



NGO FUND IN TWELVE EU MEMBER STATES STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY



The Swiss enlargement contribution finances a support fund for non-governmental organisations (NGO fund) in all partner countries except Malta. The purpose of these funds is to promote and strengthen the participation of civil society in the socioeconomic development of the respective countries. The total contribution to all NGO funds amounts to around CHF 66 million.

In the new member states of the EU, civil society is significantly more developed than it was at the beginning of the 1990s, but it is not yet as well developed as in the older member states. NGOs suffer from various shortcomings: for example, they are poorly integrated in society and have a weak financial and institutional base.

A STRONG NGO SECTOR IS ESSENTIAL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

The funds for non-governmental organisations in all new EU member states except Malta provide essential support for civil society in these countries. This will result in the strengthening of the NGO sector and civil society in the respective countries. In particular, it is often the poorer and socially disadvan-

tagged sections of the population who benefit from a well-developed range of services provided by NGOs.

NGOS – INDISPENSABLE PLAYERS

By formulating concepts and taking action (in relation to vulnerable groups, minorities, the environment and culture), civil society strengthens the democratisation process. It also helps make government agencies more efficient by ensuring that they take better account of the concerns of the population. This applies both to specific action taken at a local level as well as to advocacy at the regional and national level. NGOs thus often deal with a wide variety of issues in daily life.

The NGO funds will be used in particular to support social welfare and environmental projects. More than half the approved projects will come under one of these two headings. Switzerland will however also fund projects in other areas, for instance the increased involvement of citizens in political decision-making processes and cooperation between NGOs and local government. In some countries, the NGO fund programmes have already been completed or are about to be completed.

SWISS ORGANISATIONS OFFER VALUABLE EXPERIENCE

Involving Swiss partners in projects enables NGOs to benefit from Swiss expertise. Overall, just under twenty percent of the projects will be implemented with Swiss involvement. Swiss expertise and experience is extremely valuable on a number of fronts for NGOs in partner countries who are often working in a new environment and therefore lack experience. For instance, Swiss NGOs can help their partners cooperate with the government, encourage young volunteers, or even help with bookkeeping. Swiss know-how enables organisations in the partner countries to implement efficient and effective projects directly, while making optimum use of their financial and human resources.



TARGETED SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IS ALSO IN SWITZERLAND'S INTERESTS

Thanks to partnerships with organisations in the partner countries, Swiss organisations are also able to extend their networks and expertise. The mechanisms of the NGO funds favour these partnerships. Moreover, Switzerland also benefits from the activities of NGOs, as many aspects such as economic exchange, migration and environmental protection are interrelated and are of international, even global relevance in some cases.

The NGO funds set up as part of the Swiss enlargement contribution

- co-finance some 700 projects totalling CHF 66 million
- strengthen the NGO sector in the respective countries and consequently support civil society
- results in the creation of partnerships between foreign and Swiss organisations for around 150 small NGO projects
- is enabling projects primarily addressing social welfare and environmental issues, as well as other problem areas, to be implemented.

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

SUBJECT

Supporting civil society

COUNTRIES

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

PARTNERS

Swiss NGOs (in particular associations, federations and foundations)

STARTING POINT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Non-governmental organisations play an important role in civil society. They perform work and deliver services for citizens that are not, or only inadequately, provided by governments or private companies. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the NGO sector has been continuously expanding in the new EU member states. However, in comparison with the old member states, the NGO sector in the new EU countries continues to be relatively small.

PURPOSE

- Strengthening civil society
- Co-financing around 700 projects
- Partnership with Swiss NGO in approximately one out of five projects

ACTIVITIES

- Partnered exchange of expertise in the particular project area
- Fact-finding visits to project partners
- Joint evaluation and drafting of reports
- Creating long-term international relationships in the project area

TARGET GROUPS

- Direct: NGOs in the respective countries
- Indirect: Civil society

COSTS

Total project budget (amount of Swiss contribution): CHF 66 million

Amount of funds by country:

Bulgaria: CHF 3 million

Croatia: CHF 4.8 million

Cyprus: CHF 0.2 million

Czech Republic: CHF 6.6 million

Estonia: CHF 2.5 million

Hungary: CHF 5 million

Latvia: CHF 3.5 million

Lithuania: CHF 5.6 million

Poland: CHF 24.7 million

Romania: CHF 5 million

Slovakia: CHF 3 million

Slovenia: CHF 2.1 million

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Non-governmental organisations in the new EU member states, in some cases in cooperation with a Swiss partner

DURATION

Different durations in each country

Bulgaria: 2012 – 2017

Croatia: 2016 – 2020

Cyprus: 2008 – 2012

Czech Republic: 2010 – 2015

Estonia: 2010 – 2016

Hungary: 2011 – 2015

Latvia: 2009 – 2013

Lithuania: 2011 – 2014

Poland: 2009 – 2017

Romania: 2011 – 2019

Slovakia: 2011 – 2016

Slovenia: 2010 – 2014