

Civil Society Facility 2011-2012

(1) Multi-beneficiary Programme 2011-2012

1. BASIC INFORMATION

1.1 CRIS Number: 2011/22-965; 2012/23-324

1.2 Title: Civil Society Facility Multi-beneficiary Programme

1.3 ELARG Statistical code: 35 (Civil Society)

1.4 Location: Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Kosovo¹, and Turkey.

Implementing arrangements:

1.5 Contracting Authority: European Commission

1.6 Beneficiary: Civil society organisations in Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Kosovo, and Turkey.)

Financing:

1.7 IPA contribution: Total 2011-2013: EUR 18 500 000

2011: EUR 11 000 000

2012: EUR 7 500 000²

2013: EUR 11 500 000³

1.8 Final date for contracting:

30 November 2012 for the 2011 budget appropriations

30 November 2013 for the 2012 budget appropriations

30 November 2014 for the 2013 budget appropriations

1.9 Final date for execution of contracts:

30 November 2016 for the 2011 budget appropriations

30 November 2017 for the 2012 budget appropriations

30 November 2018 for the 2013 budget appropriations

1.10 Final date for disbursements:

30 November 2017 for the 2011 budget appropriations

30 November 2018 for the 2012 budget appropriations

30 November 2019 for the 2013 budget appropriations

¹ Under UNSCR 1244/99

² Budget appropriations for 2012 are subject to the approval of the Budget Authority of the 2012 budget

³ Budget appropriations for 2013 (in greyed-out text) are for information only and are subject to the approval of the Budget Authority of the 2013 budget and the College adopting a new Financing Decision for activities proposed for 2013.

2. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

2.1. Overall Civil Society Facility Objective and Programme Purpose:

The Commission Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-8⁴ and the latest Strategy Documents (2008, 2009 and 2010⁵) underline the importance of civil society being able to play its role in a participatory democracy.

The 'Civil Society Facility' (CSF) was set up in 2008 to financially support the development of civil society. This programme sets out the strategy and scope of activities for the CSF for the next three years with associated budget appropriations for 2011, as well as for 2012 subject to availability of funds for this purpose under the 2012 budget. Activities and budget allocations for 2013 are for information only and have been greyed out for easy identification. Agreement on 2013 budget appropriations will be subject to a future Financing Decision.

In line with the original vision for the Civil Society Facility (CSF), the overall **objective** for the CSF programme for the period is *'To contribute to anchoring democratic values and structures, human rights, social inclusion and the rule of law, thereby supporting the EU integration process.'*

The **programme purpose** is to achieve: *'A more dynamic civil society actively participating in public debate on democracy, human rights, social inclusion and the rule of law and with capacity to influence policy and decision making processes.'*

For the period ahead, the CSF will focus on the achievement of **three outcomes** which have been identified on the basis of needs analyses⁶, internal and external reviews, and feedback from EU Delegations responsible for national programming:

- Greater benefit of civil society from national legal and financial frameworks and improved dialogue with state institutions;
- Greater commitment and capacity of civil society organisation (CSO) networks to give citizens a voice and influence public sector reform processes through analysis, monitoring and advocacy etc; and
- Increased access of grass-root organisations and civic initiatives to financial resources, in-kind contributions or expertise from established CSOs and CSO networks.

2.2. Multi-beneficiary Fiche Purpose:

The purpose is 'reinforced national and cross-border civil society capacities to plan and implement strategic monitoring, advocacy and stakeholder communication on issues relevant to fundamental rights and the EU *acquis*'.

⁴ COM (2007) 663 "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008"

⁵ COM (2008) 674 "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008-2009"

COM (2009) 533 "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010"

COM (2010) 660 "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011"

⁶ TACSO (2010): "Civil society organisations' capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey - A comparative summary of the eight country CSO needs assessments"

The programme strategy is to:

- (a) Strengthen dialogue and the development of knowledge and experience through regional partnership networks between Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from the enlargement region and EU counterparts;
- (b) Provide technical assistance to enable systematic assessments of civil society environment, impact and needs;
- (c) Reinforce the collaboration between media and CSOs on cross-regional investigative reporting and protection and promotion of freedom of expression; and
- (d) Improve flexibility and readiness to support initiatives from CSOs in response to events and opportunities relevant to the enlargement objectives.

In particular, the multi-beneficiary programme will favour the following aspects and principles:

- Provide knowledge and experience to national efforts to improve the environment for civic activism and state-civil society dialogue.
- Provide knowledge and experience to selected national partnership efforts in analysis, advocacy and monitoring key sector reforms.
- Support efforts to improve the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of CSOs in the region.
- Reinforce dialogue and strengthen ties between CSOs within the region and with their counterparts from the EU.
- Strengthen existing and where needed facilitate new CSO networks, common strategy and initiatives.
- Support development of methodology and tools to increase grass-roots organisations access to support networks and resources.

2.3. Link with the 2010 Enlargement Strategy and Progress Report

A principal political objective of the Western Balkans and Turkey is accession to the European Union.

The Commission Communication of 5 March 2008 described the overall strategy of involving civil society in the accession process through the Civil Society Facility (CSF): *“The goal will be to strengthen civil society bodies and their role in the political process, enhance the capacity of civil society organisations to develop cross-border projects and networks, and familiarise civil society representatives and opinion leaders with EU affairs ... the facility will promote cooperation and transfer of know-how between business, trade union, and professional organisations in the partner countries and the corresponding EU level organisations.”*⁷

The CSF consists of three areas of activity: (i) support for local civic initiatives and capacity-building, (ii) a “People-2-People” programme, and (iii) ‘partnership actions’ to develop networks between CSOs and to promote transfers of knowledge and experience. The programme described in this fiche will focus on the third strand.

⁷ COM(2008) 127 - “Western Balkans: Enhancing the European Perspective”

The Commission Communication on the Enlargement Strategy 2008-2009⁸ made reference to the CSF and underlined its importance for the increased participation of CSOs in the reforms to be undertaken by the Candidates and Potential Candidates for Accession. The Communication also stated that for IPA 2009, support schemes to civil society partnerships should give priority to the following sectors: culture, minorities and business associations. The Enlargement Strategy 2010-2011⁹ outlines the following:

“Civil society activities are essential for a mature democracy, the respect for human rights and the rule of law. Such activities enhance political accountability, stimulate and expand the space for discourse on societal choices and strengthen the consensus for a pluralistic society. By contributing to a more open, participatory and dynamic democracy, a lively and vibrant civil society is also conducive to tolerance and reconciliation. The involvement of civil society organisations in the pre-accession process contributes to the quality of and public support for accession-related reforms”.

A culture of acceptance and appreciation of the role played by civil society allow civil society organisations to engage in an effective policy dialogue. Public consultation on policy initiatives and draft laws should become the general principle. The access of civil society to government support is frequently hindered by a lack of transparency and poorly developed allocation criteria.

The civil society facility helps civil society organisations to strengthen their capacities and professionalism, allowing them to engage in an effective dialogue with public and private actors and to monitor developments in areas such as the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights. The facility finances initiatives at local level, regional networking and short-term visits to the EU.

The Commission has reviewed the facility to better reach out to local community-based organisations, taking into account feed-back from civil society organisations. The Commission will better target needs in each country and provide longer-term seed-funding to NGOs. Stronger, well-established organisations could become mentors and facilitators for smaller organisations.”

2.4. Link with Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document

The "Civil Society Facility – Multi-beneficiary Programme" has been designed on the basis of the objectives pursued under the Multi Beneficiary MIPD through the priority “Political Criteria - Civil Society Development and Dialogue”.

It will contribute to the progress made to date, particularly with regard to the implementation of the EU *acquis* and to guarantee a participatory democracy. In line with the objectives pursued under the Multi Beneficiary MIPD, the programme will complement and be consistent with the National approaches by ensuring a clear comparative advantage to be gained for example through tackling cross-border problems or facilitating networks of experts. It should therefore contribute to the European integration agenda.

⁸ COM(2008) 674 “Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008-2009”

⁹ COM(2010) 660 “Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011”

2.5. Link with Beneficiary Strategies on Civil Society

This multi-beneficiary programme is in line with the national CSF programmes. Its activities are consulted with stakeholders responsible for the development of beneficiary strategies. The sectors/themes for Partnership Actions will be selected on the basis of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and feasibility. In addition, the programme will also allow for the design/improvement of national strategies.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMME

3.1. Background and justification

Effective pluralism implies the respect for human rights, the rule of law and the possibility for political change. Civil society activities – often defined as primarily non-state, non-business and non-private activities – mirror this pluralism. They encourage citizens to organise themselves and to collaborate in their common interest. A thriving civil society contributes to a more open, participatory and consequently a more dynamic democratic society. Through its advocacy activities, civil society can help ensure that accession negotiations between the candidate country institutions the EU are not merely technical discussions. Accession will only be successful when it is supported by citizens who understand the necessary institutional, political and economic changes.

In order that CSOs can prepare for and support EU accession, it is crucial they have access to information and are able to share knowledge and experiences. They need to deepen their knowledge of the legislation and implementation of the EU *acquis* and how it relates to civil society, the steps of the EU accession process and the institutional set-up and functioning of the European Union. They also need to increase their understanding of the opportunities provided under EU programmes and projects.

By bringing together representatives from different organisations in the EU and Beneficiaries, the programme enhances regional cooperation and understanding beyond the regional and national levels.

3.2. Activities

3.2.1. Types of actions

3.2.1.1. Approach

In 2010 the Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) project under the Civil Society Facility conducted assessments on CSOs' capacities and on the progress made by IPA beneficiaries towards establishing enabling environment for civil society. The assessment concluded that all the regions civil societies were at a formative stage of development.

CSOs represent a wide variety of target groups and interests. While the majority of CSOs in the region continue to focus on service delivery in the community, an increasing number of CSOs are engaging in advocacy, lobbying and public policy. They have been particularly successful in empowering minority groups to claim their rights and ensure that minority interests are reflected in policy making. CSOs have also demonstrated their potential to mobilise wider public support – whether at local or national levels – behind broader issues of general social and economic concern. However, as pointed out by the

TACSO study, many CSOs have embraced advocacy only as it became a priority for donor funding and overall influence remains scarce. The gap in capacity between urban and rural CSOs also continues to characterise the civil society landscape, just as CSOs tend to be more poorly represented outside the larger towns.

Broadly favourable legal frameworks governing civil society are in place in all IPA beneficiaries guaranteeing CSOs the right to operate as independent, voluntary organisations free from interference from government or state institutions. Throughout the region, however, the effectiveness of CSO laws is diminished (i) by insufficient coordination of their provisions with a variety of other relevant financial and legal regulations and (ii) by the failure to enact supporting legislation in key areas. For example, legislation to encourage and regulate voluntarism is largely absent in the IPA counties, or its impact diminished by a lack of harmonisation with e.g. the labour laws.

Among CSOs, the concept of strategy is often poorly understood and few organisations carry out long-term objective-oriented programme planning or organisational management. Short-termism is the typical mode of CSO operation, dominated by a focus on achieving project funding. This behaviour to a large extent reflects the modus operandi of donors where the bulk of civil society assistance is still provided as short-term project support. With declining levels of external funding available, competition amongst CSOs is increasing. Inadequate levels of analytical capacity in CSOs including skills for policy research, stakeholder analysis and participatory needs assessment are a major constraint on the wider engagement of CSOs in advocacy and policy dialogue.

Public awareness, constituency support and understanding of civil society, its purposes and the range of interest it represents is at best partial in all beneficiaries. At the sector level, the civil societies of the region are generally poorly integrated and represented. CSOs face a number of challenges in building effective coalitions to better influence priority sector reform processes. High levels of distrust among CSOs, owing to competition for increasingly scarce donor resources and poor communication between themselves, militate against the development of broad-based national networks and undermine the legitimacy of CSOs and the achievement of sustainable outcomes and impact. The situation is aggravated by difficulties faced by grass-root organisations and civic actions to support networks and resources

It is essential that the Civil Society actors in the Western Balkans and Turkey are in charge of defining needs and priorities and the corresponding strategies on how to address them and to achieve results. The Multi-Beneficiary programme builds further on the experiences in achieving this aim made during the initial phase of the CSF with cross-boundary partnership actions and technical assistance. The multi-beneficiary support will use a multi-prone strategy designed to complement national efforts to address the issues mentioned above.

1) Partnership Actions / Support to cross-border thematic networks

The programme will enable approximately 10-15 long-term thematic Partnership Actions developed and implemented by EU CSOs and CSOs from the Western Balkans and Turkey to be undertaken. Implementation of these programmes will start by mid-2012. They will make it possible for like-minded CSOs to perform activities based on a joint strategy and programme arrangements. Environment, social inclusion, reconciliation, human rights and transparency/good governance are the main themes under which network partners may apply. The roles, responsibilities and expectations of each partner will be clearly defined.

The strategies for the 10-15 Partnership Actions will be designed with seed funds from the IPA 2011 Multi-beneficiary Annual Programme¹⁰ which does not form part of this Decision.

A second round of strategy design support is planned for 2013 (funded from 2013 budget appropriations).

The Partnership Actions will base their strategic aims and programmatic activities upon a documented analysis of the regional and national state of play within their respective thematic field. This will include a structured assessment of key challenges, stakeholders, on-going initiatives, results and lessons learned upon which systemic approaches can be developed. The approach is to bring added value to national and cross-border reforms that are relevant to fulfilment of fundamental rights and the EU *acquis* and avoid overlaps, exclusion and non-productive competition. During the design of Partnership Actions, special attention will be given to strengthening incentives for the participation of Turkish CSOs.

Key outputs will include methods and tools put into practice on advocacy, awareness raising and constituency building.

2) *Technical Assistance*

In the period ahead, the existing TACSO project will actively support on-going civil society assessments, provide needs-based technical assistance and conduct strategic training programs. TACSO will facilitate a review of the full range of legal and financial regulations that apply to civil society in order to identify gaps, inconsistencies and areas of possible improvements in the legal environment for civil society. If and when required, TACSO will provide technical support to re-draft and improve legislation. Particular attention should be paid to harmonising financial and tax regulations with CSO framework laws, and also the adoption of appropriate labour law and laws on voluntarism.

To improve accountability for results, TACSO will also take responsibility for monitoring progress of the CSF as a whole. This will include developing a results framework, identifying baselines and firming up the proposed indicators as projects are contracted.

The detailed scope of TACSO's work will depend on local circumstances. Overlaps will be avoided through close communication between EUDs and DG ELARG/D3. TACSO's activities are funded until mid-2013 from the 2010 IPA appropriation. It is envisaged that continued technical assistance will be required beyond 2013. At that stage it is assumed that CSOs will have developed sufficient capacities to continue some of the training and information events currently performed by TACSO staff. The focus of the technical assistance would shift towards capacity development and application of methodologies for (a) effective partnerships, (b) civil society needs and impact assessment and (c) advocacy strategies.

3) *Reinforced collaboration between media and CSOs on cross-regional investigative reporting and protection and promotion of freedom of expression.*

Freedom of expression and of the media, which is an integral part of any democratic system, remains a concern in most enlargement beneficiaries.

¹⁰ CRIS 2011/022-964

In Turkey, the legal framework does not yet sufficiently guarantee freedom of expression. In several Western Balkan countries, threats and physical attacks against journalists have continued. In some Beneficiaries, defamation remains a criminal offence or subject to disproportionately high fines.

Throughout the region, political interference with the independence of media, including public service broadcasters is a problem. Editorial independence is undermined by undue political and economic pressures.

The issues need to be addressed by the Beneficiaries concerned as a matter of urgency. The CSF will support priority activities stemming from the conclusions from the May 2011 conference on Freedom of Expression and Media (“Speak Up!”). This will include support to regional network programmes to support investigative journalism, prizes for journalists and capacity building of journalist associations.

4) Strengthening Civil Society Contribution to EU Integration

In addition to the long-term capacity development and advocacy work support by CSF, experience shows the importance of being able to respond to issues and opportunities as they emerge. Many CSOs have been working successfully over the years in the IPA region. Most of these actions have been pursued by partnerships and networks that share the values of the EU. Some are even part of the EU structure such as the European Economic and Social Committee, the Environment Forum and the Committee of the Regions.

To improve impact of the dialogue with CSOs and to address shared objectives and priorities identified in the Regular Reports and Communications on the Enlargement Strategy, it is therefore of the essence to create a budget for activities aimed at strengthening civil society contribution to European integration.

3.3. Expected results and measurable indicators

Supporting the development of multilateral partnerships between CSOs is deemed to be an effective way of improving the development, function and involvement of civil society and to increase the influence of civil society region-wide.

The following results are expected. Progress against these objectives and the provisional indicators - as amended from time to time - will be monitored on an annual basis.

Component 1: Partnership Actions / Support to cross-border thematic networks:

- Thematic CSO networks are able to present joint rights-based strategic programmes with the aim to add value to national CSO efforts and achieve sustainable outcomes.
- Civil Society development strategies have been developed for the main sectors, and endorsed by local civil society, foreseeing established regional CSOs/networks helping national CSO coalitions and initiatives.
- Thematic CSO networks perform timely consultations with citizens, pool expertise and produce high quality research, monitoring and strategic advocacy.
- Government institutions recognise the importance and value of civil society

participation in reform processes

Component 2: Technical Assistance:

- Improved capacity of CSOs to conduct quality thematic research and evaluations on the impact of civic activism and issues to be addressed to improve democratic space and effectiveness.
- CSO thematic network results and experiences evaluated, methodology further developed and put into practice.
- CSOs confident and active in identifying and pursuing cross-border thematic cooperation.
- Methodology and practices developed to strengthen interaction between larger, urban-based NGOs and grass-root CSOs and civic activities.

Component 3: Media and Freedom of Expression:

- Intensified cross-border cooperation resulting in increased quality and visibility of investigative journalism.
- Improved performance of self-regulatory bodies in print media.
- Increased joint action between investigative journalists and CSOs.

Component 4: Strengthening Civil Society Contribution to EU Integration:

- Improved efficiency in civil society responses to political developments, opportunities and threats of high importance for fundamental rights and EU integration.

Provisional Indicators

- Number of thematic networks producing joint strategic programme documents
- Quality of outputs produced by networks and ability to manage a participatory process
- Frequency and quality of interaction with government institutions: evidence of participation, policy and legislative changes being influenced by network performance.
- Number of new partnerships and networks or increased membership and degree of representation of existing ones, in the two years from the end of the programme;
- Number of (in)formal consultation structures involving CSOs and public authorities and/or relevant stakeholders set up during the two years from the end of the programme;
- Number of members of target groups that benefit from the support of these CSOs in the two years from the end of the programme.

- Number and quality of joint initiatives / contacts involving stakeholders from different Beneficiaries;

3.4. Selection mechanism

Partnership Actions

Partnership Actions will be implemented through Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA). These agreements support the need to work on a regular, stable and longer-term basis with networks involving well-established beneficiaries, facilitating the work already carried out by these organisations to influence public sector reform processes and give citizens a voice in decision-making. FPAs will be selected on the basis of a call for proposals. They will be implemented with agreements at two levels: The first level will set out the conditions governing the grant to partners for carrying out actions or work programmes, on the basis of an action plan and jointly agreed general objectives. This does not constitute an obligation for the Commission to award grants. The second level is the specific grant agreement which is based upon the Framework Partnership Agreement and leads to a grant for an action or work programme. These specific grants will either be awarded on the basis of a restricted call for proposals restricted to partners or the partner may present a proposal to the Commission for an action. Both one-off action grant(s) and/or operating grants could be made available under these agreements.

Under this Multi-beneficiary programme the lead contracting partner will cooperate and use the grant contribution with partners within the network for activities on the basis of an agreed work plan and budget. The contracting partner is responsible for the overall quality assurance; including monitoring and reporting on results and compliance with high standards of internal controls. The scope, length and comprehensiveness of the partnership actions will differ and depend upon the objectives to be reached.

The programme for Partnership Actions will be designed and implemented in five distinctive steps.

1) In Q4 2011: A call for proposals will be made for Framework Partnership Arrangements. Applicants will be asked to submit a draft strategy and implementation plan for the partnership. These will be assessed by an evaluation committee based on published criteria for relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

2) In Q1 2012: 10-15 proposals will be selected and granted resources for a strategy design phase of 3 months (funded from 2011 Multi beneficiary IPA).

3) In Q3 2012: At the end of the strategy design phase, grantees will submit final strategies and implementation plans. These will be reassessed by the evaluation committee using the same criteria as set out for the first stage of the call for proposals. Based on the evaluation, applicants will be awarded FPAs and implementation grants for a duration of up to 4 years.

4) In 2014: External review of the first two years of implementation.

5) In 2016: Final review and end of programme evaluation.

A second call for Partnership Actions is planned for 2013, following the same process of implementation (funded from 2013 budget appropriations)

Within the Partnership Actions, part of the budget is earmarked for activities/projects where funds are used by the programme partners for activities in their respective countries that meet established programme criteria. Such activities – e.g. pilot projects in support of policy initiatives - would address issues and generate experiences and results important for mutual learning within the network.

The regional networks will encourage and support affinity networks between CSOs at the national level. It is important that there is sufficient flexibility built into the programmes to allow the networks to respond to opportunities as they arise. The networks will be able to propose as part of their annual work plan and budget re-granting of activities performed by partners outside of the original network. This will allow for support to new initiatives identified during the implementation and mitigate the risk of partnership actions being perceived as exclusive and inwards looking.

Technical Assistance

At the end of the 4-year TACSO contract in 2013, the Commission will assess the results and constraints to inform the design of future regional technical assistance to CSOs. It is expected that the training and capacity development modules developed by TACSO will be assumed by national CSOs. This component will be used to (a) develop the capacity of CSOs to do regular coordinated needs assessments and evaluations, (b) develop a methodology based on lessons learned in thematic/sector network programmes, (c) assist CSOs to identify areas and opportunities for cross-boundary cooperation and (d) facilitate development and overall quality assurance within the CSF. It will be implemented through a service contract selected through a restricted tender to be launched in the first quarter of 2013. If the assessment of the TACSO contract shows that CSOs are best placed to continue the work, the Commission may launch a call for proposals.

Media and Freedom of Expression

The selection of a regional network programme to support investigative journalism will follow the same selection and implementation procedures as set out for Partnership Actions. The financial allocation for the programme will be made from the Partnership Action budget line.

Other Media and Freedom of Expression activities will be funded from Action Grant Media budget line. This includes the programme providing prizes for investigative journalists which will be designed in early 2012. It is estimated that 5-10 journalists would be awarded annually in each IPA Beneficiary. The selection and evaluation of candidates will be handled by the EUDs supported by a regional facilitator.

The implementation modalities for activities aiming towards capacity building of journalist associations and print-media self-regulatory bodies are to be determined following a mapping of the state of play of media support in the region. It is envisaged that this will be either a call for proposals or, in exceptional circumstances, direct awards in accordance with Article 168(1)(c) of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation, i.e. to bodies with de jure or de facto monopoly, and/or Article 168(1)(f) of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation, on account of their technical competence and high degree of specialisation. The final decision on implementation method and schedule will be made following a mapping of actors in Q4 2011 and set out in the Annual Work Programme for Grants.

Strengthening Civil Society Contribution to EU Integration

This component will provide support to CSOs to address regional priorities identified in the European Commission's Regular Reports and Communications on the Enlargement Strategy for 2011 and 2012. It will be implemented through two calls for proposals to be launched in Q1 2012 and Q1 2013.

3.5. Conditionality and sequencing

The development of a civil society culture in the region requires political stability and a favourable environment for the enhancement of CSOs and civil society dialogue. The present general political framework within the Western Balkans and Turkey should allow for dialogue and development of and with CSOs.

Consequently, partner CSOs and/or authorities from the Western Balkans and Turkey should be willing to establish and improve their exchange of information. The partnership network action programmes require CSOs to establish functional alliances and coalitions to achieve common purposes. To become eligible for the partnership action funds, the contracting partner should:

- (1) have an efficient and reliable quality assurance system, established track record in programming multi-party interventions in the enlargement context, an adequate system for results-based management and reporting, financial management and procurement;
- (2) be transparent and based on democratic values;
- (3) ensure ownership and visibility of local partner organisations and that regional network initiatives add value and support but do not overlap with national initiatives.

All these efforts will fail if the authorities implement policies and actions that are counterproductive to achieving a civil society culture. It is therefore of paramount importance that the EU and other donors keep a close eye on this and take appropriate measures if necessary. It is very important that donors remain committed to a strong civil society in the region.

CSOs have to demonstrate their legitimacy and credibility as reliable and constructive partners representing important elements of society: citizens should trust CSOs. In addition, beneficiary CSOs should be keen on establishing partnerships with other CSOs within the region and the EU and they should have the capacity to absorb and successfully implement contracts awarded to them. These matters will be analysed thoroughly during the selection process of proposals.

3.6. Linked activities

Other Civil Society Facility components:

For the period ahead, the CSF will focus on the achievement of three outputs that have been identified on the basis of TACSO needs analyses, internal and external reviews and feedback for EU Delegations responsible for national programming:

- Greater benefit to civil society from national legal and financial frameworks and improved dialogue with state institutions. TACSO will continue to work with local partners in the region to review the full range of legal and financial regulations that apply to civil society in order to identify gaps, inconsistencies and areas of possible improvement in the legal environment for civil society. If and when required by the EU Delegations, TACSO will also provide technical support to the re-drafting or amendment of legislation and its improvement.
- Stronger commitment and capacities of CSOs in priority sector reform processes (analysis, monitoring advocacy etc). The thematic partnership actions will complement national initiatives by bringing in sectoral expertise, resources and experiences from the cross-boundary networks.
- Increased access of grass-root organisations and actions to support networks and resources. The regional projects, both through TACSO and partnership actions, will investigate feasible models and practices to divide the gap between larger NGOs and civil society grass-root initiatives.

Close coordination will be maintained with the People to People (P2P) Programme as a valuable complement to the partnership actions.

3.7. Lessons learned

Under previous projects to support civil society¹¹ there have been some important achievements. Networks and partnerships have been established and strengthened, and information on the EU *acquis* has been shared.

However, it has become apparent that the vast majority of these networks and partnerships include only CSOs of a similar nature or background (notably size), which have difficulties to survive once financial support from EU or other donors ends and have limited success in advocacy work at local level. As a result, the involvement of other essential partners remains very limited.

It is for this reason that the current programme will pay particular attention to cross-sectoral partnerships and networks involving larger more established and experienced EU and national CSOs as well as more grass-root local CSOs.

To allow them to flourish, legislative frameworks, public incentives and indeed the perception of CSOs among the general public should be upgraded. The Technical Assistance will provide valuable input for this. Furthermore, the TA will provide guidance to the projects acting as a mediator/facilitator between the different 'segments', which in turn should assist the smaller CSOs.

¹¹ CARDS 2003: “Democratic Stabilisation - Civil Society Development and Network Building”;
 CARDS 2006: “Consolidating Partnership between Civil Society Organisations and Public Authorities for Raising Minority Rights in the Region”;
 Phare 2006: “Business Support Programme”;
 IPA 2007: “Support to Media Production in South East Europe”;
 IPA 2008: “Civil Society Facility”
 IPA 2009: “Civil Society Facility”
 IPA 2010: “Civil Society Facility”.

In addition, more effort is required for further recognition, development and civil society initiatives in the region and for a culture of civil society partnership and consultation in sectors of great interest for the region and relevant stakeholders.

The proposed multi-beneficiary programme is built on the recognition that civil society in Western Balkans and Turkey is facing a number of deep structural problems that are creating barriers for its independence and sustainability. Many local NGOs are not aware of the real mission of civil society and they have not managed to establish tangible relations with the citizens because their projects have been donor-driven and short-term. In addition, many NGOs have developed as interest groups or professional NGOs with no actual member base. With a decrease in the overall funding envelope of NGOs from foreign donors, the main challenge is to facilitate a process whereby civil society becomes better rooted in their societies.

To achieve the necessary changes, it is important to operate on the basis of a longer term vision and time perspective and to move away from short-term individual projects in favour of partnerships and networks based on concrete sectoral areas. It is important that these networks do not become merely discussion panels but are allowed the flexibility and resources to become action- and results-oriented networks dealing with policy based on concrete action and evidence based experience.

Turkish CSOs are under-represented in the Multi-beneficiary Partnership Actions. A number of factors, including language, culture and political-historical context distinguish Turkey from the Western Balkans. Efforts should be made to improve access and make Partnership Actions more relevant for Turkish CSOs. .

4. BUDGET (IN EUR)

	EU - IPA assistance 2011-2012 (indicative only for budget appropriations 2012; planned appropriations for 2013 for information only)				Total Co- financing of Project 2011-2012 (indicative)	Total IPA + Co- financing 2011 -2012
	2011	2012	Total 2011-2012	2013		
	All Institution Building					
Strategy design grants:	-	-	-	500 000	-	-
Partnership Action grants:	10 000 000	-	10 000 000	10 000 000	1 000 000	11 000 000
Action Grants media:	500 000	1 000 000	1 500 000	500 000	150 000	1 650 000
Strengthening Civil Society Contribution to EU Integration:	500 000	500 000	1 000 000	500 000	200 000	1 200 000

Technical Assistance:	-	6 000 000	6 000 000	-	-	6 000 000
TOTAL	11 000 000	7 500 000	18 500 000	11 500 000	1 350 000	19 850 000

5. INDICATIVE IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE (PERIODS BROKEN DOWN PER QUARTER)

Contracts	Start of Tendering	Signature of contract	Project Completion
Partnership Action Implementation grants, (IPA 2011)	-	Q4 2012	Q4 2016
Partnership Action Strategy Design Grants, 2 nd call (IPA 2013)*	Q1 2013	Q3 2013	-
Partnership Action Implementation Grants, (IPA 2013)	-	Q4 2014	Q4 2018
Action Grants Media: (IPA 2011)	NA	NA	NA
Action Grants Media (IPA 2012)	NA	NA	NA
Action Grants Media (2013)	NA	NA	NA
Technical Assistance (IPA 2012)	Q1 2013	Q3 2013	Q3 2017
Strengthening CSO Contribution to EU Integration (2011)	Q1 2012	Q3 2012	Q3 2014
Strengthening CSO Contribution to EU Integration (2012)	Q1 2013	Q3 2013	Q3 2015
Strengthening CSO Contribution to EU Integration (2013)	Q1 2014	Q3 2014	Q3 2016

*The first call for Strategy Design Grants will be funded from the IPA 2011 Multi-beneficiary Programme (outside this Decision) and will be launched in Q3 2011.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

6.1. Equal Opportunity

The strategies and implementation projects will promote equal opportunities in all activities covered. Proposals will set out what the current situation is for relevant groups and how the intervention will address issues affecting equal opportunities.

6.2. Environment

The European Union has a longstanding commitment to address environmental concerns in its assistance programmes (as part as a wider commitment to sustainable development). Many of the foreseen subjects will concern rights and obligations relating to the environment *EU acquis*.

6.3. Minorities

Actions will certainly include aspects related to public services, legislation and socio-economic development of relevance for intercultural dialogue, rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. The actions to be implemented will address specific aspects of minorities and vulnerable groups.