil society-related events to gather information for the assessment. The list of persons consulted is provided in the Annex 8.

The authors of the needs assessment relied considerably on their extensive experience as activists, researchers and consultants in the area of civil society development, in Croatia and regionally. They also utilized their personal social networks and opened a Facebook group (“Jučer, danas, sutra”) which temporarily served as the initial project information board. It was also used as a kind of virtual focus group since the members have been invited to give their opinion on the achievements and impacts generated by CSOs in Croatia; challenges faced by the CSO community in the past; strategies to overcome challenges in the future; suggestions on the TACSO project could assist in this overcoming. The group attracted 62 members, most of them involved with civil society development as individual activists, CSOs founders, active CSOs members, consultants etc. Unfortunately, only 8 public responses, open to all users of the group, were received. The responses have been integrated into the needs assessment report.

³³ The Croatia team was finally operational only on the 5th October 2009, whereas the other project country teams commenced work in August.

Annex 3 Not-for-profit media sources in Croatia

Baranja.NET, a project implemented by the Association Baranjski Civilni Centar (BRICC), which provides a site where CSOs can publicise themselves and activities to the general public. It consists of announcements, news items, forums and video clips. <http://www.baranja.net>.

Dialogue for Sustainable Energy, a project implemented by the Association DOOR. The goal of the project is to initiate a more promising cooperation between NGO concerned with environmental protection and the expert community regarding important energy issues, <http://www.door.hr>

Gay.Hr – project running by Association Iskorak, providing all relevant information on gay and lesbian issues (lifestyle, health issues, coming out, news, events, and legal aid). <http://www.gay.hr/mag/>

H-Alter - an independent web portal run by the Association for Independent Media Culture. Its purpose is to provide unbiased public information about relevant events in Croatia and world, with emphasis on NGOs events. The web site gathers leading figures and opinion makers, not only from NGOs, but also from public life in Croatia. <http://www.h-alter.org>

Kulturpunkt, run by Network of associations Klubtura/Clubture, a network of non-profit, inclusive, participative organizations promoting and encouraging an independent cultural sector. The portal covers independent cultural events in all SE European countries. It also provides a space for civic initiatives active in lobbying and advocacy, and promoting citizens participation in the social and political decision-making process. Focus areas include: youth, urban culture, civic activism and new technologies. <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr>

Pomakonline – Magazine for Social Development – run by the association Slap - promotes social and non-profit entrepreneurship, inter-sectoral cooperation, NGO sustainability and education for NGOs in all the above fields. Focus on regions of Slavonia and Baranja in northern Croatia. <http://www.pomakonline.com>

RadioNET, a project implemented by Association for Development of Radio Programs. The site's main role is to produce informative and discussion-based programmes on national and local issues for local radio stations. <http://www.radionet.hr>

ZaMirZINE, an online newspaper, maintained by ZaMirNet, association, dedicated to developing civil society, promoting a culture of peace and the idea of sustainable development in Croatia and the region. ZaMirNET supports individuals, organizations, and social movements in the strategic application of technologies to solve social problems. Special competencies are: ICT4D (Information and Communication Technology for Developmental Projects), E-Learning, and Gender evaluation methodology for ICT projects. <http://www.zamirzine.net/>

Annex 4 CSOs Databases

Databases operated by governmental institutions

Ministry of Public Administration (www.uprava.hr) maintains several on-line registries of various types of CSOs:

Type of CSO and web access	Total number of entries on October 13, 2009.
Citizens' associations: www.uprava.hr/RegistarUdruga/	38822
Catholic Church: www.uprava.hr/PravneOsobeKatolickeCrkve/	1972
Religious communities: www.uprava.hr/RegistarVjerskihZajednica/	50
National minorities councils: www.uprava.hr/RegistarVNM /	308
Foundations: www.uprava.hr/RegistarZaklada/	145
Foreign associations: www.uprava.hr/RegistarStranihUdruga/	129
Political parties: www.uprava.hr/RegistarPolitickihStranaka/	109
Funds: www.uprava.hr/RegistarFundacija/	11

Their registration is regulated by different laws, so that the collection of data depends on the specific type of CSO. The data are entered by the staff of public administration bodies at different levels (for association this is mostly at the level of county). While this can be considered the most comprehensive database (t.i. databases), there are problems with regular updating of data and with establishing an accurate number of active organizations (there are estimates that out of some thirty-eight thousand associations at most one third is active).

Ministry of Finance (www.mfin.hr) is in the process of establishing a Registry of not-for-profit organizations; it is not available on-line yet.

Three DBs maintained by the Government's Office for Cooperation with NGOs:

1. Review of financial support to associations provided by foreign donors (including EU funds) and public administration bodies at all levels since the year 2004. Searchable according to the type of donors, level of government, name of organizations, name of the project or program and the name of the project leader. Available at: <http://www.uzuvrh.hr/potpore.aspx?pageID=58>

2. DB of European CSOs (based on the [EC Register of interest representatives](http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regrin/) <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regrin/>), searchable by area of operation and the organization's name, has a purpose of assisting Croatian CSOs in establishing partnerships and networking with EU-based organizations. Available at: <http://www.uzuvrh.hr/udrugaEN.aspx?pageID=62>

3. DB of civil society organizations representatives with the state institutions and consultative bodies. Searchable by state institutions, consultative bodies and representatives' names. Available at: <http://www.uzuvrh.hr/drzavnatijela-savjeti-clanovi.aspx>

DB maintained by the National Foundation for Development of Civil Society provides an overview of financial support to CSOs since 2004. Searchable according to the year, name of the organization, name of the project, name of the person responsible for the project and the seat of the organizations. Available at: http://zaklada.civilnodrustvo.hr/financial_support/search

Databases operated by CSO service organisations

Database of associations (www.udruga.hr) maintained by the Regional Youth Info Center (founded by Youth Association Step Forward from Rijeka) is based on the data available from the Central Office of Public Administration (as of July 2009 this is the Ministry of Public Administration). The introductory note states that the data are not necessarily accurate. The database can be searched according to the counties and according to the area of work, same as the on-line Registry book available on the Ministry of Public administration Web site. The current number of entries is 36,282, which is less than the number of entries in the official Registry book (39,064 on November 10, 2009). In difference to the official Registry, there is an option for associations to comment on the database and to report changes in their status. It is not clear, however, whether the entries are updated. Also, there is an option to search for active associations in Primorsko-Goranska County (where the Regional Youth Info Center is based).

"Little Database of Associations" (www.udruga-mi.hr/udruga.php or www.programstep.info/mala-baza-udruga) is maintained by Association MI, regional support centre from Split. The current number of entries is 674, whereas more than one third are from Split-Dalmatia County (273). Associations can register themselves by fulfilling an on-line questionnaire. DB is searchable according to the areas of work, counties and towns.

Database of human rights groups (including women's rights groups) (<http://udrugazora.hr/taxonomy/term/14>), maintained by the Association Zora from Čakovec, provides detailed information for 31 NGO committed to the advancement of women's rights and human rights in general. The entries are sorted out by counties and currently, due to the small number of entries, there are no special search options. Data are collected via questionnaire available for download on the Web site.

Annex 5 Geographic distribution of associations in Croatia

Table 3. Distribution of associations according to the counties

REGION/COUNTY	number	%
<u>Central Croatia</u>		
City of Zagreb	8580	22,07
Primorje-Gorski Kotar	3112	8
Zagreb County	2247	5,78
Sisak-Moslavina	1526	3,92
Varaždin	1440	3,70
Karlovac	1145	2,94
Bjelovar-Bilogora	1111	2,85
Koprivnica-Križevci	1059	2,72
Krapina-Zagorje	1020	2,62
Međimurje	967	2,48
Lika-Senj	467	1,20
<u>Littoral (Dalmatia and Istria)</u>		
Split-Dalmatia	3492	8,98
Istria	2061	5,30
Dubrovnik-Neretva	1478	3,80
Zadar	1166	3
Šibenik-Knin	985	2,53
<u>Slavonia</u>		
Osijek-Baranja	2903	7,47
Vukovar-Syrmia	1488	3,82
Brod-Posavina	1178	3,03
Virovitica-Podravina	759	1,95
Požega-Slavonia	675	1,73
TOTAL	38,859	100

Source. Min. of Public Administration: www.uprava.hr

Annex 6 Programme for Regional Development and Strengthening of CSOs

National Foundation for Civil Society Development in cooperation with five implementing CSO networks:

Programme "Emisija" (<http://www.e-misija.info>) Counties: Karlovac, Krapina-Zagorje, Sisak-Moslavina, Zagreb and City of Zagreb. Implementing partners: Centre for Civil Initiatives (Zagreb City) and Association IKS (Petrinja, Sisačko-moslavačka County)

Programme "Jako" (<http://programjako.info>) Counties: Bjelovarsko-bilogorska, Koprivničko-križevačka, Koprivnica and Varaždin . Implementing partners: Association ACT (Čakovec, Međimurje County) and K.V.A.R.K. (Križevci, Križevačko-koprivnička County)

Programme "MRRAK" (<http://mrrak.info>) Counties: Istra, Ličko-senjska and County Primorsko-goranska. Implementing partners: Association for Civil Society Development SMART (Rijeka, Primorsko-goranska County), Association Delta (Rijeka, Primorsko-goranska County) and Association for Civil Society Development Pokretač (Korenica, Ličko-senjska County).

Programme "Step" (<http://www.programstep.info>) Counties: Dubrovačko-neretvanska, Splitsko-dalmatinska, Šibensko-kninska and Zadar County. Implementing partners: Association MI (Split, Splitsko-dalmatinska County) in partnership with Association for Secretaries and Accountants in School UTIRUŠ (Trogir, Splitsko-dalmatinska County)

Programme "Šalter" (<http://www.salter.com.hr/>) Counties: Brodsko-posavska, Osječko-baranjska, Požeško-slavonska, Virovitičko-podravska and Vukovar County. Program is Implementing partners: PRONI Centre, Volunteer Centar Osijek and P.G.D.I. Beli Manastir (Project for civic democratic initiatives)

Annex 7 CSO advocacy networks in Croatia

- Koalicija za zaštitu i promociju ljudskih prava (Coalition for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights) – www.lsc.hr/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1
- Koordinacija za djecu u Hrvatskoj (Coordination for Children in Croatia) – www.koordinacija-zadjecu.com/index.htm
- Mreža ekosela Balkana (Balkan Eco village network) – www.ekosela.org/modules/news/
- Mreža mladih Hrvatske – MMH (Croatian Youth Network) – www.mmh.hr/
- Platforma za izgradnju mira u RH (Platform for Peace Building in the Republic of Croatia) – www.izgradnja-mira.net/index.php
- Regionalni forum udruga Slavonije i Baranje (Regional Forum of CSOs of Slavonija) – www.forumudruga.hr
- Savez udruga Klubtura (Alliance of associations “Clubture” – Culture clubs) – www.clubture.org/FrontPage/
- Zeleni forum (Green Forum) – www.zeleni-forum.org/bin/view/Zeleniforum
- Ženska mreža Hrvatske (Croatia Women's Network) – www.zenska-mreza.hr/

Annex 8 List of persons consulted

Name	Organisation
Tatjana Čorlija Milivojević	Office for Cooperation with NGOs
Mirela Despotović	Center for Civil Initiatives (CCI)
Srđan Dvornik	Independent consultant
Gordana Forčić	Association SMART
Sanja Galeković	CFCS (Central Finance and Contracting Agency)
Jaša Jarec	Office for Cooperation with NGOs
Suzana Kunac*	B.a.B.e. Women's Human Rights Group*
Romana Kuzmanić Oluić*	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Department for Human Rights
Vesna Lendić-Kasalo	Office for Cooperation with NGOs
Ines Loknar-Mijatović*	Government's Office for Human Rights
Mladen Majetić	Independent consultant
Palma Miličević	Association Iks, Petrinja
Jagoda Munić*	Green Action
Slađana Novota	Association SMART
Gordana Obradović-Dragišić*	CESI – Centre for Education, Counseling and Research
Andrijana Parić	Razbor d.o.o.
Lidija Pavić-Rogošić*	Assoc.n Odraz & Croatian Rural Development Network
Teo Petričević	Autonomous Center – Act, Čakovec
Cvjetana Plavša-Matić	National Foundation for Civil Society Development
Merlena Plavšić	Association Suncokret – Pula
Slaven Rašković*	Documenta – Centre for Dealing with Past
Slobodan Škopelja	Association Mi, Split
Marina Škrabalo	MAP Savjetovanja d.o.o.
Anamarija Sočo*	Croatian Youth Network (CYN)
Suzana Sušanj*	Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity
Andreja Tonč	ADD Tim d.o.o.
Martina Ugljik	Civic Centre Baranja
Igor Vidačak	Office for Cooperation with NGOs
Andrija Vranić	Independent consultant
Danijela Vuković	Association SMART
Ljiljana Zahrastnik Žužul*	Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity

* Participant in the sectoral analysis for IPA 2010 programming, organized by GOINGOs and facilitated by TACSO Croatia Resident Advisor, on October 29th, 2009.

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³⁴ Laws and other official documents in Croatian language are available electronically at the website of the Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia at www.nn.hr. Here we provide links only to the English translations.