

Civil Society Facility 2011-2012

(3) Country Fiche: ALBANIA

1. Basic information

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

1.2 Title: Civil Society Facility Albania Programme

1.3 ELARG Statistical code: 35 (Civil Society)

1.4 Location: Albania

Implementing arrangements:

1.5 Contracting Authority: European Commission, EU Delegation to Albania

1.6 Beneficiary: Civil society organisations in Albania

Financing:

1.7 IPA contribution: **Total: EUR 1 500 000**
2011: EUR 0¹
2012: EUR 1 500 000²
2013: EUR 1 500 000³

1.8 Final date for contracting:

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 2012 budget appropriations
30 November 2017 for the 2013 budget appropriations

1.10 Final date for disbursements:

30 November 2017 for the 2012 budget appropriations
30 November 2018 for the 2013 budget appropriations

¹ EUR 1.5 million is included in the IPA National Programme 2011

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 and expertise from established CSOs and CSO networks.

2.2 Country fiche purpose:

A strengthened civil society, actively participating in the public debate on democracy, human rights and the rule of law and with capacity to influence decision and policy making processes at all levels of governance.

The specific purposes of the programme in Albania are:

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".

- To strengthen management and organisational capacities of civil society organisations, promote inter-organisation cooperation and support networking between local and regional/international CSOs, providing also a longer term programme-oriented support.
- Improve the legal and fiscal framework for civil society organisations in the country, promoting adoption throughout the country of a clear and unified approach, in line with European best practices.
- To encourage the active participation of civil society in policy-making, fostering the role of civil society in monitoring the fulfilment of Albania's obligations under the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Agreement, including the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

2.3 Link with the 2010 Enlargement Strategy and Opinion

The 2010-2011 Enlargement Strategy 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 needs to be in place to 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."

In the case of Albania, the Analytical Report accompanying the Commission's Opinion on Albania's application for EU membership, released on 9 November 2010, reads as follows:

"As regards freedom of assembly and association, the Constitution and legislation provide for the right to organise collectively for any lawful purpose. Civil society actors operate in a non-restrictive environment and registration of new organisations is not impeded by the state authorities. Progress has been made on building networks of organisations dealing with

domestic violence, Roma, child trafficking, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons and people with disabilities, among others. However, notwithstanding the enhanced visibility of some civil society organisations, the sector still remains relatively weak, suffering from insufficient technical and financial resources and dependence on international donor assistance. Only a limited number of NGOs have strong organisational capacity and most lack solid management structures.

Despite the adoption of the Charter for Civil Society, involvement of civil society organisations in policy making and parliamentary hearings and consultations is limited, thus undermining their counterbalancing power and role in democratic scrutiny. Civic engagement of the Albanian public remains limited and NGOs are sometimes regarded with mistrust. The fiscal regulatory framework for non-profit organisations needs to be further clarified through a consultative process with all relevant stakeholders. An Agency for the support of civil society tasked to allocate state funding to non-profit organisations has been established and the first call for proposals has been launched."

2.4 Link with Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document

The MIPD 2011-2013 will focus on the following sectors/priority areas:

1. Justice and Home Affairs
2. Public Administration Reform
3. Transport
4. Environment and Climate change
5. Employment and social inclusion
6. Rural Development/Agriculture

Support to **civil society** will be integrated in all sectors of the MIPD, in particular in the field of the environment, justice and home affairs, public administration reform and employment and social inclusion.

2.5 Link with Country Strategies on Civil Society

The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007-2013, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 12 March 2008, states that *"The active participation of non-government and other civil society organisations in the decision-making process will be further encouraged"*.

On 9 March 2009, the Albanian Parliament approved the Law on the Agency for the Support of Civil Society, responsible for the provision of public funding to non-profit organisations through regular calls for proposals. The mission of this public body is to encourage, through financial assistance, sustainable development of civil society and to create conditions conducive to enhanced civic initiatives in the areas covered by the existing National Strategies.

The concrete areas of interest of the Agency include, amongst others:

- Fight against corruption, human trafficking and domestic violence.
- Encouragement of citizens in activities, their inclusion and participation for the education / cultivation of community feelings;

- Capacity building in the fields of social development where there is a lack of the presence of the activity of civil society, building capacities to offer services currently lacking in the market of social services.
- Development of cooperation between organisations of civil society, in particular those operating in the same sector.
- Lobbying initiatives which promote the interests of citizens, groups of interests and communities, especially the interests of vulnerable groups of society.
- Initiatives of civil society promoting employment and preventing the informal labour market.
- Increase of the influence of the civil society in the processes of compilation, policy making and monitoring of public policies.

Since 2009, the Agency has been provided with an envelope of about EUR 750 000 / year. Although the fund became operational only in 2010 when the Agency launched its first call for proposals, 52 grants have been awarded for a total of about EUR 900 000, with funding from 2010 and 2011, while the rest of the yearly allotment was used for the set up and running costs of the Agency.

The application procedures are considered by NGOs as being relatively easy to implement. In some cases, CSOs which had already received EU funding have obtained further funding from the Agency to extend similar activities.

The Agency is also part of the Local Advisory Group established under the TACSO Project.

3. Description of project

3.1 Background and justification:

3.1.1 CSOs role and perspectives in Albania

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.

Since the collapse of the communist regime, hundreds of civil society organisations emerged throughout the country during the 1990s. Today, the CSO sector is small and relatively underdeveloped, with around 450 active non-profit organisations mainly concentrated in Tirana. The third sector in Albania has traditionally depended on foreign donor assistance, and currently shows limited financial and management capacity. CSOs need to increase their organisational capacities and their abilities for advocacy and networking, and must work to

ensure the financial sustainability of the sector. They should further develop their partnership with the State authorities, aiming for a greater involvement in the decision-making process and in monitoring the implementation of public policies.

3.1.2 Legal environment for CSOs

Civil society actors operate in a non-restrictive legal environment. The non-profit sector is broadly regulated by the legislative package adopted by the Albanian Parliament in 2001, which marked a step towards a more favourable legal environment for civil society initiatives. Registration of new CSOs is not hindered by the State authorities. However, the fiscal regime governing the non-profit organisations remains unclear, in particular regarding the applicable Value Added Tax, which puts some strain on the CSOs' financial viability.

CSOs are facing daily difficulties in dealing with fiscal provision which are not sufficiently detailed and not homogeneously applied by the relevant governmental offices throughout the country. A recent study of the *European Centre for Non-Profit Law (ECNL)*, commissioned by the Open Society Foundation for Albania (OSFA), highlighted the need to have improvements in the fiscal environment in which the CSOs are working.

As highlighted above, the Albanian Parliament adopted in 2009 the law and by-laws for the establishment of a public Agency for the Support of Civil Society, which provides support to CSOs through the provision of public funding.

After consultation with civil society representatives, the Government also adopted in 2010 the Civil Society Charter, a document of political nature defining the main principles of the relationship between the non-governmental sector and the local and central authorities.

The Government has sporadically consulted civil society representatives on draft laws and in the preparations of public policies. This is the case, for instance, of consultations carried out on the Gender Equality Law adopted in July 2008, the Roma Action Plan of October 2009, or the Anti-discrimination Law approved in February 2010. However, there are no formal mechanisms in place for such consultations. Coordination mechanisms to enhance civil society participation in policy-making remain weak.

Although there has been a gradual increase in recent years in the number of advocacy activities carried out by CSOs, including human rights monitoring and campaigning against corruption, Albanian civil society continues to be most active in providing social services to the community. In this regard, a significant number of non-profit organisations deliver supplementary or alternative services in areas such as education, health, legal advice, protection and reintegration of victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, community-based services for people with disabilities, etc.

In 2010 UNDP Albania, in collaboration with the Institute for Democracy and Mediation, conducted an assessment of the situation of the civil society sector in the country – named "Civil Society Index (CIS)" – which charts civil society development and assesses the capacity of the sector to meet Albania's development challenges and societal expectations from this sector. The index highlights that civil society operates in a moderately enabling environment, with relatively developed organisational capacities that appear supportive to the general practice of values. Yet, low levels of civic activism and the weak performance of a donor-driven civil society in grasping priorities and needs of the local context appear to be the main reasons for a limited impact on the policy and social development level.

According to the researchers, the CIS highlighted *"the need to establish an Albanian Council for Cooperation with NGOs, as a government initiative, based on international best practices and the successful experiences of the Western Balkan Region. This forum would institutionalise consultations between government and civil society organisations around issues related to legislation, transparency, cooperation, and help develop mutually reliable working relations."*

3.1.3 Financial viability of CSOs

In general, the non profit sector's overall resources are insufficient to meet its financial needs. Only rarely do CSOs charge fees for their services or engage in economic activities to support their activities. Furthermore, CSOs generally do not engage in local fund-raising, and access to private funding is very limited.

Until recent years, access to Government funds has been negligible. However, this situation has changed since the Agency for the Support of Civil Society was established and started providing financial assistance through calls for proposals.

Nevertheless, the Albanian non-profit sector is still heavily dependent on foreign donor funds. Most CSOs orient their operations to match available funding rather than to operate under their own strategic approaches. This has translated into civil society initiatives being mainly driven by the international donors' agenda, not always reflecting the most pressing needs in the country.

CSOs have frequently lamented the lack on donor side of a long-term, programme-based approach, which would in turn favour for them the set-up and pursuit of solid multi-annual strategies. The low financial sustainability of the third sector has been aggravated during the past few years due to diminishing funding from traditional donors.

A Working Group on the Civil Society has not yet been formally established under coordination of the Department for Strategy and Donor Coordination.. However, with the initiative of the Dutch Embassy and the EU Delegation, a Donor Working Group on Civil Society has been meeting since 2010 with representatives from donor countries (Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Sweden, UK, France, Switzerland) and international organisations (OSCE, UN). Information about the respective support programme to CSOs is exchanged and main common problems of the sector are discussed with a view to identifying perspectives for common action.

3.1.4 Management and organisational capacity

Civil society is represented by many small organisations which remain largely fragmented. The number of Albanian CSOs that have solid organisational structures remains quite limited, with a heavy concentration in Tirana. There is a generally poor level of constituency development by CSOs, low number of membership-based organisations, and low levels of community support.

The need to increase the organisational capacity of non-profit organisations remains one of the most important challenges for the Albanian third sector. In most organisations, the maintenance of a large paid staff is not possible or sustainable, especially since donors now fund specific project activities and cover fewer operational costs.

There is a general lack of adequate training of CSOs staff and low volunteering rates. There are often weak governing structures within non-profit organisations. CSOs need to establish proper governance, management, administrative and financial systems to ensure the achievements of their goals and to develop sustainable programmes in the long term.

In this regard, the establishment of the EU regionally financed Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) has been highly useful in improving knowledge of EU policies and of financial instrument in favour of CSOs as well as in upgrading their capacity to prepare project proposals properly and later to implement them.

There still remains a great need for the improvement of such capacities taking in consideration the relatively low average level of the proposals submitted. Another important indicator of improvement required in the management phase is the large number of clarifications required in the frame of the reporting phase, especially for the financial component.

There is a clear capacity gap between urban and rural CSOs, with those in Tirana generally having greater organisational strength and human capacity. Some of the most active and influential organisations at the community level are the professional Tirana-based elite, many of which have regional and local offices and centres.

In recent years, the EU Delegation has devoted specific attention to the wider involvement of grass-root, small scale organisations located in peripheral areas. On the occasion of the last Call for Proposals under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), several info-days were organised in different cities, attracting mostly organisations that had never applied before to EU grants.

During such info-days, a specifically targeted questionnaire was distributed to the participants to provide them with a manageable instrument to express their opinions about the key features of the forthcoming call, such as sub-sectors to be targeted, size of the grant appropriate to their capacities as well as training needs perceived for their proactive participation to the call. As a result, the number of applications submitted increased by 1/3, mainly due to increased participation by newcomer, small-scale organisations.

Due to the reduction of donor assistance, as well as the political affiliations of a number of CSOs, strengthening cooperation among these organisations remains a challenge. Despite these shortcomings, CSOs are increasingly aware of the benefits of working together and having stronger communication with one another. Consequently, during recent years there have been some successful examples of NGO coalitions working on child trafficking, gender equality and domestic violence, and people with disabilities.

3.2 Activities:

In order to address the above mentioned issues, support to civil society will be provided using one or more of the methods of implementation mentioned under 4.1 of the main text of the Financing Proposal. Also the mechanism for selection on a regular basis of the type and method of implementation is explained in there, as further developed under point 3.4 below.

In preparation of the present project fiche, public consultations were held in spring 2011 with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders, including the Agency for Support to Civil Society, the Ministry of European Integration, other international donors and international organisations.

The following activities have been identified for support:

*A - Calls for proposals will be launched annually to provide support to national CSOs in the fields of **justice** (access to justice, fight to corruption and monitoring/improvement of living conditions in detention system), **protection of vulnerable groups** (disadvantaged women, children and elderly people as well as minority groups) and **protection of environment**.*

Regarding longer-term programme-based targets, mechanisms for promoting continuity through sequencing of contracts will be considered, provided that quality criteria and other conditionality are met.

The following activities are linked to A but mainly funded through the Technical Assistance component of the Multi-beneficiary programme (TACSO).

B - Involvement of smaller organisations from rural and peripheral areas will be promoted through info days and outreach activities.

In line with best practice established in recent calls, the specific subjects of the new calls as well as the size of grants considered appropriate by the potential applicants will be subject to discussion in the frame of the info-days.

TACSO will have a wider role to play in the frame of the activities of the Donor Working Group on Civil Society (see 3.1.3 above), including the possibility to act as Secretariat of the Donor Working Group, managing also a database of the activities funded by the various donors.

To consolidate reflections on the results of the grant scheme in the specific sectors, the establishment of "**sector platforms**" for sharing of information on results achieved by national CSO will also be promoted.

Additionally, in order to have a larger number of small organisations taking part to the EU funding process, the involvement of delegate bodies from Member States in the management of a share of grant funding, including the possibility of sub-granting, will be considered. If deemed viable, an arrangement of this nature would be funded from 2013 appropriations.

C - Technical Assistance will be provided for the improvement of regulatory and legal framework for civil society especially in relation to fiscal environment and relationship with local authorities in service delivery.

Building on the previous work of the CSOs community and in dialogue with the Government including through the involvement of the National Agency for Support to Civil Society, the Technical Assistance should support the definition, approval and implementation of a legal framework for CSOs in line with the European best practices. Such TA will be provided by the TACSO Project, under funding of the multi-beneficiary budget.

3.3 Expected results and measurable indicators:

Outcome for Measure A – Calls for proposals for the improvement of the functioning of the justice system, improvement of the living conditions of vulnerable groups, improvement of the protection of the environment, within the programme implementation period, through service delivery at field level and advocacy and policy dialogue with Government at central and local levels.

- Improvement in the judicial, socio-economic, political and environmental context in which civil society operates
 - Indicator 1: Civil society is substantially involved by the government in the elaboration of new legislation and in the field of justice, environment and social policies. Civil society is invited to discuss new versions of the Operational Programmes in the field of environment (IPA Component III) and social policies (IPA Component IV).
 - Indicator 2: Improved satisfaction of civil society as regards their dialogue with the government and their comments taken into account by the government
 - Indicator 3: Number of monitoring reports made by CSOs in the field of environment, social inclusion of most vulnerable groups, human rights and justice system.
 - Indicator 4: Civil society organisations push for the ratification and proper implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international instruments of comparable level in the fields of environment, social inclusion of most vulnerable groups, human rights and justice system.

Outcome for Measure B – Increased access of newcomers, small-scale organisations from peripheral areas of the country to financial resources.

- Improvement of the efficiency of support to newcomers, small-scale organisations from peripheral areas of the country in planning and implementation of activities
 - Indicator 1: Increased level of above-mentioned types of organisations attending info-days (from 1/3 of the participants to 1/2)
 - Indicator 2: Increased level of applications submitted (from 1/3 of the applications to 1/2)
 - Indicator 3: Increased levels of funding to above-mentioned types of organisations (from 1/3 of the grants to 1/2)
 - Indicator 4: Increased geographic spread in distribution of grants
- Enhanced involvement of newcomers, small-scale organisations from peripheral areas of the country in the creation of public opinion, policy-making and participation in the decision-making mechanisms at local and national level
 - Indicator 1: Number of initiatives that have achieved their objectives and examples of good practice of grass-root and community based organisations' contributions in relevant areas

Outcome for measure C – Technical Assistance for the definition and approval, within the programme implementation period, of a legal framework for CSOs in line with the European best practices to be homogeneously and properly adopted throughout the country.

- Strengthened prospects for financial sustainability of CSOs through well developed national legal and financial frameworks
 - Indicator 1: Improved satisfaction of CSOs with legal and financial frameworks
- Improvement in institutional mechanisms and policy frameworks for Government and Civil Society dialogue;
 - Indicator 1: Improved satisfaction of CSOs with institutional mechanisms and policy frameworks for Government, Civil Society dialogue and consultation;

More detailed performance indicators and benchmarks will be defined and adopted to monitor the regular advancement of the programme.

3.4 Selection mechanism:

A - The calls for proposals will be launched in principle with a yearly pace; the possibility for a unique launch of the whole financial envelope will be considered.

B – The delegate bodies from Member States for Indirect Centralised Management of a share of the funds for grants will be selected in an objective and transparent manner, through a cost-effectiveness analysis to match the performance requirement identified.

C – The technical assistance for the improvement of the legal framework for CSOs will be provided through the TACSO Project. The revised Terms of Reference for the second phase of the TACSO Project make provision for assistance of this nature.

3.5 Conditionality and sequencing

For Measure A, the guidelines for applicants will be adjusted based on the actual pace of change in the relevant sectors and remarks from the yearly Regular Progress Reports.

For Measure B, a call for expression of interest will be launched for identification of interested and suitable delegate bodies from Member States.

For Measure C, the full involvement of the Albanian Government is needed in order to gain effective results from the revision of the legal framework.

3.6 Linked activities

EU financial assistance in the field of civil society and human rights has considerably increased in the recent years, thus helping fill the gap left by other traditional donors such as the British, Dutch and Danish development cooperation agencies.

EU funds made available to civil society at national level since 2005 total some EUR 10 million from financial instruments such as CARDS/IPA, national and multi-beneficiary

programmes, including Cross-Border Cooperation programmes (CBCs) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

Over EUR 3 millions were allocated under CARDS 2005 and 2006 and approximately EUR 1.3 million under the IPA 2009 National Programme for the Civil Society Facility. These funds have been allocated to projects dealing with the fight against corruption, support to environmental protection and education, strengthening of media and support to vulnerable groups.

Under the IPA National Programme 2011, EUR 1.5 million were earmarked to support a project aimed at promoting social inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania, which will be implemented by UNDP. One of the main components of this action will consist of a re-granting mechanism targeting Roma and Egyptian grass-roots organisations for the implementation of small-scale projects.

Furthermore, in the period 2007-2009, approximately EUR 1.8 million were allocated to NGOs operating in Albania under the EIDHR Country-Based Support Scheme. These funds have contributed to the implementation of actions aimed at strengthening the role of civil society in fostering human rights and democratic reform, including access to justice, the protection and promotion of the rights of children, women, minorities and people with disabilities. An additional EUR 1.2 million for the years 2010-2011 has been programmed and will be allocated via the on-going call for proposals the CSOs working in the above-mentioned fields, with an emphasis on the fight against discrimination.

Finally, CSOs in Albania can benefit from IPA cross-border cooperation funds through the calls for proposals regularly launched in the framework of the CBC Programmes between Albania and neighbouring countries:

- In 2010, approximately EUR 500 000 were allocated to CSOs following the first call for proposals of the CBC Programme Albania-Montenegro, covering economic development and tourism promotion, environment protection and enhancement of social cohesion through people-to-people contacts.

- Early 2011, about EUR 465 000 have been allocated to CSOs from the first call for proposals of the CBC Programme between Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, covering economic development, sustainable environmental development and social cohesion and cultural change.

Albania has also participated in the cross-border cooperation programme with Greece and with Kosovo since 2010.

Under the multi-beneficiary civil society facility, Albanian NGOs have also benefited from regional calls for proposals, as well as from the Technical Assistance for CSOs (TACSO) and the People 2 People Programme (P2P):

- The TACSO project office in Tirana has been fully operational since 2009 and provides, inter alia training to a large number of non-profit organisations in areas such as preparation of project proposals and project management.

- Furthermore, in the framework of the P2P programme, representatives from Albanian CSOs are regularly invited to participate in organised study tours, where they learn about EU institutions and policies and have the opportunity to exchange good practices with other organisations from the region.

In addition, a number of bilateral donors are providing support to civil society in the country, although the general trend is towards reducing financial support while the country advances in its transition process.

Swedish support to CSOs is currently channelled through three Swedish framework organisations. Swedish organisations provide other kinds of support to their Albanian partners, complementary to the grants. The number of Albanian partners is approximately 21 and the annual funding amounts to approximately EUR 1 million. The areas of support are women's rights, women's movement, local democracy, access to justice, anti-discrimination and media. Support to civil society in the environment sector through an Albanian framework organisation is envisaged in 2012. The funding to civil society in Albania is expected to increase. Sweden also provides support for capacity building of forest and pasture user organisations and communes.

Austria offers small grant schemes for CSOs supporting their initiatives in areas such as social inclusion, environment, human rights and gender as well as media. In the context of EU integration, Austria organised a workshop for CSOs to strengthen their capacities to become more effective in accessing as well as managing EU grant funding. In addition, Austria provides a specific NGO budget line supporting partnerships in project implementation between Austrian NGOs and CSOs from the region to promote sustainable know-how transfer and cooperation.

The German Cooperation Agency (GIZ) recently closed its projects providing support to civil society. It will however continue to cooperate with civil society in the context of its other ongoing projects on economic and rural development, vocational educational training, water sector reform, public administration reform and EU-integration.

Italy keeps a strong interest in the social and local development sectors through the realisation of projects to be financed through debt swap. The agreement on the debt swap is expected to materialise soon. As part of this agreement, several projects will be proposed by Albanian line ministries on specific issues which will include rural and local development. It is the intention of the Italian Cooperation to involve Albanian CSOs as partners or implementing agencies for these projects. This will represent an important opportunity for Albanian CSOs to enforce their own capabilities.

Switzerland addresses civil society as a cross-cutting issue. As a consequence Swiss interventions in Albania in support to civil society are complementary and in synergy with the main domains of intervention, as defined in the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Albania 2010-2013. In addition, Switzerland targets civil society specifically through its Swiss Contribution Fund, amounting an equivalent of around EUR 81 000 per year.

3.7 Lessons learned

Based on the experience of past calls for proposals under geographic and thematic instruments targeting non-profit organisations in Albania, as well as through civil society consultations between the EU Delegation and civil society organisations, a number of conclusions have been drawn, including:

- Although the EU is well-known amongst Albanians, the majority of CSOs have an imperfect knowledge of EU programmes concerning funding for civil society. The EU

Delegation and TACSO Albania have promoted specific initiatives to tackle this issue, including info-days and training courses throughout the country

- CSOs usually complain that the procedures for applying for and managing EU funds are extremely bureaucratic. They generally consider that it is difficult to meet the eligibility criteria, and declare that they are not prepared to comply with EU requirements relating to project management and reporting. This is particularly the case of small grass-roots organisations dealing with the Roma minority or people with disabilities.
- Albanian CSOs are generally ill-equipped to compete for funds against international and intergovernmental organisations. Therefore, EU funding in this field should target primarily Albanian CSOs. In those cases where the applicant to a call for proposals is not based in Albania, there should be at least one Albanian partner, in order to allow for know-how transfer from foreign to local organisations.
- It would be appropriate projects have a duration longer than one year, so as to ensure a greater sustainability of the action and monitoring of impact.

4. Budget (in EUR)

	EU - IPA assistance 2011-2012 (indicative 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
	All Institution Building					
	2011	2012	Total 2011-2012	2013		
Measure 1: Call for Proposals	-	1 500 000	1 500 000	1 500 000	225 000 (15%)	1 725 000
TOTAL	-	1 500 000	1 500 000	1 500 000	225 000	1 725 000

5 INDICATIVE IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE (PERIODS BROKEN DOWN PER QUARTER)

Contracts	Start of Tendering	Signature of contract	Project Completion
Measure 1: Call for Proposals (IPA 2012)	Q4 2012	Q4 2013	Q4 2016

6. Cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting issues such as equal opportunities and non-discrimination, environmental protection and support to minorities and vulnerable groups are an integral part of the programme.

Special attention will be paid to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, in accordance to the EU Gender Action Plan adopted by the Council on 14 June 2010 for the

period 2010-2015, as well as to the empowerment and social inclusion of the Roma and Egyptian communities and to capacity-building efforts of the NGOs defending their fundamental rights.