

Executive Summary

Rapid Assessment of the EEA Grants 2009-
2014 Civil Society Programmes

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Disclosure Statement

The views and opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the client, EEA Grants, or that of its partners. Rather they are the direct product of the methodology applied to the assignment.

Executive Summary

From 2009 to 2014, EEA Grants' non-governmental organisation (NGO¹) funding, supported some 3000 interventions and constituted an investment of €160 million plus €13 million in in co-financing, pursued a strategy to help strengthen civil society actors and secure their important role in the democratic process.² This financial support also aimed to ensure that international and European commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democratic institution-building, and sustainable development were met or strengthened.³ Shifts in local context threaten the civil society sector—and, thus, the civic space—meaning that supporting NGOs has become increasingly important.

Nordic Consulting Group conducted a rapid assessment of civil society funding by EEA Grants from November 2018 to June 2019. The assessment examined the grants' institutional set-up and support provided to civil society work on democratic principles and fundamental rights. The assessment also investigated efforts to build the capacity and resilience/sustainability of civil society.

Overall, this assessment has aimed to document achievements, identify the main factors leading to results, and pinpoint a set of lessons learned and actionable recommendations. It focused on seven of the 10 outcomes that are pursued by the EEA Grants NGO funding (see box).

EEA Grants outcomes of focus for this assignment

1. Active citizenship fostered
2. Increased involvement of NGOs in policy- and decision-making processes with local, regional, and national governments
3. Cross-sectorial partnerships developed
4. Democratic values, including human rights, promoted
5. Advocacy and watchdog role developed
6. Developed networks and coalitions of NGOs working in partnership
7. Strengthened capacity of NGOs and an enabling environment for the sector promoted.

Methodology

The rapid assessment focused on seven countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. In addition to a document review, the assessment team collected original data using interviews, focus groups, and a series of online surveys. A total sample of 146 projects was closely assessed, with an additional 48 included in the statistical analysis only. Overall, the findings were consistent across the individual countries and themes; therefore, the team is confident its findings reflect the EEA Grants NGO funding experience more broadly. Importantly, the findings detailed in this report, as well as the lessons learned and recommendations, are a product of the data collected, including data analysis/interpretation discussions with those interviewed, and do not reflect the unsubstantiated or expert opinions, views or perspectives of the evaluation team.

Key Findings and Lessons Learned

Institutional Set-Up

The fund operator (FO) plays a key role in the institutional set-up of the funding. Therefore, identifying the right FO can considerably influence a programme's likelihood of success. The assessment identified four FO characteristics as decisive:

¹ In this report, at the request of the client, the terms NGO and Civil Society Organization (CSO) are used interchangeably.

² EEA and Norway Grants. (2010). *Programmed areas 2009-2014. Blue book*, p. 26-27.

³ EEA and Norway Grants. (2010). *Programmed areas 2009-2014. Blue book*, p. 26-27.

- **Capacity and resources.** FOs must be able to fulfil their obligations, meaning they must have a solid understanding of the NGO sector and the experience and capacity to manage grant-making programmes. They must also have the human and time resources to actively engage with and support the project promoters (PPs) in their respective countries. The resources required to do this should not be underestimated: A large proportion of PPs are weak institutions that need considerable attention and support to meet their programmatic and administrative requirements for the funds received.
- **Credentials.** FOs must have the right ‘credentials’. Strong organisations with solid knowledge of the civil society sector and subject matter competence can play an important role in reducing the threat of government encroachment.
- **Independence.** FOs must be independent of the government according to EEA Grants requirements, and this should not be changed. However, FOs must also be able to carefully navigate their role as independent actors to ensure their organisations and PPs are able to work freely.
- **Ability to foster links.** Time and again, the importance of networks, coalitions, and collaborations has emerged as a crucial contributor to project-level success. However, PPs have a limited ability to identify and develop these connections on their own. Therefore the FOs’ ability to foster links between PPs is important. In this context, there is a pressing need for FOs to focus considerable time, attention, and effort on building coalitions, networks, and collaborations. Overall, respondents emphasised the value of real collaborations. Indeed, a number of collaborations and partnerships initiated with EEA Grants NGO funding continued after funding ended – in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania - showing the partnerships could demonstrate sufficient added value to warrant continuation. The best results from collaborations are achieved, according to PPs, when multiple projects target the same concern (or facets of the same concern) from multiple angles and intervention modalities. This could include, for example, engaging youth as potential volunteers and improving the knowledge of their rights and obligations, while simultaneously engaging them in issues such as the negative impact of hate speech.

In addition, this rapid assessment found that, according to both FOs and PPs, targeting organisations locally requires a concerted effort and that the best method for this varies depending on the country and thematic area. Therefore, FOs must develop a case-specific strategy to reach organisations. Examples of how to do this successfully could include mapping the NGO sector first, approaching grassroots organisations through local community associations or popular radio programmes, reaching out to local governments, etc.

Although not strictly relevant to the institutional set up or specific to the FO, it is also worth noting that efforts to address systemic issues faced by civil society actors, and specifically when working in a restricted civic space, the development of a ‘roadmap’ that can serve to guide civil society actors towards joint common objectives. Poland’s experience in the development, use and value of a roadmap showed the positive aspects of such an approach.

Flexible Responses to Emerging Needs

Emerging needs can be precipitated by changes in context or by the identification of an existing issue that had not attracted attention. Few projects specifically aimed to respond to changing needs. The efforts that did exist focused on developing specific activities or products to address a well-defined issue: action grants in Hungary, for example, allowed for limited funds to focus on advocacy efforts to respond to changing or emerging needs. Another example was the permission to reallocate unspent funds in both Hungary and Romania.

Overall, the EEA Grants NGO funding has demonstrated a degree of flexibility that has been important but not been consistently utilised to achieve the maximum benefit. Importantly, the costs of flexibility should not go unnoticed; a larger number of grants means more administrative and oversight responsibilities. In addition, grant time frames (i.e. too short implementation periods) have been a concern, particularly for smaller PPs with limited, if any, staff. Combined, this demonstrates that EEA Grants NGO funding has

opportunities to respond to changing needs, but more concerted efforts must be made if this is to be a priority.

Reaching Smaller and Remote Organisations

Attention to smaller and/or remote organisations is important because a considerable proportion of organisations are small and populations in rural areas, and smaller urban areas away from the capital, are comparatively underserved. Overall, the assessment found that smaller and rural/smaller urban centre organisations tend to have more limited capacity and experience. This is important because the assessment also found that stronger CSOs are more effective members of the civil society sector and contribute to its strengthening.

Across the assessment countries, there were some clear successes and good practices on targeting small and rural organisations: ‘twinning’ larger urban-based organisations with rural smaller ones (e.g., in Hungary), making specific efforts to reach rural and smaller potential PPs (e.g., in Lithuania), and training all potential PPs, including smaller and rural ones (e.g., in Poland). In many instances, building capacity of these type of organisations can require considerable time and attention, as organisations that are small or far from the capital may experience clear challenges attending training in terms of time or expenses for what might be considered ‘non-essential activities.’ To achieve success, FOs must specifically target rural and smaller organisations and accompany this with a clear effort to understand PPs’ limitations and necessary adaptation (such as ensuring reporting requirements and project implementation timelines are realistic).

Democratic Principles and Fundamental Rights

In pursuit of supporting democratic principles and fundamental rights, projects focused on one or more of the following topics: the watchdog role, advocacy, and monitoring; civic education and communicating democratic values and rights; participation, active citizenship, and good governance; and human rights and countering discrimination, as well as on-line hate speech and hate speech in generally. An overview of the type of results achieved and the factors that led to success is presented here.

Watchdog, advocacy and monitoring: activities that pursued these objectives found that demonstrating the value of the activities to all stakeholders was of considerable benefit. Indeed, across countries and experiences, PPs consistently reported their success was directly contingent on their ability to demonstrate that transparency was advantageous to decision-makers. A review of projects showed that the most meaningful ones were those that increased government accountability and that allowed both government and the general population to see that transparency is beneficial both to the public and to individual politicians and/or civil servants. Projects that successfully achieved this overarching result required that PPs work directly with politicians and public servants to secure buy-in, which was regarded as essential but difficult at times. Moreover, and specifically relating to advocacy, in Greece, where advocacy largely focused on specific issues or events, participants listed *consistency* as the single most important factor influencing success—that is, an advocacy campaign should be sustained over a long period of time. In relation to on-line hate speech, FOs across all seven countries agreed that the ability to address this issue—generally, across society—is underdeveloped and requires considerable support. Unsurprisingly, therefore, despite some successes, PPs across the countries studied felt ill equipped to effectively address on-line hate speech and felt they require more support in terms of capacity. Specific examples of successful interventions included watchdog efforts on specific areas such as voter transparency,⁴ local government budgeting,⁵ municipal-level decision-making⁶ and district level monitoring activities.⁷ Other successful

⁴ See, for example: HU05-0144—“Your Vote = My Vote / 2”

⁵ See, for example: RO09-0246—Transparency and Integrity in the Management of Local Budgets

⁶ See, for example: LT04-0028—Towards More Transparent Lithuania

⁷ See, for example: PL05-0195 - Open Lublin - Monitoring the Performance of City District Councils in Lublin

projects included activities aiming to support a more democratic process included the development of a set of standards for transparency, integrity, and responsible appointments in Bulgaria,⁸ as well as standards on public-sector financial accountability in Lithuania⁹ and the development of policies for asset recovery in Romania.¹⁰

Civic education: an overarching lesson related to these interventions is that while significant results can be achieved in terms of outputs, sustained support is needed to achieve sustainable, long-term change. Within this context, several elements were consistently useful across countries: using first-hand experiences to highlight issues faced by minority groups, simultaneously engaging different segments of the population, and applying audience-specific approaches. Using the media to promote work by CSOs was found to be a positive strategy. However, in some instances the strategy did not work, for example in Romania, where engaging the media to support democratic values and human rights was difficult because the subject was not considered marketable. There were a number of successful efforts to engage and raise awareness in the community. For example, projects which helped mobilising disenfranchised communities,¹¹ created a register of NGOs to provide an overview of ‘who does what’,¹² and promoting freedom of the media and discussing the value of a free press for diverse audiences.¹³ Other efforts successfully targeted specific audiences such as students, children, and youth. For example, efforts which focused on developing and disseminating curricula to highlight the importance of human rights and civic engagement¹⁴ and efforts focused on increasing knowledge on human rights.¹⁵ Additional successful examples included efforts that focused specifically on changing perceptions, demystification, and integration. Specific success stories of shifting popular perceptions of minority groups, specifically of Roma populations¹⁶ and asylum seekers,¹⁷ and more generally on stereotypes of minority groups,¹⁸ were found. Aligned with these efforts, others successfully aimed to promote non-discrimination. For example efforts that targeted hate speech in schools,¹⁹ building awareness of religious freedoms through the media,²⁰ or improved awareness on gender inequality through efforts targeting the NGO sector, government agencies, and the general public.²¹

Promoting active citizenship: The assessment found active citizenship does not have a long or solid history in any of the included countries, although each has a strong grassroots response to identified needs in this area. This is one reason why a large number of small organisations exist to address active citizenship. Still, despite a relatively limited history, there are some good examples of efforts pursuing this objective. For example the use of social media and on-line platforms as tools to promote active citizenship: In Hungary, social media was effectively used to reach the population and promote their active participation in the democratic process, specifically on nuclear issues related to the construction of new plants.²² In Romania, a platform for public participation through online campaigning encouraged wider civic engagement.²³ Other examples included efforts to improve engagement focused on reaching out to the general population

⁸ See, for example: BG05-0188 - The Lay Judges – Active Citizens for Real Participation in the Judicial Process

⁹ See, for example: LT04-0020–Creation and Implementation of the Model for Early Prevention and Intervention Work with Families at Risk in the Municipalities of Lithuania

¹⁰ See, for example: RO09-0064–Social Reuse of Confiscated Assets; RO09-0271–Initiative for a Clean Justice

¹¹ See HU05-0181–RehabCriticalMass - Active Citizenship

¹² See LT04-0058–Mapping of NGO Sector in Lithuania: Assessment Study with Recommendations

¹³ See RO09-0063–FreeEx Map and RO09-0053–Media Literacy for High School Students against Discrimination

¹⁴ See HU05-0300–Integration of Human Rights Education into Public Education - Civic Education; PL05-0407 - Citizen PRO; PL05-0050 - A Declaration of Kindness: I Do Not Exclude

¹⁵ See HU05-0304 - Fighting prejudice and promoting human rights in after-schools

¹⁶ See BG05-0150 - Promoting Democratic Values with the TV Programme “Small Stories from Roma World”

¹⁷ See BG05-0324 - Blowup (The Strange Other); BG05-0132 - National Media Campaign: Cuisine Against Xenophobia

¹⁸ See BG05-0136 - The Living Books

¹⁹ See LT04-0026–All Different, All Equal: Human Rights, Active Participation and Variety

²⁰ See LT04-0015–Religious Diversity Awareness and Its Dissemination in Lithuania

²¹ See LT04-0038–WIP: Women Initiative for Parity

²² See HU05-0160 - Enforcement of democratic values in connection with the construction of the new nuclear blocks of Paks

²³ See RO09-0290–DeClic - The First Romanian Platform for Online Campaigning

as donors of civil society activities,²⁴ as well as mobilising volunteers and particularly youth.²⁵ Opportunities for engagement also ventured into the broader use of tools, including social media as a platform to discuss and campaign.²⁶ Some projects looked to build civil society actors' capacity, increasing opportunities for partnerships,²⁷ building advocacy skills, and promoting the role that advocacy can play.²⁸ Other successful efforts focused specifically on specific subject areas and CSOs' valuable role in that sector;²⁹ or specific skills such as improving the watchdog function.³⁰

Human Rights and Countering Discrimination: A number of approaches were found to be particularly useful. For example, it was also noted that across all countries, the most successful interventions were those using personal histories. The experiences from Greece, Hungary, Romania, and Poland demonstrate that using multiple approaches to convey messages to hard-to-reach populations can be essential. A considerable portion of successful activities focused on mobilising and raising awareness on the rights of minority and under-served groups. Specific examples focused on empowering the target group to demand their rights be met—for example, people with disabilities³¹ and Roma populations in Hungary;³² mental health patients³³ and victims of gender-based violence in Greece;³⁴ and children who had been institutionalised in Bulgaria.³⁵ Other efforts aimed to make the general public aware of violations of rights or exclusion as a catalyst for change—for example, on the conditions faced by children with disabilities who had been institutionalised in Romania;³⁶ or focused on efforts to bring attention on the rights of minorities to specific groups, such as lawyers.³⁷ Still a couple of projects addressed economic status as a source of discrimination;³⁸ while these two examples do not address what would be commonly understood as 'protection of human rights', they do point to how wealth can translate to an inability to secure rights and participate in democratic processes. Other successful efforts to counter discrimination and promote human rights focused on challenging stereotypes and promoting integration. Specific examples of effective interventions included efforts to challenge popular perceptions on mental health issues,³⁹ gender-based violence,⁴⁰ and gender equality,⁴¹ religious freedom,⁴² and marriage equality.⁴³ Other efforts focused on the inclusion of ethnic minorities and asylum seekers, as well as on the impact of stereotypes.⁴⁴ Few

²⁴ See, for example: BG05-0294 - Enhancing the Capacity of NGOs from Varna Region for Fundraising from Private Donors and Development of a Culture of Giving

²⁵ See, for example: BG05-0150 - Promoting Democratic Values with the TV Programme "Small Stories from Roma World"; RO09-0186- Volunteering Map in Romania; and RO09-0092-Young People from Romania and Norway - Promoters of Civic Community Volunteering

²⁶ See, for example: HU05-0160 - Enforcement of democratic values in connection with the construction of the new nuclear blocks of Pak; RO-0290-DeClic - The First Romanian Platform for Online Campaigning

²⁷ See, for example: SK03-0070 - Activity Opens Door

²⁸ See, for example: HU05-0134-There Is No Cap On!

²⁹ See, for example: LT04-0038-WIP: Women Initiative for Parity

³⁰ See, for example: PL05-0158 - Watchdog Activity - permanently and professionally in the public interest

³¹ See, for example: HU05-0181-RehabCriticalMass - Active Citizenship

³² See, for example: HU05-0283-We Are Here! - Human Rights

³³ See, for example: GR04-0077 - Strengthening and Networking of Mental Health Organizations to Improve Services to the Community

³⁴ See, for example: GR04-0049 - Legal Aid and Empowerment of Gendered Violence Victims

³⁵ See, for example: BG05-0193 - Deinstitutionalization Regional Coordination Mechanism - Model for Effective Partnership and Cooperation between Civil Society Sector, Regional and Municipal Structures

³⁶ See, for example: RO09-0165-The Death Camps Next to You

³⁷ See, for example: PL05-0421 - Observatory for anti-discrimination legislation

³⁸ See, for example: SK03 - Funds for Non-governmental Organisations - Democracy and Human Rights; RO09-0131-Every Child in Preschool - Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion through Early Education

³⁹ See, for example: GR04-0077 - Strengthening and Networking of Mental Health Organizations to Improve Services to the Community; GR04-0056 - See and Act Differently

⁴⁰ See, for example: SK03-0020 - Increasing availability and quality of specialized protection, help and support for women experiencing gender based violence; GR04-0049 - Legal Aid and Empowerment of Gendered Violence Victims

⁴¹ See, for example: LT04-0038-WIP: Women Initiative for Parity

⁴² See, for example: LT04-0026-All Different, All Equal: Human Rights, Active Participation and Variety

⁴³ See, for example: PL05-0391 - Marital equality for all

⁴⁴ See, for example: BG05-0150 - Promoting Democratic Values with the TV Programme "Small Stories from Roma World"; BG05-0324 - Blowup (The Strange Other); BG05-0132 - National Media Campaign: Cuisine Against Xenophobia; BG05-0136 - The Living Books; LT04-0022- Ethnic Kitchen: Human Rights Advocacy Campaign to Combat Xenophobia, Racism, Sexism, and Ageism in Lithuania

projects specifically targeted on-line hate speech, but some did focus on hate speech in general⁴⁵ or on the specific needs of victims.⁴⁶

Overarching findings. A few elements were found to have clear implication for all themes. These included:

Research. It was generally found that research could play an important role in furthering the objectives of CSOs. A key finding suggests that funding for research efforts must be accompanied by funding to actively disseminate and advocate for the findings. Alternatively, research can be used as a basis to conduct advocacy activities that have already been planned. Engaging the media to disseminate research findings also proved a positive strategy. Notably, efforts to ensure media engagement worked best when organisations operated in networks and when they conducted advocacy to highlight their findings or used the findings to support their advocacy campaigns.

Targeting. The assessment also found that projects work best when they target multiple audiences or aspects of a problem, such as working with police, the judiciary, victims, and the general public on issues related to gender-based violence. Importantly, this does not mean that a single organisation must 'do it all'. Rather, coalitions or collaborations can be an important asset to adequately supporting or tackling a problem.

Accessing hard-to-reach populations. Hard-to-reach populations presented a clear access issue: In some instances, the project's message was not welcome; in others, the target population was hard to reach. In both cases, finding a trustworthy conduit was of key importance. Smaller organisations originating as grassroots entities play a valuable role in reaching these groups.

Capacity Building

FOs and the PPs listed overall capacity development as essential. This includes not only the administrative and subject matter expertise but also a broader range of activities on developing organisations' institutional identity. Respondents said the most important capacity development effort was sometimes not building capacity per se but rather reshaping institutions away from grant-dependency and towards a grassroots, civic model; this was particularly true in Hungary. According to some respondents, this was an essential focus that began with the EEA Grants NGO funding and that can counter the ever-changing and restrictive civil society environment. While true, this should not discount the importance and value of technical capacity, specifically in research, for example. The rapid assessment found that even in hostile environments, CSO actors can make themselves better heard when they have the skills to conduct robust research and follow this research with substantive advocacy efforts. The assessment also found that capacity development should use a wide range of tools and approaches beyond traditional seminars and workshops. Approaches such as hands-on workshops, mentoring, and study tours should be used more actively. FOs must also have the human and time resources to actively engage with and support the project promoters PPs in their respective countries. The resources required to do this should not be underestimated: A large proportion of PPs are weak institutions that need considerable attention and support to meet their programmatic and administrative requirements for the funds received. The rapid assessment also found that by actively supporting civil society actors different from themselves, FOs have developed a deeper understanding of the challenges organisations face and how to solve them, as well as of civil society more broadly—lessons that have served them in resolving their own challenges. FOs also noted that successful umbrella organisations understand their member organisations' needs, clearly articulate their capacity as an umbrella, and can use their capacity to meet members' needs in a way that meets members' expectations.

⁴⁵ See, for example: LT04-0026–All Different- All Equal: Human Rights, Active Participation and Variety; PL05-0050 - A Declaration of Kindness: I Do Not Exclude; PL05-0065 - Youth in the Web – ENTER!; PL05-0422 – Meeting with Islam

⁴⁶ See, for example: GR04-0062 - React: Recording - Intervening - Tackling Discrimination - Protecting Human Rights

The value and importance of capacity development was underscored by the finding that, particularly for smaller, less professionalised organisations, limited funding opportunities exist. Many organisations in the assessment countries are small and have limited personnel and skills, and it is important to focus on building their capacity and on providing them with grant agreements they can fulfil. For example, reporting requirements and project time frames must consider that many smaller organisations rely entirely on volunteers. Overall it was found that smaller organizations have difficulty meeting current requirements and hence often desist from applying or encounter challenges during project implementation. In line with this finding, it was also noted that the value of networks and coalitions was considerable. The findings show that these can play a crucial role in securing outcomes, and in expanding both the geographical and thematic engagement of PPs.

Recommendations (Full Format)

Based on these findings, the following recommendations can help build the EEA Grants' work in the areas noted in the terms of reference. Specifically these have been divided into recommendations for the FMO, the FO and recommendations that target both the FMO and FO. The numbers reflect those in the report and hence due to the format used in the conclusions, are not in sequential order here.

Financial Mechanism Office

- 1. FO Selection:** When selecting the FO, the FMO should focus specifically on key attributes including the potential FO's resources and capacity, credentials, independence and ability to foster links. To do this, it could consider not only the applicant's track record but also include a workshop or other participatory event in the selection process that demonstrates the potential FO's convening power amongst local NGOs. Workshops and like events have been arranged by some FOs and were found to be a realistic and effective tool/approach.
- 2. Flexibility in grant making:** The FMO should consider expanding opportunities for FOs to be flexible in using funds. Specifically, this could include smaller grants that allow for changes in response when the context shifts, as well as grants that specifically focus on capacity development. This type of flexibility in granting offered as part of the standard package of support would allow PPs to be better able to respond to changing needs, conduct smaller interventions which are manageable for them and strengthen their capacity.

Financial Mechanism Office and Fund Operators

- 3. Reaching smaller and rural⁴⁷ organizations:** The FMO should specifically direct FOs to develop a strategy to reach smaller and rural-based organisations, as well as those that are based outside major metropolitan areas. This could include, for example, conducting workshops and other events showcasing the grants and explaining application processes. In addition, the FMO should consider building flexibility into reporting processes that allow FOs to request more limited reporting from smaller organisations, and ones that are based outside the metropolitan area in either rural areas or smaller urban centres, which have limited capacity and are receiving more modest funds. This should ensure that reporting requirements encourage these organizations to apply.
- 4. Capitalizing on research, advocacy, and watchdog roles:** The FMO should openly and deliberately support research-backed advocacy efforts, and FOs should call for applications that combine research and advocacy. This may sometimes require that PPs work as part of a network, coalition, or collaboration.

Additionally, when reviewing applications for watchdog projects, FOs must clearly assess the degree to which those being 'watched' have been engaged; similarly, PPs applying for watchdog projects must ensure

⁴⁷ Reference to rural organizations in the ToR as organizations found outside the metropolitan area

they find clear mechanisms to both engage the watched party and convince them of the project's potential personal benefit. The FMO should also ensure local projects with a limited audience are specifically targeted. Since a watchdog function is a relatively new concept in these countries, focusing on a more targeted audience is one way to help demonstrate the activity's value.

The FMO should also further explore/use opportunities to facilitate FOs and PPs engaging with foreign organisations (in Norway or elsewhere) that have solid advocacy experience to share. These efforts could be included into current bilateral cooperation efforts.

9. Building capacity: FOs should expand capacity development to include not only administrative capacity and subject matter expertise but also training to help strengthen PPs' institutional identity (e.g., training on how to develop a mission statement, multiyear strategies, and tying funding applications to institutional objectives). Training provided to both FOs and PPs should use a wide range of approaches, including workshops, seminars, mentoring (institutional 'twinning'), and study tours.

Additionally, the FMO should continue to foster connections among FOs across countries, which should lead to the development of joint capacity-building efforts, such as study visits. Along the same lines, FOs should develop a plan to support exchanges among PPs both within their country and between countries; this should include workshops that bring together PPs working on the same topic and/or study visits.

10. Networks, umbrella organizations and collaborations: FOs should identify opportunities to allow PPs to come together, such as workshops, seminars, conferences, PP meetings, and online opportunities such as closed Facebook groups or WhatsApp discussion groups. The objective should be to make PPs aware of each other and foster organic collaborations and networks. Additionally, the FMO must support the active development of umbrella organisations and networks by funding collaborative efforts as projects, which should be used as opportunities to further develop members' skills and capacity.

8. Increasing specific technical capacity (on-line hate speech): The FMO should support collaborations with experienced agencies and organisations outside their project country that can engage with FOs and PPs (e.g., delivering trainings and experience-sharing). FOs should consider including experience exchanges and inter-country project 'twinning' (between beneficiary countries) to support cross-context learning.

Fund Operators

5. Types of efforts to focus on: FOs must specifically support activities that lead to an improved public perception of civil society—actively engaging grassroots and small organisations with a specific target audience (as these organisations were generally set up to respond to an identified need and the audiences already value what they do); actively pursuing research-based advocacy demonstrating the role and value of a vibrant civil society; and advertising civil society-led activities to show to the general public what CSOs do. FOs should also include advocacy-related capacity development in the activity plan, which will help PPs working in advocacy to successfully develop and implement advocacy efforts. More broadly, support for the development of a roadmap to guide civil society along a clear strategic pathway could also serve as a fruitful endeavour. The experience from Poland appears to show the success of this type of investment.

6. Addressing challenging themes: FOs should specifically support projects that promote activities which target an issue from a variety of different angles, including a wide range of target groups and employ a diverse number of methodologies or approaches.

7. Engaging the general population: FOs should specifically support activities that promote volunteerism, which will sometimes mean training PPs on how to best engage volunteers. FOs should also capitalise on the efforts of small organisations targeting specific audiences, advertising these as a way to demonstrate CSOs' utility and role. Projects that use innovative methods to engage the general population—such as film, sport, food, festivals, and other activities with a 'fun' element—should be actively encouraged.