

EEA GRANTS
NORWAY GRANTS

Thematic Report on Civil Society

Empowering NGOs to make a difference



Contents

Address	1
Prime funding schemes for civil society	2
Why focus on civil society?	3
Key achievements under NGO Funds 2004-09	5
Activities	14
Looking forward	16
Strengthening bilateral relations	18
Annex	22

The EEA Grants and Norway Grants at a glance

Through the EEA and Norway Grants, **Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway** contribute to reducing social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area (EEA) and to strengthening bilateral relations with the beneficiary countries.

Between 2004 and 2009, the three donor states made available **€1.3 billion** in EEA Grants and Norway Grants to the 12 newest EU member countries¹ and Greece, Portugal and Spain. Another **€1.79 billion** is set aside from 2009 to 2014. Norway contributes around 97% of the total funding.

Key areas of support include environment, climate change, research and scholarships, **civil society**, public health and children, gender equality, judicial capacity building and cultural heritage. This report is focused specifically on the support to NGOs and civil society.

¹ Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia

Address

Through the EEA and Norway Grants, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway contribute to the creation of a more inclusive, fair and prosperous Europe. Nowhere is this support more vital than in the area of civil society – a cornerstone of any fair and transparent democracy.

Under the Grants, the NGO Funds reach out to the core values of civil society – social justice, democratic engagement and citizens' empowerment – and have yielded important successes and achievements. The Funds have enabled NGOs not only to tackle pressing issues but also to enhance their capacity to build more sustainable societies, including through strategic partnerships.

This report, published on the occasion of the NGO stakeholder seminar in Oslo in June 2011, is a celebration of the success of the past experience and an introduction to our future – both in working with our partners in the NGO community in Central and Southern Europe, and in achieving important results together.

In a world marked by economic and political turbulence and transformations, we recognise the need for continued support to this sector. Building on the success of the funding to date, we have made an even stronger commitment to NGOs in the 2009-2014 programming. In shaping the future NGO Funds, we have

listened to the experience of our partners and taken on-board lessons learned in evaluations and consultation.

We would like to thank all who have contributed so far to making the Funds one of the flagship success stories of the EEA and Norway Grants, and for their continued engagement in strengthening civil society development in Europe.



*Ingrid Schulerud,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

Ingrid Schulerud is coordinator for the negotiations on the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the beneficiary states. The MoUs set out the framework for priorities in the beneficiary states under the EEA and Norway Grants 2009-2014

A map of Central and Southern Europe, showing countries like Norway, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Turkey. Major cities like Oslo, Stockholm, Berlin, Warsaw, Vienna, Budapest, Kiev, and Moscow are marked. The Baltic Sea, Black Sea, and Azov Sea are also labeled.

Prime funding schemes for civil society

Recognising the key role played by NGOs in promoting participatory democracy and social cohesion, bolstering civil society has been, and continues to be, one of the key areas under the grant support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

In the funding period 2004-09, €185 million was channelled to civil society through the EEA Grants and Norway Grants. Democracy building, human rights and anti-discrimination was a central focus.

The support also contributed to shaping responses on 'green' issues and raising environmental awareness in local communities, as well as financing NGOs which provide accessible services to the most vulnerable in society. Specific NGO Funds were established in 12 beneficiary states.

In the funding period 2009-14, strengthening civil society in Central and Southern Europe continues to be a top priority.

Fast facts NGO Funds 2004-09:

- **€85 million** channelled through **19 dedicated NGO Funds**. Almost 1920 projects supported which focused on:
 - Democracy, human rights, and social inclusion
 - Environment and sustainable development
 - Health, social issues and childcare
 - Cultural initiatives
- An additional **€100 million** in direct support to larger projects run by NGOs

Fast facts NGO Funds 2009-14:

- **Minimum 10% of the EEA Grants²** dedicated to NGO Funds
- **NGO Funds in all 15 beneficiary states**
- Expected to total over **€140 million**
- NGOs will also be eligible to apply for funding under other thematic areas funded by the Grants³

² The EEA Grants represent €988.5 million in funding to 15 beneficiary states

³ A total allocation of €1.79 billion is made available under both the EEA Grants (€988.5 to the 15 beneficiary states) and the Norway Grants (€800 million to the 12 newest EU and EEA member states)

Why focus on civil society?

"Civil society, at least as I see it, is simply one of the great opportunities for human responsibility for the world. I certainly do not need to stress how important it is in today's world, which is endangered by so many different threats, that we cultivate opportunities of this kind."

Václav Havel, President of the Czech Republic 1993-2003

Former dissident during the Communist regime, Václav Havel addressed these words to an American audience in 1999. Ten years after the 1989 'Velvet Revolution' had launched him to his country's Presidency, leading the way to multiparty democracy, Václav Havel spoke of the restoration of civil society as a matter of utmost importance in the transition years following the fall of totalitarian rule. *"Genuine civil society is the truest fundamental of democracy, and totalitarian rule can never, by definition, be reconciled with that."*

A decade on and these words still hold true. Civil society carries the core values of democracy, fairness, and transparency. Citizen engagement and civic action help to broaden social consensus and provide an arena to bring about change in societies.

This was instrumental in achieving the fall of regimes in Central and Southern Europe, and during the transition to democratic societies, economic and social change, and European integration. Yet, although great strides have been made, there is still scope for growth and development of civil society in the region.



Vital support in challenging times

NGOs across Central and Southern Europe have been at the forefront of the issues facing their societies, from transformation to democracies and strengthening government accountability, to tackling discrimination and environmental degradation. However, civil society in the region still faces many constraints and challenges.

Challenges and constraints:

- Rising extremism and intolerance
- Increased social inequalities
- Political environments – tense relationships at times between NGOs and governments
- Patchy levels of civic activism and volunteering
- Trends of decreasing electoral participation
- Lack of broad public recognition and trust (both in NGOs and in government)
- Limited organisational capacities whilst, at the same time, an increasing need to demonstrate adaptability to changing societal and democratic challenges and emerging needs
- Vulnerable financial viability – cuts in funding and competition for scarce financial resources threatening the sustainability and, at times, the very existence of civil society organisations

A recent USAID report⁴ notes: *"Although previously present, several long-term trends and challenges for civil society were accelerated and reinforced by the crisis. And new and pressing issues resulting from the economic downturn have also been added to the agendas of NGOs and other civic actors in post-communist Europe."*

In this economic and political climate, continued support to civil society is of

vital importance. Support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants has helped to plug a gap as sources from other international donors dry up.

Projects need continuation and sustainability. Initial investment is wasted if wiped out due to changing priorities and an allocation of resources elsewhere. The continued support from the NGO Funds will help to bridge the deficit.



The contribution from the NGO Funds also fits into a wider strategic European context. The targeted grant support **reflects fundamental principles**, and **responds to numerous European pledges on civil society**, such as:

- EU Lisbon Treaty – Article 11 recognises the importance of participatory democracy as a fundamental principle, and proposes channels for dialogue with "representative associations and civil society";
- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – the right of citizens to form associations to pursue a common purpose;
- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension – human rights, fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democratic institution-building;
- Council of Europe Guidelines on civil society participation in decision-making.

⁴ 2009 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID, June 2010



Key achievements under NGO Funds 2004-09

Nineteen NGOs Funds worth €85 million were established under the EEA and Norway Grants in 12 beneficiary states – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – between 2004 and 2009. The Funds are managed by designated Intermediary bodies⁵. Most are co-financed nationally and often represent the only dedicated source of funding to the sector.

Encompassing a wide range of organisations – from community groups, social enterprises and charitable organisations, to faith-based groups and foundations – supported NGOs have strived to empower citizens to actively engage and to challenge existing approaches.

According to a comprehensive external evaluation⁶ carried out in 2010, the NGO Funds have yielded positive results in diverse fields, and provided a well-managed, effective, accessible and visible contribution to the NGO sector in Central and Southern Europe. In terms of wider impact, the findings of the report confirm the significance of the support for the development of civil society, particularly in areas such as advocacy and social inclusion.

"Building democracies is a continuous task, and the support from the EEA and Norway Grants is unique in this area, funding the development of active civic participation."

Kuba Wygnański, Polish civil society activist

social justice democratic process advocacy
human rights
capacity building anti-discrimination
acting locally innovative approaches
empowerment
awareness-raising
watchdog coalition building

⁵ See list of Intermediaries in Annex

⁶ Evaluation of EEA and Norway Grants – NGO Funds Main Report' by PITIJA svetovanje d.o.o., published in November 2010



A good investment

Findings from the evaluation showed how the funding has provided an invaluable opportunity to promote the development of NGOs and enhance their contribution to building more transparent and sustainable societies. The vast majority of beneficiaries believe the NGO Funds helped to pave the way for longer-term change, which can contribute to alleviating social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area (EEA). Key initiatives, whether at local or national level, have promoted dynamic engagement, challenged existing approaches, and developed new co-operation models.

Beneficiaries noted, among other things, that the NGO Funds:

- Are a critical (and sometimes only) source of funding;
- Act as a stepping stone for other funding opportunities;

- Are comparatively light on red tape;
- Assist in addressing inequalities;
- Boost public awareness, volunteerism and civic engagement; and
- Promote local, flexible and targeted support to the NGO sector.

Adding value for NGOs

- *A flexible funding stream* – flexibility to handle diverse organisational and national differences in civil society;
- *A stable funding stream* – advance payments enable longer-term planning;
- *An accessible funding stream* – considered the least complex of all EEA and Norway Grants to access, and simpler than EU Structural Funds to administer.

Enabling innovation, sharing learning

The NGO Funds have supported a range of innovative services and coalitions which have helped to strengthen the NGO sector in its efforts to bolster democracy, human rights, social inclusion and sustainable development in the beneficiary states. In some countries, sub-projects have been funded that break into new fields, supporting sensitive and often neglected areas, such as gay rights, and other human rights issues affecting marginalised groups.

In Portugal, two gay/lesbian organisations received public funding for the first time. In Hungary and Romania, creativity and innovation in practice, 'encouraging new ways of dealing with old problems' were actively encouraged in the grant programme applications. Co-operation under the programmes has also helped to facilitate sharing of learning and good practice. By supporting a network of exchange between the beneficiary and donor states,

NGOs have been able to exploit new ideas and draw inspiration from innovative practices elsewhere.

Delivering on key priorities: democracy, human rights and social inclusion

Of the more than 1 900 NGO projects, a majority supported human resource development, with half of them targeting democracy, human rights, discrimination or inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Numerous initiatives are supported in this field, such as a project by the Foundation for Women in Hungary to push for legislation that better addresses the links between prostitution and trafficking. Funds have supported NGOs in addressing minority rights issues, including those of Europe's Roma communities.

Other projects have seen the development of multicultural centres for the integration of excluded groups, and support for foundations to lobby on changes to legislation curbing press freedom.



Benchmark cases

A project in **Poland** created a specialist centre for pregnant and post-natal women living with HIV/AIDS. It is the first systemic programme in Poland providing medical, legal, social and therapeutic services for this social group. It is working to improve access to medical services and to free up mothers to perform their important motherly role while having time for a social and professional life.

In **Bulgaria**, a project established a new model for social services to support patients with oncological diseases, filling a gap that the state struggles to meet. Students of clinical psychology and patients in remission are involved as volunteers. The hope is that the model can be rolled out into a state service.

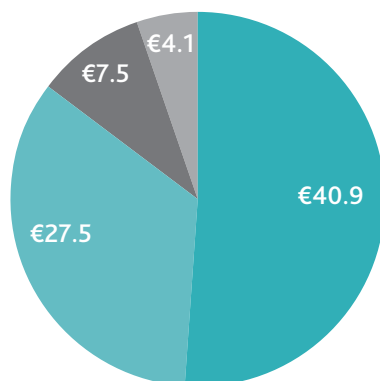
'Hope under one roof' is a project in **Slovakia** developing new methods and procedures to work with victims of domestic violence. Run by 'Help for children at risk', it provides secure emergency accommodation for victims, and works with all those involved, including public administration staff and police. The project has also started the 'League against violence' with other NGOs, which creates networks and contacts among organisations of a similar nature across the country.

Other supported areas included grass-root environmental initiatives, health and childcare, and cultural heritage. Projects under the funds, for example, provided support for health campaigns on diseases such as hepatitis C, backing for waste management and mobility plans, and looked at ways of reducing the number of children in institutional care.



Distribution of funding by sub-sector

in millions



- Democracy and human rights, social inclusion, regional policy
- Environment and sustainable development
- Health and childcare, social/family issues
- Protection of European cultural heritage

Building capacity

NGO Funds have boosted the capacities of the NGO sector across the board in recipient countries, especially in addressing the needs of local communities through its targeted support of grass-roots organisations.

The Funds strived to support the capacity of the sector in delivering its objectives. Over half of the grantees surveyed acknowledged that the NGO Funds helped in capacity building.

By enhancing skills in project development, 40% of beneficiaries said they were then better able to obtain funds from other sources, and launch new projects. Organisations have also reported an increased membership base in the period, as well as increased volunteering in some cases.

In the Czech Republic and Slovenia, workshops were organised by the intermediary for applicants on project preparation, implementation, monitoring and reporting. Estonia implemented a system for organisational development, helping NGOs gain clear visions of their sub-projects.

Other capacity-building activities included: workshops on contract-compliance issues; supporting operational costs; theme-based training and knowledge-sharing in areas such as the environment, tax or agriculture, and improving communication tools.

Facilitating exchange

The NGO Funds have fostered the development of mutually beneficial networks, coalitions and partnerships between organisations – both at national level but also with donor-state entities. Over 100 sub-projects with bilateral partnerships were implemented under the NGO Funds, mostly in Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus. Through networks, NGOs have succeeded in strengthening individual project initiatives by promoting exchange of know-how and experience.

Partnerships were also developed at management level. Consortia were set up to manage the funds in Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, yielding positive results and creating a mutually supportive and learning environment for the organisations involved.



Key focus – country highlights

Close-up on Poland

In Poland, three NGO funds were set up totalling €37.4 million in support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. One fund focused on projects to promote democracy and civil society engagement, one on environmental protection and sustainable development, and the third on equal opportunities and social integration. In total, more than 600 NGO projects were supported with 50 of them being implemented in partnership with donor-state NGOs.

Close-up on Slovenia

'Small in size but large in impact', is how you could describe Slovenia's experience with NGO Funds in 2004-09. Slovenian sub-projects have actively sought bilateral partners (15 partnerships or around 40% of the sub-projects), supported by the Norwegian Embassy. Highlights of NGO achievements in Slovenia include research carried out into risk behaviour and education concerning hepatitis C among prison employees and convicts; increasing media profile on the plight of Roma people; and the wide distribution of a book and website to raise awareness about native reptiles.



Close-up on Cyprus

The Cypriot NGO Fund represented close to 35% of the funding to the country for the period 2004-09, the largest proportion for any beneficiary state. The Fund was very successful in promoting co-operation and partnership: not only were 27% of all projects implemented in co-operation with an NGO from Norway or Iceland, but over 40% of the projects were joint initiatives between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot NGOs, encouraging co-operation and dialogue across the divide.

"While civil society remains fragile in all of the beneficiary states, the NGO Funds have clearly assisted with the support of the NGO sector ... NGOs in some beneficiary states [have] been encouraged to be innovative and develop new responses to existing issues and problems."

Evaluation of EEA and Norway Grants – NGO Funds Main Report Sept. 2010



Fast facts

Calls: Some **45** calls for proposals issued resulting in **14 810** applications for funding, with almost **1920** sub-projects approved

Average overall grant size: **€45 474**

Most projects: Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic initiated the highest number of sub-projects.

Partnerships: Over **100** bilateral partnerships with donor-state entities (mostly in Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus).

Examples from the countries

- NGO advocacy skills strengthened in **Estonia**;
- Increased co-operation between NGOs, and NGOs and state authorities in **Latvia** and **Poland**;
- The grant-making model used by an NGO Intermediary in Hungary influenced the National Development Agency's approach to EU funding;
- A new NGO association in **Poland** convinced local authorities to open up tenders to NGOs (it subsequently won two tenders to implement public tasks);
- **Romanian** environment NGOs convinced rural communities to clean up agricultural practices;
- Nation-wide campaign and actions launched against discrimination in **Slovakia**;
- Energy saving practices introduced in **Slovenia** (census of 300 households rolled out to community-wide initiatives);
- Better family ties forged for prisoners in the **Czech Republic**, thanks to NGO engagement of all stakeholders, including childcare groups, prison staff and, of course, prisoners and their families;
- Increased capacity for public services to settle civil disputes in **Slovakia**;
- Increased support for new models of social services and cancer patient care in **Bulgaria**;
- Underlined need for victim support and shelters in domestic violence cases in several countries;
- Schemes introduced for waste-management planning and mobility plans in several countries;
- Increased awareness and better programmes to support children with diabetes in **Lithuania**;
- Network of social and health NGOs set up in **Estonia** to develop capacity to lobby for improvements in social and health care systems;
- Beyond the extensive support to civil society under the NGO Fund, a centre called 'Home for Cooperation' was also established to foster dialogue between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in **Cyprus**;
- Capacity-building for small NGOs in **Portugal** received a much-needed boost.





NGO Funds by Beneficiary State 2004-09

NGO Funds were established in 12 beneficiary states in the period 2004-09.

This table shows the amount committed by the donor states to the funds per country.

Beneficiary State	Total amount (million)	No. of sub-projects ⁷	No. of partnerships ⁸
Bulgaria	€2.1	60	3
Cyprus	€1.5	33	9
Czech Republic	€10.0	181	5
Estonia	€2.3	190	7
Hungary	€7.9	299	0
Latvia	€5.7	165	9
Lithuania	€5.0	105	8
Poland	€37.4	613	28
Portugal	€2.0	30	8
Romania	€5.1	115	4
Slovakia	€5.0	87	5
Slovenia	€1.5	40	15
Total	€85.5	1918	101

⁷ Figures as of May 2011

⁸ Indicative figures from source: 'Evaluation of EEA and Norway Grants – NGO Funds Main Report' by PITIJA svetovanje d.o.o., published in November 2010



Activities

Inspiring stories

Homeless in Slovenia

A Slovenian civil society group is helping homeless people help themselves. The 'Kings of the Street' association borrowed from Norwegian models and policies for reintegrating homeless people into society. Their flagship initiative is a newspaper sold by people living on the streets, which is contributed to and sold by homeless people who receive half the proceeds of each sale.



Coalition campaign on renewable energy in Czech Republic

NGO Funds backed a campaign to raise awareness amongst policy-makers and the general public on the use of renewable energy sources for heat production. Bringing together a network of municipalities, consumers, small business groups and biomass producers, the campaign succeeded in increasing visibility of the issue and put pressure on national public administrations and Parliamentarians to adopt better renewable energy policies.

Healthier school dinners in Slovakia

Campaigns to improve the quality of food served in school canteens have been gaining visibility across Europe in recent years. Now, civil society in Slovakia is getting behind a similar movement aimed at increasing the use of organic food in schools. State approved 'healthy' recipes for schools have also been launched and the project website now acts as an online market place for organic buyers and sellers.

Tackling discrimination in Poland

NGO Funds got behind broader efforts to counter discrimination and xenophobia faced by refugees and marginalised groups in Poland. Support for the *Centrum pomocy Prawnej im. Haliny Nieć* – where core activities include legal aid, research and promotional campaigns – has helped to improve capacity for working with the media and in communicating its activities. Communications are vital to raise awareness and change attitudes in the government and general public.



Better social services provision for the elderly in Romania

With the support of NGO Funds, a new planning model for social care for the elderly was developed in the North East Region of Romania. Partners in the project designated specialist teams from public institutions and NGOs to gather information on health care, housing and education provision for older people, assess needs and identify gaps. These findings fed into a new plan for social services which is helping to improve service provision for older people in the region.

Clearer laws on child adoption in Cyprus

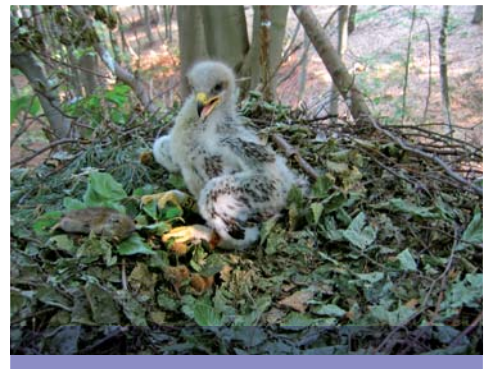
NGO Funds have been instrumental in promoting a clearer and fairer multicultural policy on child adoption and custody in the

increasingly multi-cultural society of Cyprus. Through the Cyprus Institute of Church and State Relations, the project has pushed for changes to the legal framework on child adoption and in decisions on children's custody cases. It is also working on policy guidelines to help judges and officials in their deliberations on custody cases, where parents have mixed ethnicity or religion.



Protecting bird life in Latvia

With the help of NGO Funds, bird enthusiasts and local communities in Latvia have got behind monitoring schemes to protect bird life in and around designated 'Important Bird Areas' (IBA). Around 40 birdwatchers were trained to perform IBA monitoring and sound recording, resulting in a rich database of some 10 000 reports and recordings of various bird species.



A photograph of three children in a forest setting. Two children in the foreground are wearing red jackets and are focused on constructing paper airplanes from red paper and sticks. A third child, wearing a striped shirt and a bucket hat, stands slightly behind them, also holding a paper airplane. The background is filled with green trees and foliage under a bright sky.

Looking forward

The NGO Funds have proved themselves to be an invaluable source of support for civil society. The EEA and Norway Grants aim to make sure that this success is repeated and built on in the future. In developing the new programmes, lessons have been taken on-board and good practice identified.

Lessons learned

Input from evaluation and consultations, as well as past experience, have all been taken into consideration in defining the NGO Funds 2009-14 – including the need for further focusing of the funds, and further simplification of the management and reporting systems.

Feedback from NGOs

Hungary – *“Simple, easier, quicker, flexible”*

Poland – *“Simple and clear; user-friendly, comparable, transparent, less formalised”*

Slovakia – *“Comparable, quicker, user-friendly application process”*

Good practice

- Best results come from a **focus on strategic processes** that lead to change and sustainability: institutional strengthening, increasing participation and networking, policy and strategy development, as well as advocacy and watchdog activities;
- **Trusted intermediaries** should be knowledgeable and independent (coalitions of national NGOs have worked well in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania);
- **Clarity in definitions** of eligible organisations – so that funding is well targeted – and **clear, consistent rules** and procedures that help NGOs to access support;
- A **clear framework for developing bilateral partnerships** between NGOs in beneficiary and donor states can build capacity and skills.

Improvements in current funding period

- **Longer-term** perspective through multi-annual programming approach;
- **Simplification** of the management and reporting system;
- **Targeting** through country priorities based on consultation with local civil society

stakeholders – ensuring NGO Funds complement national funding;

- Good practice from beneficiary states to **improve application and assessment procedures** and provide support and training to applicants;
- Build on current **monitoring and evaluation** to ensure lessons continue to be learned.

NGO Funds 2009-14

Support to civil society is further strengthened under the current EEA and Norway Grants. 'Funds for Non-governmental Organisations' is the only programme area which is mandatory in all of the 15 beneficiary states. A minimum of 10% of the EEA Grants in each country is set aside for new NGO Funds but total support for these funds is expected to reach €140 million. Additional support to NGOs is provided through other programmes under both the EEA Grants and the Norway Grants.

Overarching objective

To strengthen the development of civil society and enhance its contribution to social justice, democracy and sustainable development

Expected outcomes

- Fostering of active citizenship in beneficiary states;
- Increased NGO involvement in decision-making in local, regional and national governments;
- Development of cross-sectoral partnerships, particularly with government organisations at local, regional and national level;
- Promotion of democratic values – including human rights;
- Development of civil society's advocacy and watchdog role;
- Networks, partnerships and coalitions of NGOs working together;

- Strengthened capacity of NGOs and an enabling environment for civil society;
- Increased NGO contribution to sustainable development;
- Improved provision of welfare and basic services to target groups;
- Empowerment of vulnerable groups.

Areas of support

The **main areas** eligible for support – which should be covered by at least one-third of the programme allocation –, are:

- Democracy and participatory democracy;
- Human rights, including minority rights: ethnic, religious, linguistic and sexual orientation;
- Transparency and good governance;
- Combating racism and xenophobia;
- Anti-discrimination;
- Social inequalities, poverty and exclusion – including in rural areas;
- Gender equality;
- Gender-based violence.

At least 10% of total funding available for 2009-14 will also be set aside for child and youth-driven organisations or activities.

In addition, there is funding for:

- Protection of the environment and climate change: awareness-raising and civic participation, developing umbrella organisations and new networks on biodiversity and climate, NGO involvement in national action plans on biodiversity and climate change, mobilising local involvement to protect biodiversity, and environmental educational activities and training for teachers;
- Provision of welfare and basic services to vulnerable groups where such services are not otherwise or not adequately provided by the state: children and youth at risk, people affected by HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities and/or mental disorders and their families, victims of trafficking and domestic or gender-based violence.



Strengthening bilateral relations

Objective

Strengthening bilateral relations has been introduced as a **dual goal** with that of reducing economic and social disparities in Europe for the EEA Grants and Norway Grants 2009-14. To enhance co-operation between entities in donor and beneficiary countries, partnerships are encouraged particularly where they may be of mutual benefit and may bring added value and enhanced quality to the project.

Funds for bilateral relations

Special seed money funds will be set up in the beneficiary states to cover networking, finding partners, exchange of experiences and establishing partnerships. Funds will be

available both at the national level in each country and under each programme, including the NGO Funds. There are special provisions on what a partnership agreement should look like and what kind of expenditure is eligible, as well as a simplification of the procedures.

Building good partnerships: the key for success

NGO partners can fill gaps in knowledge, education and equipment, and share experience, challenges and solutions. With some countries, it is more about revitalising old relationships or building on existing ones; with others there is a need to establish new links.

The view of beneficiaries

Launching conferences with the participation of NGO representatives from the donor states, to enable 'matchmaking' and making first contacts, is a good way of initiating bilateral partnerships.

The view of donor-state NGOs

The most important thing is that both countries have used their expertise and are equal partners – to know each other well before signing the partnership agreement and to be aware of the different business culture in the different countries.

The potential of partnerships to strengthen bilateral relations is clear, but there are **barriers to be overcome** in building bilateral partnerships, such as:

- Funding – for example, to allow workshops that bring NGOs together to build relationships;
- Administrative barriers to partnerships – some beneficiary states limit the types of organisations eligible;
- Capacity to develop partnership applications, especially for smaller NGOs;
- Awareness of beneficiaries' issues and partnership possibilities among donor-state NGOs.

Inspiring stories

Polish-Norwegian cooperation on media freedom

The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Poland acts as a watchdog for media freedom in Poland. It monitors Polish media, presses for changes to current legislation to ensure freedom of speech, and initiates public debates on media freedom. The Foundation has organised important conferences about freedom of media in Poland, and has cooperated with the Human Rights House Foundation in Norway.

Poland and Iceland pair up for child witnesses

The 'Child Victim Advocate' project has been running in Poland since 2005. Involving several Polish organisations – such as the Nobody's Children Foundation, the Ministry of Justice and the Coalition for Children-Friendly Interrogation – it focuses on fully preparing children called to appear as witnesses in trials. With NGO Funds support, the project was able to set up a bilateral partnership with the Icelandic Governmental Agency for Child Protection in Reykjavik. Work included the setting up of 'friendly rooms' for child witnesses, help lines and training for parents and carers.



Donor states: how do partnerships help civil society?

Civil society in the donor states

Civil society plays an active role in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, and NGOs from these countries can contribute with considerable experience and expertise, from international cooperation, too. Over 100 partnerships were established under the previous NGO Funds, and this continues to be encouraged under the new Funds.

In Norway, 58% of the population (of 4.8 million) are involved in 115 000 NGOs. The Nordic model emphasises democratic engagement, with the NGO sector evaluating and challenging government, engaging and educating the public, valuing local cultures, and building bridges between social groups.

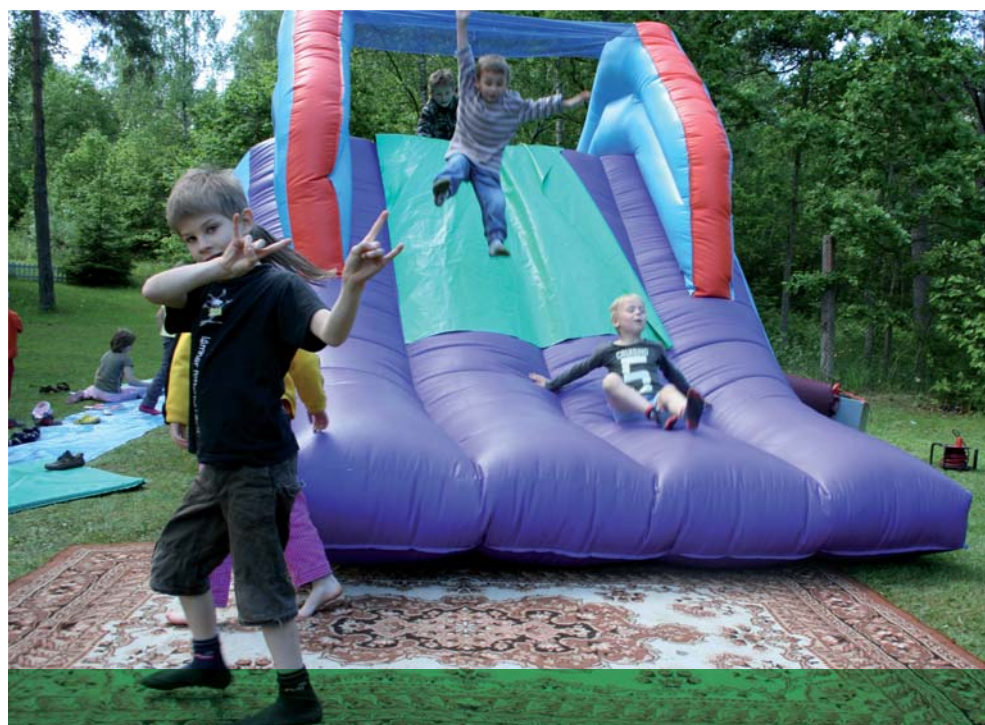
Norwegian Helsinki Committee

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) facilitates bilateral partnerships with Norwegian NGOs. The NHC notes that there is a high level of interest in bilateral partnerships, with considerable unpaid time invested by Norwegian NGOs. There is positive feedback on their value, but they present a real capacity challenge for donor-state organisations.

ØkoPomorka Norway

"Our experience is that our partners in Poland have a lot of knowledge and skills that are also important for Norway. The nice thing is that you get to be involved in developing each other to the benefit of both countries."

ØkoPomorka is engaged in ecological agriculture





NGO Norway portal

The NHC runs 'NGO Norway' (www.ngonorway.org), an information portal to help search for partners and facilitate cooperation within the framework of the NGO Funds. The website contains practical information about the beneficiary states, and a database of potential Norwegian partner organisations. The NHC also advises the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on these activities and arranges seminars to support its role.

"We have generally had a very good experience with the bilateral partnership in the NGO Funds. Where many grant schemes tend to channel funds into big organisations or structures, these Funds help to fill an important gap to meet needs at grass-roots level. They are flexible and help local initiatives establish connections and develop cooperation also on a small-scale level."

Royal Norwegian Society for Development, Norges Vel

Annex

List of intermediaries: NGO Funds 2004-09

Bulgaria

Foundation for Local Government Reform and Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation

<http://ngofund.flgr.bg/en/>

<http://www.flgr.bg/>

In partnership with:

Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation

<http://www.environmentalpartnership.org/bulgaria/>

Cyprus

First Elements Euroconsultants Ltd

<http://www.eeangofund.org.cy/>

Czech Republic

Civil Society Development Foundation

<http://www.blokovygrant.cz/>

Estonia

Open Estonia Foundation

<http://www.oef.org.ee/>

Hungary

National NGO Fund

Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation

<http://www.okotars.hu/>

<http://www.norvegcivilalap.hu/>

In partnership with:

Autonomia Foundation

<http://www.autonomia.hu/>

Carpathian Foundation – Hungary

<http://www.carpathianfoundation.org/>

Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights

<http://www.demnet.hu/>

Environmental NGO Fund

Ministry of Environment and Water

<http://www.kvvm.gov.hu/index.php>

Latvia

Society Integration Foundation

<http://lsif.lv/en>

Lithuania

Ministry of Finance and the Central Project Management Agency

<http://www.finmin.lt/web/finmin/eeagrants>

Poland

Overall webpage for NGO Funds

<http://www.funduszngo.pl/en>

NGO Fund–Democracy and Civil Society

Co-operation Fund Foundation

<http://www.cofund.org.pl/>

NGO fund–Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development

ECORYS Polska Sp. Z.o.o.

<http://www.ecorys.pl/>

NGO Fund–Equal Opportunities and Social Integration

ECORYS Polska Sp. z o. o.

<http://www.ecorys.pl/>

Portugal

NGO Fund–Citizenship and Human Rights

Commission for citizenship and gender equality

<http://www.cig.gov.pt/>

NGO Fund – Environment

Agencia Portuguesa do ambiente

<http://www.apambiente.pt/>

Romania

Civil Society Development Foundation

<http://www.fdsc.ro/>

In partnership with:

Carpathian Foundation – Romania

<http://www.carpathianfoundation.org/>

Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation

<http://www.environmentalpartnership.org/romania/>

Slovakia

NGO fund – Environment

Nadacia Ekopolis

<http://www.ekopolis.sk/>

NGO fund - Human Rights

Open Society Foundation

<http://www.osf.sk/>

NGO fund - Social Inclusion

SOCIA – Social Reform Foundation

<http://www.socia.sk/>

Slovenia

The Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe

<http://www.rec-lj.si/>



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