

## WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES?

In 2007, civil society development and civil society dialogue have been laid down as one of the priorities of the Enlargement process. With the publication of Communication “[The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe’s Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations](#)” in 2012, the European Commission (EC) laid down the set of preconditions that have to be in place in a country for functioning of the civil society.

For the Enlargement countries, these conditions were in 2013 “translated” into more detailed tool for monitoring of the civil society development for Enlargement countries – [the Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries, 2014-2020 \(EU Civil Society Guidelines\)](#). A similar framework for media – the [Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries](#) – has been laid out in 2014. Consequently, since 2014 civil society is treated as a separate part of Political criteria in the EC Annual Country Reports and has as of 2008 been supported through a one single comprehensive financial framework – the Civil Society Facility (CSF).

The EU Civil Society Guidelines form the **result** and **monitoring framework** guiding both assessing progress via the EC Annual Country Reports and directing financial assistance, mainly through the CSF. In this, the Commission seeks to support both the enabling or conducive environment and civil society organizations’ (CSOs) development and their capacities to be able to participate actively and contribute to the EU integration and reform process. More concretely, through defining concrete objectives and targets, the EC seeks to support development of an appropriate legal, judicial and administrative environment for exercising the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. This includes rights for CSOs such as formalised, transparent and non-discriminatory registration procedures, free and independent operation and co-operation between citizens and the absence of disproportionate or unwarranted state interference etc..

The development of the EU Civil Society Guidelines through an inclusive process led by civil society and inclusive of Government representatives (as observers) was a crucial process enabling for both public authorities and civil society to come together and build **joint understanding** of what enabling environment and what policies and measures need to be taken to improve it. The Guidelines now broadly define the standards that the public authorities are expected to achieve in terms of civil society development and media freedom to achieve EU members status. In short, the Guidelines now present **the soft civil society Acquis**.

## HOW WAS THE MONITORING DONE SO FAR?

For the period under the current EU Civil Society Guidelines, the monitoring process facilitated by TACSO 2 project, included the utilization of existing civil society assessment reports on the enabling environment (e.g. BCSDN Monitoring Matrix reports) and public opinion analysis about the perceived CSO capacities and gaps. All of these were collated into the TACSO Need Assessment for each country, including also a traffic light-type visualisation of the assessed state under the individual indicators. No specific detailed methodology of data-gathering and analysis to guide the assessment and enabling comparativeness of the situations between IPA Beneficiaries was developed. Only general methodology was put in place to guide the traffic-light visualisation.

In the current phase of EU TACSO 3 project, a self-standing methodology of data-gathering and analysis including also testing of qualitative indicators and methods of data-gathering has been

developed and tested for the monitoring of the situation for 2019. The traffic-light assessments remain to be refined and in need of proper methodology.

## **WHY THE REVIEW PROCESS?**

The first ever EU Civil Society Guidelines were put in place for the seven-year EU budget period cycle of 2014-2020. The seven-year implementation warranted a reflection on how the EU CS Guidelines have oriented the EU support to civil society and how they have contributed to improving the conditions in which civil society works and its overall development in the seven Enlargement countries. In order for the EU, together with national Governments, civil society and other stakeholders, to have clear framework for monitoring the progress and directing its assistance to civil society in the next seven-year cycle between 2021-2027, the new EU Civil Society Guidelines are being defined based on achieved results, lesson-learned and current state of play in the region.

## **WHAT WILL BE REVIEWED?**

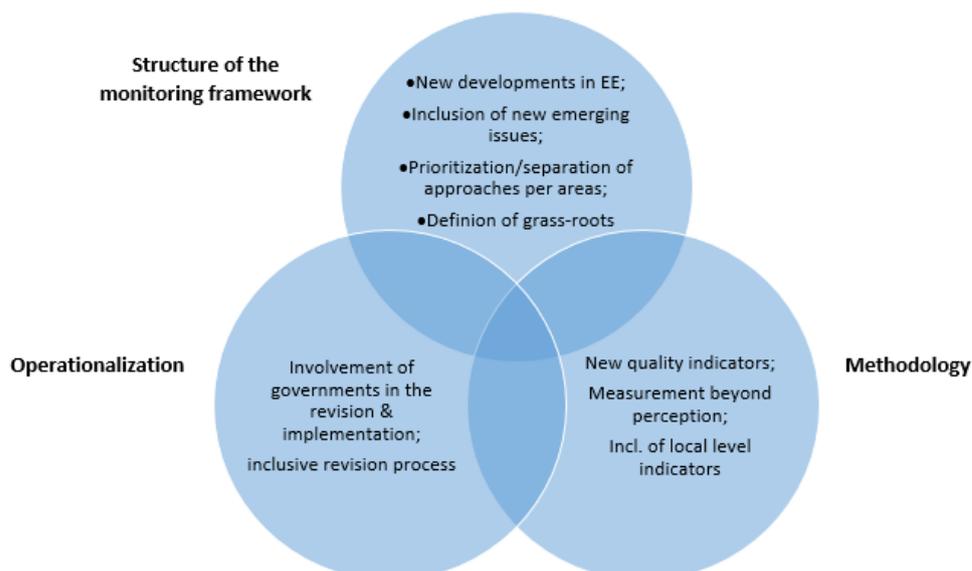
Based on the outlined process and consultation so far, it was made clear that the focus on the review needs to be on the result framework defining the objectives, results and indicators that measure the state of affairs in the field. Consequently, the reviewed EU Civil Society Guidelines encompasses the review of the three crucial elements:

(i) **Structure of the monitoring framework**, including reorganization of objectives and linked indicators, introduction of new emerging issues and mainstreaming the reviewed framework against the EU Acquis and IPA III;

(ii) **Methodology guiding the monitoring and assessment**, including both the process of data-gathering, their interpretation and analysis so that assessments are comparative and methodologically correct. Here, methodology of traffic-light assessment (if relevant), data-sets against available data and data-bank of international and regional body of human rights (HR) and related law as well as country laws and analysis can be prepared;

(iii) **Operationalization** of the new system of data-gathering, analysis and presentation of the assessments ideally supported through a creation of a one-stop-shop on-line tool to provide for a clear, effective and sustainable monitoring process beyond the life of EU TACSO 3.

**Table 1: Elements of the EU Civil Society Guidelines review**



The starting point of the review is **the current EU CS Guidelines document**. The purpose is to improve its content, overall structure of the current framework as well as lay clear, realistic, sound and effective methodology for data-gathering and analysis, which is operational and adds value and directs both the EU's, civil society's and public authorities' action in improving the enabling environment and capacity of CSOs.

The inclusion and local ownership over the EU CS Guidelines and its process are the key to the success of its revision. Used as **advocacy tool** by civil society, the Guidelines provides for raising awareness as well as standard- and norm-setting tool. Thus, it is important to develop a system and tools to easily **communicate** and **present** the reviewed EU CS Guidelines to both decision-makers and wider public.

Modestly only, the EU CS Guidelines has provided for **streamlining of national instruments** (strategies, measures, rules etc.) and has affected policy actions that improve the enabling environment in **national and local contexts**. Most notably, this has taken place through EU-funded national Technical Assistance projects in the area of support to civil society development when developing national strategies for civil society development and cooperation. The reviewed Guidelines, offers the possibility to fully streamline this via operationalizing the Guidelines monitoring process through an **on-line tool** that would provide for linkage through efforts of EU-funded TA efforts and communicate clearly the monitoring results in consistent and on-stop-shop manner.

## WHAT IS THE TIMELINE AND REVIEW STEPS?

The timeline includes the following steps:

- (i) Formulation and preparation of a draft **proposal** and its update based on the received inputs;
- (ii) **Consultations with** all relevant stakeholders, incl. thematic, country and local level to gather further inputs.
- (iii) **Finalisation** of the Guidelines for EU support to CSOs in the enlargement region, 2021-2027

1. Regional Civil Society Forum, 22-23 January, 2020 - **general discussion**

and **WG on 3 areas – initial input**

2. Internal **Commission thematic discussion** (CiSoNet, etc.)

3. **First draft** the Guidelines preparation

4. Conduct of **country and thematic stakeholder and open on-line consultations\***

5. Review of input and **preparation of 2<sup>nd</sup> draft**

6. Internal Commission **consolidation of Guidelines**

7. **Adoption**, publication & promotion

\* Depending on COVID-19 situation



## WHAT IS THE SITUATION THE GUIDELINES IS ADDRESSING?

The situation is currently monitored under the Guidelines for the period 2014-2020. EU TACSO 3 project undertook in-depth analysis for the period 2018-2019 for which the report is available [here](#). The project will be conducting an analysis of the situation for 2020 with focus on effects of COVID-19 on enabling environment and civil society development and resilience. The report should be published in late spring/early summer 2021.