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ANNEX III

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the ENI East Regional Action Programme 2015
part.2

Action Document for Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility Regional Actions 2015

INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL GRANT APPLICANTS

WORK PROGRAMME FOR GRANTS

This document constitutes the work programme for grants in the sense of Article 128(1) of the Financial Regulation (Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012) in section 5.3.1 concerning grants awarded directly without a call for proposals.

1. Title/basic act/ CRIS number	Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility Regional Actions 2015 CRIS number: ENI/2015/038-124 financed under European Neighbourhood Instrument
2. Zone benefiting from the action/location	Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine
3. Programming document	Programming of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) - 2014-2020 Strategy Paper 2014-2020 and Multiannual Indicative Programme 2014-2017 for Regional East
4. Sector of concentration/ thematic area	Eastern Partnership – Objective 3: Enhance civil society’s role as a vector for reform
5. Amounts concerned	Total estimated cost: EUR 5,080,000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 5,000,000 The contribution is for an amount of: - EUR 5,000,000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2015 This action is co-financed by potential grant beneficiary for an indicative amount of EUR 80,000

6. Aid modality(ies) and implementation modality(ies)	Project Modality Direct management - Grants – direct award Direct management - Procurement of services			
7. DAC code(s)	15150 - Democratic participation and civil society			
8. Markers (from CRIS DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
	Aid to environment	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade Development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
	Biological diversity	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) thematic flagships	NA			

SUMMARY

The overall objective of this action is to strengthen and promote civil society's role in reforms and democratic changes taking place in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries by:

- Contributing to an improvement of the environment in which civil society organisations (CSOs) operate (i.e. ensuring an “**enabling environment**” exists in partner countries);
- Strengthening **CSOs capacities** to promote reform and increase public accountability;
- Increasing **interaction between CSOs and authorities** at the national level and local level.

The action will build on the ongoing and planned activities for support to civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries, at bilateral and regional level and will include two main components:

1. A **monitoring tool for enabling environment** for civil society development in the Eastern Partnership countries;

2. A Regional Technical Assistance project to act as **integrator and capitalisation centre**, creating synergies between the various bilateral and regional initiatives and contributing to the replication and sustainability of results.

1 CONTEXT

1.1 Sector/Country/Regional context/Thematic area

1.1.1 EU Policy Framework

The Joint Communication on “**A new response to a changing Neighbourhood**”¹ of May 2011, the culmination of a comprehensive review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) launched in 2010, outlined a new approach towards EU’s neighbours to the East and South, based on mutual accountability and a shared commitment to respecting universal values, international human rights standards, democracy and the rule of law. Acknowledging civil society’s role to contribute to policy-making and hold governments to account, the Communication committed to supporting a greater role for civil society actors through a partnership with societies, helping civil society actors develop their advocacy capacity, the ability to monitor reform and their role in implementing, monitoring and evaluating EU programmes. The Communication proposed the establishment of a Civil Society Facility to provide funding for civil society actors. The **Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility** attempts to move beyond simply providing financial support to civil society organisations (CSOs), towards enhancing engagement with civil society and increasing its involvement in the policy dialogue at the country level. The Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility addresses three main aspects:

- Strengthening civil society actors' **capacities** to promote national reform and increase public accountability, to enable them to become stronger actors in driving reform at national level and stronger partners in the implementation of ENP objectives.
- Strengthening civil society actors through **support to regional and country projects**, by supplementing the funding available through thematic programmes and instruments.
- Increasing involvement of civil society actors in selected EU-partner countries **policy dialogues and in the implementation of bilateral programmes**.

This action is part of the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility and aims to build upon the activities supported through the Facility in 2011-2014.

In September 2012, the Commission adopted the Communication “**The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations**”². The policy proposes an enhanced and more strategic EU engagement with CSOs in partner countries, with a particular focus on local civil society organisations. It also outlines a new approach to support CSOs with regards to the promotion of inclusive and sustainable growth as

¹ COM(2011)303 of 25 May 2011.

² COM(2012) 492 of 12 September 2012.

well as in social service delivery. The Communication emphasizes the need to ensure the existence of an enabling environment for civil society organisations (which goes beyond the mere existence laws on freedom of assembly, association and expression).

The Communication also envisages the **elaboration of Roadmaps** at country level. The purpose of the Roadmaps is to develop a **common strategic framework** for the engagement of EU Delegations and Member States with civil society at country level, with a view to improving the **impact, predictability and visibility** of EU actions. Roadmaps are also intended to improve the **consistency** of EU cooperation vis-à-vis civil society, across sectors and instruments, and to progressively promote better **coordination** within EU Delegations, Member States and other relevant actors. The first generation of the Roadmaps covers the period **2014-2017**. Roadmaps should be seen **as a continuous process** and they should be **updated** when major changes in the context take place. A second generation of Roadmaps will then cover the period 2018-2020.

Reflecting the increased focus on engagement with civil society and allowing for a proper implementation of Roadmap priorities, more resources than ever before are dedicated to strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations in the region. With the new multi-annual financial framework (2014 – 2017), indicatively 5% of countries' assistance is foreseen to be channeled towards civil society support.

EU Delegations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova³ and Ukraine all have or intend to programme civil society actions, mainly focused on capacity development. With the indicative allocation of 5% of the bilateral envelopes to civil society actions, **funding available for civil society organisations at national level is higher than it has ever been**: indicatively an overall bilateral allocation of almost EUR 40 million is planned only for 2014-2015⁴ compared to EUR 40 million for the entire half of the previous programming period (2011-2013).

At regional level, with the creation in 2009 of the **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** the EU sought a broader and more intensive engagement with all civil society stakeholders already involved in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The Forum brings together CSOs from the six EaP countries and from EU Member States to exchange views and formulate policy recommendations on national and EU policies.

Support to civil society networks and platforms, as well CSO-led regional projects, is foreseen to continue in 2014-2017.

1.1.2. Stakeholder analysis

The programme will primarily support civil society actors in the wide definition of the term: non-governmental organisations; organisations representing national and/or ethnic minorities; local citizens' groups and traders' associations; cooperatives, trade unions, organisations representing economic and social interests; local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration; consumer organisations; women's and youth organisations; cross-border associations, non-governmental associations and independent foundations.

³ Hereinafter referred to as Moldova.

⁴ This is subject to change until the finalisation of the programming process for bilateral funds.

Local authorities in partner countries, defined as "decentralised bodies in the partner countries, such as regions, departments, provinces and municipalities" may also be addressed.

Other stakeholders involved are partner government authorities, which should be associated to the action which ultimately aims to foster public institutions' ability and willingness to associate civil society actors in policy dialogues, reforms and cooperation activities.

1.1.3 Priority areas for support/problem analysis

Problem analysis

The mappings of civil society carried out in the Eastern Partnership countries in 2014 show that, although there are important differences between the partner countries in terms the environment in which they operate, their capacities and their actual involvement in the policy dialogue, there are certain common traits which become apparent in an analysis of the region.

Overall CSO landscape:

- There is a high number of registered CSOs, but a limited percentage of active organisations;
- In all partner countries, there are significant discrepancies between CSOs in the capital and CSOs in the regions;
- There is an increase in the number of non-formal civic groups;
- An increased number of CSOs use online tools to disseminate information and involve more people, especially youth, in public activities;
- In Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine CSOs are starting to use ICT tools for transparency, accountability and participation in order to monitor the activities of various public authorities, gather evidence from the public on problems encountered with public services and conduct evidence-based advocacy campaigns and media campaigns.

Enabling environment:

- The legal environment governing the registration and operations of CSOs is generally favourable in most countries, with the exception of Azerbaijan and Belarus;
- Most civil society organisations depend to a very large extent on donor funding which leads to a situation in which donors become the drivers of the agenda;
- Membership fees, donations and government funding are second rank sources for CSOs;
- Charity, individual or corporate, has not, yet, become an important source of CSOs' revenues. Direct donations from businesses remain a rare form of CSO funding;
- Tax regulations do not encourage individual or corporate donations;
- Cooperation, coordination and consolidation with other CSOs are vital in order to improve the access to and participation in policy development. Unfortunately, donor dependency and strong competition for funding limits CSOs willingness to partner with each other in order to gain more influence.

CSO capacities:

- More efforts are needed in particular regarding the development of technical expertise, internal governance and improving links to constituencies.

Public perception:

- Public trust in CSOs is generally low;

- The visibility of civil society actions is limited, although there are some good examples in the region of civil society and media cooperation.

Interaction with public authorities;

- In recent years, efforts for decentralisation and modernising public administration have pushed central governments in the Eastern Partnership countries to attributing increased responsibilities to local authorities involving for example management/maintenance of water supply, roads, public light, waste, schools and kindergartens, social housing, social integration and shelter as well as other communal services. However, decentralisation initiatives have not always been accompanied by an adequate level of autonomy, capacity development and financial resources, leaving local authorities' empowerment incomplete. Nevertheless local authorities are increasingly taking own initiatives when defining their future development and increasingly influencing central governments on issues that are particularly important at local level. In this context, it is crucial to support local authorities and civil society to develop joint solutions to common social and economic development challenges and to improve good governance at local level;
- In most countries, progress is visible in terms of increased opportunities for CSOs to participate in policy formulation and monitoring. However, reforms in the more sensitive areas (such as financial reform, energy and environment) tend to be undertaken with significantly less consultations and civil society involvement;
- In general policy dialogue is weakened by a shortage of resources, and most importantly, the low capacities of public servants and their relative mistrust of civil society organisations.

Priority areas:

Taking the above into account, this action will aim to contribute to an improvement of the environment in which civil society organisations operate, to strengthen CSOs **capacities** and to **increasing interaction** between CSOs and authorities at the national level and local level.

2 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Diversity of the EaP countries in terms of their willingness to associate with the EU and the EaP region.	H	Although the willingness and pace of partner countries towards EaP goals varies greatly, the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership has shown that on specific technical issues cooperation is not only possible, but desired by partner countries. Similarly, civil society organisations in the region do have areas of common interest, be it migration or environment or human rights issues.

<p>Shrinking space for civil society operation in some of the EaP countries, in particular Azerbaijan.</p>	<p>H</p>	<p>The risk of deterioration of the working environment for civil society actors will find a certain measure of mitigation in the fact that a monitoring tool will be developed which will allow for evidence-based advocacy for an improved enabling environment for civil society actors. Furthermore, the EU includes in its political dialogue with partner countries the requirement to engage with civil society actors at the national level and to promote a more enabling environment for the work of civil society. However, there is a risk of inadvertently involving GoNGOs ('Governmental' NGOs) in the political dialogue which, of course, would undermine to a large extent the entire democratic exercise. Particular attention will be paid by the Delegations and Commission services to making sure that the involvement of GoNGOs is limited.</p>
<p>The credibility of civil society in general in EaP countries is not very high.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>Civil society's credibility in partner countries can be partly improved by disseminating the results of CSO actions and CSO led projects.</p>
<p>There is a risk that the authorities do not see the added value of involving CSOs in the policy dialogue or that they do not provide an enabling environment that put in place modern and transparent institutions to encourage accountability and good governance and ensure fair and transparent rules of the game.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>Capacity building measures for public authorities will be implemented in several EaP countries at bilateral level. Additionally, this action will include a twinning pilot project which aims to increase the capacity of public authorities to engage with CSOs.</p>
<p>Assumptions</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There must be some degree of political stability in the region; • Basic elements of an enabling environment must exist in the partner countries (including a certain degree of freedom of association); • Civil society actors need to have some access to information on policies and the functioning of the legislative and budgetary processes; • Public authorities must be willing to consider that CSO involvement in policy- 		

making could bring added-value, at least in some areas;

- CSOs must be interested in engaging in policy dialogues;
- The government must allow some 'space' for the involvement and intervention of civil society;
- CSOs must have some basic capacities allowing them to interact with international donors and their own government;
- There must be some accountability mechanisms in place allowing civil society to hold government accountable for its actions.

3 LESSONS LEARNT, COMPLEMENTARITY AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

3.1 Lessons learnt

At the beginning of 2014 the Commission requested a **special report on “ROM and support to civil society in the Neighbourhood East”** which aimed at providing a critical analysis of the performance of EU-funded civil society projects, with a view to draw lessons and to improve project design and project management. The team analysed the ROM (result-oriented monitoring) reports of 76 CSO projects and developed several recommendations, out of which the most relevant are:

- In order to help address the most common challenges faced by beneficiaries it would be worth considering having **projects of longer durations**, possibly five years;
- All project stakeholders should hold more formal and informal events involving several projects to increase the **level of synergy between different projects**;
- There is a need to **improve the dissemination of results and experiences** which can also be done via the many databases and websites that have been set up previously.

From 2011 to 2014, **over 100 CSO-led projects** were selected through the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility in the Eastern Partnership region. In 2014 alone, several calls for proposals for civil society organisations were launched at bilateral and regional level.

In total only seven CSO-led regional projects were selected through the 2014 regional call for proposals⁵ aiming to develop the capacities of civil society organisations by facilitating partnerships between stronger and weaker CSOs and by encouraging ‘learning by doing’ through a strong sub-granting component. Taking into account that almost 200 applications were received only for the Neighbourhood East lot, the success rate for this lot of the call was 3.5% which shows **the high absorption capacity of CSOs from the region** and the ‘appetite’ for regional projects which allow for twinnings and exchanges between more experienced and less experienced CSOs.

⁵ Call for proposals EuropeAid/135811/DH/ACT/Multi (Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility - Regional actions)..

These EU-funded projects support very diverse issues, from service provision to engagement with governments on important reforms at local and national level. The results of the various grant projects with civil society range from better living conditions for vulnerable groups (such as children with disabilities) to increased capacities of civil society to carry out budgetary analysis and expenditure tracking in order to make sure that public spending is transparent and responds to citizens' needs. This diversity and the relatively high number of projects, make it crucial to **create synergies** between the various ongoing and planned initiatives at regional and bilateral level and **capitalise on project results**, contributing to the replication of successful activities and to their sustainability.

Additionally, the ongoing regional technical assistance project '*Civil Society. Dialogue for Progress*' includes several components: mappings of civil society in partner countries, capacity development activities, support to multi-stakeholder dialogues and communication and visibility. The project started at the end of 2012 and lasts for 36 months. Its implementation so far provides some important lessons learnt for any future technical assistance project supporting civil society:

- Civil society organisations from the partner countries should be more regularly involved in project implementation, not only during project steering committees. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum National Platforms could serve as links between the project and project stakeholders in each country, in particular the civil society community;
- Mappings or updates of the mappings require significant quality check to be performed by independent experts, outside of the project consortium;
- Experts should be recruited through open calls published on the project website and through other channels, in order to avoid tensions with the local partners, as well as the mistrust of other civil society representatives;
- Civil society visibility should be improved and efforts increased, for example through media campaigns, demonstration of success stories, CSO fairs, etc.;
- Assistance should be rendered for match-making between CSOs in the region and potential partners within the EU;
- One of the main challenges remains the final elaboration of strategies for phasing out the project support. Sustainable solutions need to be identified for each project component. The development and full implementation of a phasing out and sustainability strategy should have high priority.

3.2 Complementarity, synergy and donor coordination

EU Delegations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine all intend to programme civil society actions, mainly focused on capacity development. With the indicative allocation of 5% of the bilateral envelopes to civil society actions, funding available for civil society organisations at national level is higher than it has ever been.

Additionally several CSO-led regional projects were selected through the 2014 regional call for proposals aiming to develop the capacities of civil society organisations by facilitating partnerships between stronger and weaker CSOs and by encouraging 'learning by doing' through a strong sub-granting component.

The regional technical assistance project ‘Civil Society. Dialogue for Progress’ includes mappings, capacity development activities, support to multi-stakeholder dialogues and visibility actions.

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum is also supported through a EUR 3 million grant managed by the EaP Civil Society Forum Secretariat, as well as through other bilateral support to the National Platforms (for example, in Georgia).

As previously mentioned, one of the main aims of this action will be to ensure synergies between the various ongoing and planned initiatives.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and Civil Society and Local Authorities (CSO-LA) thematic programmes under the Development Co-operation Instrument have a global coverage and are implemented largely through calls for proposals under which applicants, mainly civil society, have a right of initiative. These calls for proposals are launched at national level by EU Delegations and at regional level by the Commission Headquarters.

Under Priority 2 of the CSO-LA thematic programme, the EU aims at strengthening representative, membership-based and actor-based⁶ regional, EU and global non-thematic⁷ civil society umbrella organisations, in order to maximize the effectiveness of their work as development actors in their own right and contributors to policy-making, on development related topics at global and regional levels (including the EU). The local authorities-focused part of the programme aims to "empower local authorities and national associations of local authorities, to enable them to contribute to the achievement of more effective development objectives while responding to citizens’ demands and promote inclusive and sustainable local development".

In the implementation of the present action, complementarity will be ensured with existing support through EIDHR, CSO-LA and other thematic programmes.

By promoting a participatory approach and reinforcing the role of citizens and civil society at local level, the **Eastern Partnership Flagship Initiative on Municipal Development** will also complement this action.

The activities of other donors directed towards supporting civil society, in particular EU Member States (like the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency SIDA), other international organisations (like the World Bank) or development agencies (like the American Agency for International Development USAID), will be taken into account. At regional level, regular informal meetings with SIDA representatives take place in order to avoid overlaps of activities.

⁶ “Actor-based” umbrella organisations are understood as structures that gather civil society organisations belonging to the same family of actors, such as, inter alia, non-governmental organisations, cooperatives, trade unions, employers’ organisations, foundations, etc.

⁷ Non-thematic umbrella organisations focus on general development issues such as, inter alia, development effectiveness, capacity building of development actors, and creation of enabling environment for CSOs. Non thematic umbrella organisations can be understood as opposed to organisations that focus on thematic fields such as, inter alia, climate change, education, health, migration.

At bilateral level, the Roadmaps for EU Engagement with Civil Society provide the most important framework for donor coordination on engagement with CSOs.

EU Delegations will keep other donors informed of progress of this action in the context of country-level donor coordination groups.

3.3 Cross-cutting issues

The action aims at reinforcing civil society actors' contribution to the decision-making process and foster interaction between authorities and civil society. This participatory approach to decision-making is at the heart of the good governance principles, and a core element of democracy. The Civil Society Facility aims to enhance the accountability of the governments and the reforms implemented vis-à-vis a structured and solid civil society.

In line with the Communication on “Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation”⁸, the monitoring tool for an enabling environment for civil society development will include indicators on women’s representation and participation in decision-making, allowing for evidence-based advocacy campaigns on gender issues. The capacity development activities will also target women CSOs in need of strengthening, for example, their skills in the areas of lobbying, advocacy, gender analysis and budgetary literacy. The tools for transparency, accountability and participation will contribute to an increased democratic control on how public funding is spent, ensuring a fairer allocation of resources.

The implementation of activities will capitalise on the existing thematic, regional and bilateral programmes already implemented with civil society actors active in the field of gender equality and support to youth.

4 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

4.1 Objectives/results

The overall objective is to strengthen and promote civil society's role in reforms and democratic changes taking place in the Eastern Neighbourhood countries, through increased participation in the fulfilment of Neighbourhood Policy objectives.

The following specific objectives will be addressed:

- Contributing to an improvement of the environment in which civil society organisations operate (i.e. ensuring an “**enabling environment**” exists in partner countries);
- Strengthening CSOs **capacities** to promote reform and increase public accountability;
- **Increasing interaction** between CSOs and authorities at the national level and local level;

⁸ COM(2007)100 of 8 March 2007.7

Main results:

Enabling environment:

R1. The environment in which CSOs operate is regularly monitored by civil society, recommendations produced and evidence-based advocacy campaigns initiated aiming to introduce changes in favour of a more enabling environment for CSOs.

R2. Local stakeholders have a better understanding of issues on enabling environment for CSOs and solid basis for advocacy for an improved legal framework for CSOs.

Reform and public accountability

R3. The capacities of CSOs are strengthened and their effectiveness is improved, in particular their ability to monitor government actions and track budgetary spending.

R4. An analysis of existing ICT tools for transparency, accountability and participation is carried out and solutions proposed for the development of future initiatives which would contribute to an increased ability of CSOs to hold governments accountable for their action, as well as lead to the improvement of public services.

Increased interaction between CSO and public authorities

R5. Cooperation and networking among targeted CSOs and between CSOs and other stakeholders are strengthened.

R6. Public awareness of CSOs' activities is raised.

R7. The public image of CSOs has improved.

R8. The capacity of local authorities to engage with civil society organisations is improved through exchanges with civil servants from the EU member States.

4.2 Main activities

The action will include two components as detailed below. The activities are separated into two components due to their different nature: the monitoring tool for enabling environment for civil society development will be implemented by a civil society organisation with specific expertise in the area (the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law); and the capitalisation activities will be implemented through technical assistance.

Component 1: Monitoring tool for enabling environment for civil society development in the Eastern Partnership countries

The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law⁹ will provide leadership and technical expertise in the development of a regional monitoring tool (matrix) on enabling environment for civil society

⁹ The European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, based in Budapest (Hungary) is a European resource and research centre in the field of policies and law affecting civil society (www.ecnl.org).

development specific for the Eastern Partnership region. In addition, the tool will be accompanied by an explanatory document for its implementation, methodology for monitoring, templates for reporting and plans for advocacy.

This work will be carried out in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the Civil Society Forum for Eastern Partnership¹⁰ and with local civil society organisations experts in each of six countries of the EaP region.

The monitoring will focus on existing regulation to guarantee fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of association, of assembly, and of expression and their implementation in practice. In addition, the tool will address broader enabling environment issues that affect the work of the CSOs and are of particular importance for the region (e.g. tax incentives, cooperation with authorities, fundraising regulation). The monitoring tool will also include a specific sub-area on human resources which will reflect on employment in the CSO sector. The review of practice will also include indicators on gender representation in CSOs (including number of women employed in the CSO sector, salary level, involvement of women in CSO leadership) in order to aggregate data and provide basis for advocacy. In addition, data on women's participation in policy-making processes will be collected and analysed.

Country specific reports with specific recommendations for reform and advocacy will be developed by local partners of ECNL (CSOs from the EaP countries). Each country report will be presented to the local stakeholders: CSOs and, if appropriate in the context, to government and donors.

ECNL will summarize all findings in one regional report with recommendations for actions on the regional level to support exchanges of best practices as well as joint learning and advocacy.

ECNL will apply a methodology which will respect local ownership over the tool and the results and facilitate consultative processes in the development and implementation of the tool through expert meetings and in-country workshops. To achieve this ECNL will invest in the capacity building of CSO experts from their local partner organisations, who will be developing and implementing the tool, and will provide expertise to help them identify the issues and design the outputs. The results of the monitoring will be translated in local languages (and/or Russian) and will be made available online on a separate webpage dedicated to these tools. After the first year of implementation of the tool, ECNL will support the local CSOs to undertake an evaluation of the tool and accompanying documents and make any revisions and adjustments necessary for future effective implementation.

Although the purpose of the monitoring tool is not to rank partner countries, it will constitute a reference base allowing CSOs, governments and donors to more accurately assess partner countries' progress towards international/European standards for an enabling environment and keep track of developments in this area. The tool can also feed into the monitoring of "EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society".

Partner country government buy-in will be sought from the start, by involving partner country representatives in the development of the methodology and by including them in the process of

¹⁰ www.eap-csf.eu/en/about-eap-csf/.

implementing recommendations. EU Delegations will play an important role in promoting these recommendations and operationalizing the monitoring tool.

The monitoring tool will build on the first two years of implementation of the monitoring matrix for enabling environment for civil society development for the Western Balkans and Turkey¹¹, as well as relevant global monitoring tools such as the “Enabling Environment National Assessment”¹². The experience of the Western Balkan and Turkey shows that tools such as the matrix can be operational, allowing civil society organisations to better target their advocacy efforts.

Related activities (linking to results R1 and R2):

A1: The **monitoring tool** on enabling environment for civil society development will be developed with specific focus for the Eastern Partnership region by ECNL and its partners. The tool will be accompanied by implementation tools to allow for monitoring, reporting and setting advocacy priorities.

A2: **Public consultations** in partner countries will be organised in order to validate the monitoring tool.

A3: **Yearly country reports**, and a **comparative baseline** study (i.e. regional report) will be produced and recommendations issued¹³.

Civil society organisations from the Eastern Partnership region will be closely associated to the exercise in all stages of implementation. Alongside ECNL’s local partners, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum will be consulted on the methodology, results of the baseline study and recommendations.

Component 2: Regional technical assistance project to act as integrator and capitalisation centre

The technical assistance project will aim to create synergies between the various ongoing and planned initiatives at regional and bilateral level. It will aim to act as a **capitalisation centre**, creating synergies between these initiatives and contributing to the replication and sustainability of some of the results.

The following activities will be carried out:

A4 (linking to R1): Building on the civil society mappings carried out by the first regional technical assistance project ‘Civil Society. Dialogue for Progress’ (2013-2015), new thematically or regionally focused mappings will be produced, on a request basis. These mappings will not include an analysis of the environment in which civil society organisations operate, as this will be

¹¹ Developed by ENCL together with partners in the Balkan Region.

¹² Developed by ENCL together with the international NGO CIVICUS (www.civicus.org).

¹³ At a later stage, CSO-led advocacy campaigns could be financed based on the recommendations regarding legislation and practice.

covered by the monitoring tool and respective country and regional reports produced by ECNL. Additionally the indicators included in the Roadmaps for EU support to civil society will be monitored;

A5 (linking to R3): **E-learning courses and webinars** will be developed based on the most relevant/successful capacity development activities carried out bilaterally and regionally. This will entail a selection of best content, translation from local languages to English and Russian (and vice versa, if needed), adaptation to the e-learning environment, hosting and moderating the e-learning courses and webinars. New content may be developed particularly on issues of a cross-cutting nature, such as gender analysis or budgetary literacy. The courses will remain publically available and accessible at the end of the project, preferably through a partnership with an established e-learning platform. Additionally the content will also be promoted through the channels of the EaP Civil Society Forum Secretariat.

A6 (linking to R4) – **Analysis of ICT tools** for transparency and **organisation of a series of hackathons**¹⁴ in the Eastern Partnership region.

Technology alone is not the solution, but it is an essential tool in holding governments to account and ensuring that public policies and services respond to citizen's needs. Examples of ICT tools for transparency, accountability and participation include:

- **Interactive mapping** for election monitoring, citizens reporting, crime mapping, human rights reporting, budget and financial transactions.
- The **application of mobile telephony and web technology** for information, dialogue and participation purposes. SMS, voice or web reporting for citizens reporting issues with service delivery, data collection (Community Scorecards and Citizen Report Cards), citizen journalism, election monitoring.

An analysis of existing ICT tools for transparency, accountability and participation in the Eastern Partnership region will be carried out and **solutions and recommendations proposed** for the development of future initiatives in this area which would contribute to an increased ability of CSOs to hold governments accountable for their action, as well as lead to the improvement of public services.

In parallel, a **series of hackathons**¹⁵ will be organised in partner countries bringing together **young programmers and representatives of civil society organisations** in order to develop new ideas and tools for transparency, accountability and participation which would be relevant to the Eastern Partnership countries. The hackathons will be organised in Eastern Partnership countries and will last an average of 3 days. At the end of each event, participants will vote for the best ICT tool developed during the hackathon and the technical assistance team will then ensure that this idea will be fully developed and launched by the winning team in the following months. The new tools should become widely available free of charge for all CSOs and if relevant for the large public.

¹⁴ An event in which a large number of people meet to engage in collaborative computer programming.

¹⁵ Transparency International has previously organised similar events: www.transparency.org/hackathon/.

Taking into account the gender gap in the ICT sector in terms of employment, it is quite likely that the hackathons will attract a significantly higher number of men. However, in order to ensure that the ICT tools developed during the events will equally benefit women and will be equally used by them, focus groups will be organised in order to test the user friendliness of proposed solutions. Additionally during these events, ICT tools for reporting crimes particularly affecting women will also be developed.

A7 (linking to R5, R6 and R7): The beneficiaries of regional and bilateral EU grant funds will be supported in developing **communication activities** in order to increase the public awareness of CSOs, improve their public image and promote EU support to civil society in a more consistent and coherent manner. The technical assistance project will also initiate additional communication activities aiming to increase the visibility of EU support to civil society in the region, as well as the visibility of CSOs results. More concretely, examples include: media campaigns, press conferences, CSO fairs, matchmaking events for CSOs from the partner countries and the EU¹⁶, exchanges of best practices, awareness rising campaigns on various issues, such as alternative sources of funding for CSOs (e.g. corporate social responsibility).

A8 (linking to R8): **Pilot project - Twinning actions which aim to increase the capacity of public authorities** to engage with CSOs will be supported.

Several EU Delegations have included capacity building for local authorities in the Roadmaps and some have already integrated this component into their programming. The technical assistance will aim to capitalise on these bilateral initiatives, as well as support other similar initiatives in those partner countries which have not yet tackled this issue. The technical assistance will also build on the experience and lessons learned under the Eastern Partnership Municipal Flagship Initiative (notably Covenant of Mayors and the Mayors for Economic Growth) in these countries. The technical assistance will facilitate exchanges of experience and issue recommendations on how future initiatives could be structured.

In those countries where capacity development for public authorities on engaging with civil society organisations is not yet financed from the bilateral allocation of 2014-2015, the technical assistance team will implement small pilot projects, i.e. facilitate and organise exchanges between EU and partner countries' civil servants on issues of CSO involvement, such as: developing CSO-government strategies, monitoring and reporting on CSO involvement in the line ministries activities, consultation procedures, inter-service coordination and mandate definition, quality standards and monitoring procedures for services, legal aspects of entrusting civil society organisations with services provision, etc.

5 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with the partner countries.

¹⁶ The involvement of newer EU Members States may be particularly relevant in this respect.

5.2 Indicative implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 4.2 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 60 months (indicative duration of contracts: 48 months) from the date of the adoption by the Commission of this Action Document.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's authorising officer responsible by amending this decision and the relevant contracts and agreements; such amendments to this decision constitute technical amendments in the sense of point (i) of Article 2(3)(c) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014.

5.3 Implementation modalities

5.3.1. Grant: direct award for the implementation “Monitoring tool for enabling environment for civil society development in the Eastern Partnership countries” (direct management)

(a) Objectives of the grant, fields of intervention, priorities of the year and expected results

The grant implementation modality will be used for implementing component 1 as described in sections 4.1 and 4.2 above. The main objective is to contribute to an improvement of the environment in which civil society organisations operate in the Eastern Partnership countries, with the following planned results:

R1. The environment in which CSOs operate is regularly monitored, recommendations produced and changes introduced in order to ensure a more enabling environment for CSOs.

R2. Local stakeholders have a better understanding of issues on enabling environment for CSOs and solid basis for advocacy for improved legal framework for CSOs.

(b) Justification of a direct grant

Article 190(1) (f) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 authorises that grants be awarded without a call for proposals for actions with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation, on condition that the actions concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals. On this basis and under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL).

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because of ECNL competence, high degree of specialisation, strong proven experience in the field, and its unique methodology used to assess the environment in which civil society organisations operate.

In particular, ECNL gained unique expertise and experience in preparing similar monitoring tools for the Western Balkan region. The Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Balkans was developed with leadership and expertise of ECNL, together with members of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network. ECNL also supported Commission services (ex-Directorate-General for Enlargement) in the development of the

Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries, 2014-2020¹⁷. In addition, ECNL recently developed a monitoring tool specific for the processes of consultation in policy and law making in Turkey.

The ECNL core team which will work on the monitoring tool for the EaP will be led by two experts who led the processes in Western Balkan and Turkey and a Russian speaking policy expert who has been implementing ECNL programmes in the EaP region for over 8 years. ECNL will also rely on the comparative expertise of other ECNL legal advisors and make it available to the partner CSOs.

ECNL, with its affiliate the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)¹⁸, currently has ongoing programmes in support of enabling CSO law reform in each country of the EaP region and has been engaged in the region directly since 2007.

(c) Essential selection and award criteria

The essential selection criteria are the financial and operational capacity of the applicant.

The essential award criteria are relevance of the proposed action to the objectives of the action; design, effectiveness, feasibility, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the action.

(d) Maximum rate of co-financing

The maximum possible rate of co-financing for this grant is 90%.

In accordance with Articles 192 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, if full funding is essential for the action to be carried out, the maximum possible rate of co-financing may be increased up to 100 %. The essentiality of full funding will be justified by the Commission's authorising officer responsible in the award decision, in respect of the principles of equal treatment and sound financial management.

(e) Indicative trimester to conclude the grant agreement

First trimester of 2016.

5.3.2. Procurement (direct management)

Subject	Type	Indicative number of contracts	Indicative trimester of launch of the procedure
Component 2 as described under section 4.2	Services	1	First trimester of 2016

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/civil_society/doc_guidelines_cs_support.pdf.

¹⁸ www.incl.org.

5.4 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility in accordance with Article 9(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

5.5 Indicative budget

Component	EU contribution (in EUR)	Beneficiary contribution (in EUR)	Total amount
Component 1 Grant – Direct award (direct management)	740,000	80,000	820,000
Component 2 Procurement (direct management)	4,260,000	Not applicable	4,260,000
TOTAL	5,000,000	80,000	5,080,000

5.6 Organisational set-up and responsibilities

This action will be managed by Commission Services (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations) and, where relevant in close collaboration with other relevant EU institutional stakeholders (European Parliament, European External Action Service, EU Member States).

Civil society organisations from the Eastern Partnership region will be closely associated, in all stages of implementation, to the exercise of adapting the monitoring matrix for an enabling environment for civil society development. Alongside ECNL's local partners, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum will be consulted on the methodology, results of the baseline study and recommendations.

Civil society organisations will be given preference for the implementation of the technical assistance project. The consortium leader will be required to have significant experience with implementing civil society projects of a similar nature.. A Project Steering Committee will be created, bringing together the technical assistance team, representatives of EU institutions and the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, as well as other civil society representatives, including women's organisations. The technical assistance project will be implemented in close cooperation with the EU Delegations and the Secretariat of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

5.7 Performance monitoring and reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partners responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

5.8 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, mid-term and final evaluations may be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

The mid-term evaluation will be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, in particular with respect to launching potential follow-up actions.

The final evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), in particular taking into account the fact that the action will include a pilot project on twinning for public authorities.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 14 days in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

5.9 Audit

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

5.10 Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

This action shall contain communication and visibility measures which shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action, to be elaborated at the start of implementation and supported with the budget indicated in section 5.5 above.

In terms of legal obligations on communication and visibility, the measures shall be implemented by the Commission, the partner countries, contractors and/or, grant beneficiaries. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included in, respectively, the financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and delegation agreements.

The Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Action shall be used to establish the Communication and Visibility Plan of the Action and the appropriate contractual obligations.

Visibility and communication in the partner countries will be carried out with the support of EU Delegations.

The EaP Civil Society Forum Secretariat will promote the action through its regular electronic newsletter, publications on the Civil Society Forum website¹⁹ and social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn account).

Platforms such as the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre²⁰(the websites of the EaP Civil Society Forum National Platforms, and the website of the regional technical assistance component will also be important channels for communication and visibility.

Relevant information will also be shared with the new EEAS East strategic communication team, which seeks to develop links with civil society, given the latter's role as media watchdog and information multiplier.

When information will be disseminated on project activities (e-learning, webinars, hackathons, etc.) particular efforts will be made to reach out to women's organisations.

¹⁹ www.eap-csf.eu/.

²⁰ www.enpi-info.eu/.