

**Respondent's Information (mandatory)**

**Name of Organization – Association Green Alternative in cooperation with local groups :**

**Union Svaneti Touristic Center , NGO “Mountain and Valley Union” , Union of Teachers –Education and Union, Association for Civil Society Development of Georgia, Kutaisi Information Center, Media and Society, Meokhi -2010, Association Society for Development.**

**Location(country): Georgia**

**Email address: (optional) [greenalt@greenalt.org](mailto:greenalt@greenalt.org)**

**Type of organization**

- Civil Society organization**
  - Business Association
  - Faith based organization
  - Non–Governmental organization X**
  - Trade Union
  - Other
- Cooperative
- Foundation
- Think tank/research Institution
- Professional

**If you answer on behalf of a Civil Society Organisation, please also complete the questions below :**

- **Nationality of the organization**

**Georgian origin**

- **Number of staff of organization:**

**11-30**

- **Sectors of Intervention**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Human rights X</b>                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Education X</b> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conflict prevention | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Water resources and sanitation X</b> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial Services | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurship    |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian Aid   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Governance X</b> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decent work                             |

Health X

Environment X

Population issues

**Geographical coverage:**

Africa

Europe X

America

Oceania

Asia

• **Do you consider your organization**

Local: grassroots organization

National

National CSO X

National Branch of an International CSO

Association or platform of CSOs at national Level

Regional: network, federation

International

Other

• **Has the organization received EU funding in the past three years?**

Yes X

No

• **Has the organization been involved in some sort of dialogue with EU delegations in the past three years?**

Yes X

No

**It is normal practice to publish contributions, together with the identity of the contributions on the European Commission (DG DEVCO) website. If you do not agree please tick the option of your choice below:**

- I want my contribution to be published in an anonymous form
- I want my contribution to be treated as confidential and not to be published

### **Question 1:**

#### **How can CSOs apply in their activities the Aid and Development Effectiveness principles of Busan?**

Applying the Aid and Development Effectiveness principles of Busan would help the Georgian civil society organizations to implement their planned tasks more effectively, on the one hand, and it would increase the space of policy dialogue on the part of the Georgian government and donors, on the other. Most CSOs in Georgia have an obscure imagination about the Busan principles. It is quite regretful that neither popularization of these principles or guidelines existing in various sectors, nor sharing experience in this direction is taking place in Georgia and throughout the South Caucasus region, especially as the introduction of these principles would have promoted building of public trust towards the civil society organizations.

### **Question 2:**

#### **Responding to the challenges related to a shrinking legal and regulatory space for CSO action**

#### **How do you think that different actors, including the EU, could help to promote an enabling environment for CSOs (a) in repressive regimes, (b) in fragile/conflict countries, (c) other countries? Can you suggest good practices from your experience?**

At a glance, a legal and regulatory space for CSO action is not shrinking in Georgia. Although, the registration of civil society organizations and implementation of their activities is quite simple, the Georgian government tries to restrict CSO action and freedom of expression as well as to maintain a number of levers of control over the civil society.

For example, according to the amendments to the Law of Georgia on Political Unions, if the head of any civil society organization states that he/she does not like any political figure/force and believes that there is no place for him in the government, the restrictions set for the political parties may apply to this organization. Since the law bans the parties to receive grants, donor funding, that is the major source of incomes for civil society organizations, may be suspended.

On the other hand, as a result of a number of initiatives in the Tax Code, it became too complicated for the organizations to carry out their activities within the limits of legislation.

According to the Tax Code, a great part of expenses incurred by the organization is related to the services provided in a form of incomes that creates awkward problems under the code. For example,

if the organization gives a citizen a publication prepared owing to a grant, it will be considered as an income for the latter that will later be taxed by income tax. Of course, not a single non-governmental organization imposes taxes on beneficiaries while carrying out such activities, though in case of a desire, the government will have the levers of exerting pressure and enforcing financial sanctions against the organizations.

Hence, when we talk about the legal and regulatory framework of civil society organizations, we should take into consideration both the availability of registration for organizations, as well as all those laws, which may hamper the activities of civil society organizations.

Thus, we believe that the existence of a policy dialogue in a format of trilateral dialogue between the civil society, government and donors as well as joint search for the ways of settlement of problems is the best means for reacting on these challenges.

### **Question 3:**

**What, in your experience, are good indicators to measure progress in the area of “enabling environment” for CSOs’ actions? (max. 3,000 characters)**

“Enabling environment” for CSOs’ actions can be measured by the following indicators:

1. Freedom of expression and assembly;
2. Media freedom;
3. Increase-decrease in the cases of human rights violations;
4. Unlawful actions against the civil society representatives (including spying, undermining business reputation, marginalization, etc.);
5. Freedom of cooperation with political parties;
6. Freedom of expression and information;
7. Quality of information availability;
8. Institutionalized policy dialogue;
9. Institutionalization of public participation in decision making process;
10. Involvement of non-governmental organizations in the ongoing political processes (number, type, result);
11. Involvement of non-governmental organizations in parliamentary hearings (number, type, result);

12. Fair and clear tax legislation;
13. Tax privileges on donations granted to civil society organizations;
14. Openness of the governmental funding schemes designed for civil society organizations, and development of these schemes through co-participation.

**Question 4:**

**How could the media, including the social media, contribute to an “enabling environment” for CSOs? (max. 3,000 characters)**

Implementing CSOs’ activities without freedom of the media is quite unimaginable. Accordingly, it represents one of the preconditions for the development of effective civil society and its organizations. Promotion of civil society organizations and media organizations, especially independent and/or social media should be discussed concurrently.

The use of social networks is an important precondition under modern conditions to reach out to the citizens of the country. At the same time, we should not forget that segment of the population, which has no access to modern means of communication, and special emphasis should also be laid on the development of local regional televisions and media organizations.

**Question 5:**

**What are, in your experience, the challenges and opportunities for CSO involvement in policy dialogues including in terms of institutional mechanisms and operational rule? Can you provide good examples? (max. 3,000 characters)**

Among the key challenges there are lack of information and language barrier; absence of clear obligations for CSO involvement in policy dialogue; limited participation in the monitoring and assessment process; neglecting the principle of partnership; absence of trilateral dialogue. One of the problems is the possibility of civil society to get involved adequately in the ongoing processes that is caused by limited capacities, unawareness about ongoing processes and other numerous reasons.

There are quite good examples of cooperation in Georgia, such as the process of interim revision of the National Indicative Programme by the European Commission in 2009, preparation of the program on budgetary assistance for regional development, especially at its initial stage.

We can discuss the development of poverty reduction strategy for 2000-2003 as one of the most conflicting, though finally positive practice. The strategy was developed jointly by the Government of Georgia and the World Bank.

Hence, preference should be given to introduction and expansion of this experience.

**Question 6:**

**How can progress related to CSO participation in policy dialogue at country level be measured and monitored? (max. 3,000 characters)**

It can be measured by both qualitative and quantitative indicators, in particular:

- How much participatory the process of policy dialogue was;
- How much reasonably the opinions and remarks made by civil society organizations were reflected and/or were not reflected;
- How much open and consistent the process is;
- How available the consultation papers are for the society;
- How many civil society organizations participated in the process and from which sectors; what about geographical coverage, gender, age and other parameters;

**Question 7:**

**What are the most effective entry points for CSOs in “participatory budgetary processes?” (max. 3,000 characters)**

In the decision making process, it is vital to provide institutionalization of the ways of public participation that will ensure public involvement in all the processes. The ways and mechanisms of implementation may be different, but legalization of these ways and mechanisms represents a precondition. A number of conventions (for example, the Aarhus Convention) provide quite good mechanisms for ensuring public involvement; however, there is a great need for formalization of these mechanisms.

It is essential that while planning the entire strategy and budgetary support to the country, the donors provide effective involvement of non-governmental organizations in this process. It is interesting that the EU Communication on the Future Approach to EU Budget Support to Third Countries<sup>1</sup> underlines the CSO role in oversight functions, as well as the significance of their participation in budgetary processes or in the establishment of systematic support of internal accountability. The Communication calls for “strengthening the openness, transparency and accountability of the budget

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0638:FIN:EN:PDF>

process” and supports “a participatory budget support approach.” Moreover, it emphasizes the expedience of CSO participation in this process.

However, it should be noted that a package of proposals submitted by the European Commission to the European Parliament in December 2011 - European Neighborhood Instrument, Development Cooperation Instrument and General Rules and Regulations – does not promote the involvement of civil society in the process of programming carried out by the European Commission.

In its present form, the regulations do not promote a policy dialogue, consultations and implementation of partnership principle in the process of programming of EU funds that is perceived quite negatively.

### **Question 8:**

**Responding to the Communication on Budget support, how could the EU promote CSOs role in “domestic accountability and in oversight functions”? What, in your experience, are the related risks and how should these be managed? (max. 3,000 characters)**

First and foremost, the European Union should promote the involvement of civil society organizations in the budget support programs by the European Commission. Introduction of good practices in budgetary process, capacity building and raising awareness will increase the budgetary transparency, accountability and efficiency.

In addition, it will promote reduction of corruption in the process of implementing the budget support programs (elite corruption and so on). Public participation, transparency and accountability (in the assessment and monitoring processes), even only in frames of international budget support programs, is extremely important, even when this support aims at reforming the public financial systems.

Hence, it is vital for civil society organizations to have access to relevant documents and agreements and to be able to participate in both budget support planning process and in joint monitoring/oversight committees.

Moreover, the results of donor assessment or monitoring should be available for the public.

The European Commission should work with the Government to persuade the latter of the necessity of carrying out a policy dialogue. It is essential for this process to be, at least partially, financed by the technical aid programs. Otherwise, the government may refuse to carry out such activities.

It is important to carry out a trilateral dialogue between the representatives of civil society, national government and European Union that will ensure equal involvement of the civil society in the dialogue between the European Union and the Government as well as in policy development

processes. Such dialogue is especially important at the beginning of sectoral and budget support programs.

**Question 9:**

**In your opinion, what criteria should be used to ensure that representative and legitimate CSOs take part in policy dialogue and in budgetary oversight work? (max. 3,000 characters)**

The principle of public participation in budgetary processes should be based on a parity principle, meaning the participation of all stakeholders from the civil society and not only those organizations that are working in this sector.

It requires the creation of self-organizable structures and/or use of already existing ones (for example, Eastern Partnership Platform). However, even in this case, other non-governmental organizations, which are not the part of these structures, should have an opportunity to obtain information and express their opinions and remarks.

Therefore, as a primary task it is vital to develop the process and format of policy dialogue through participatory approach and then to ensure its consistent implementation.

**Question 10:**

**In your opinion, what should be the role of European or international CSOs in supporting local CSO participation in policy processes and oversight functions including at country level? (max. 3,000 characters)**

**Question 11/12:**

- **What approaches should be developed to improve donor support to capacity development of CSOs? (max. 3,000 characters)**
- **What is the role and the added value of international/EU based CSOs in this area? (max. 3,000 characters)**

It is essential for the European Union to support NGO networking, coordination and sharing of experience. In addition, emphasis should be laid not only on North-South, but also on South-South, regional and national cooperation.

For example, it is very interesting for Georgian civil society to share experience with Eastern European, South American and South Asian countries.

Simultaneously, it is important to ensure that shared knowledge and experience does not remain in the ownership of only one organization. For this purpose, it is urgent to further share this knowledge and experience at national and regional levels.

All these can be achieved only through expanding networking, as well as showing interest in local problems of large international organizations and increased involvement of local civil society organizations in global processes under the principle: “think globally, act locally.”

**Question 13/14:**

- **What are, in your opinion, the main challenges CSOs face in implementing these mechanisms for improving internal governance? How can CSOs monitor progress in the implementation of such mechanisms? (max. 3,000 characters)**
- **Should the EU support CSOs in implementing mechanisms for improving internal governance? And if yes, how? (max. 3,000 characters)**

Basically, the improvement of internal governance and organizational development is hampered by a number of factors:

1. Unstable financing (from project to project);
2. Lack of knowledge about the methods and means of organizational development;
3. Absence and lack of knowledge about the mechanisms of accountability and transparency.

The European Union can assist non-governmental organizations in improving internal governance and allocate funding for:

1. The projects aimed at organizational development;
2. Development of networking projects both at a country level, as well as at regional or international levels;
3. Encouragement of membership to the projects on social entrepreneurship for gaining access to the sources of stable financing by the organizations and so on;
4. Strengthening the practice of interns and volunteers.

**Question 15:**

**Are there other key elements, in addition to the ones discussed above, to be considered in building a solid and informed EU engagement with local CSOs in a given country? (max. 3,000 characters)**

There is quite successful cooperation between the Georgian civil society organizations and the EU Delegation to Georgia that can be explained by the openness of the EU Delegation's staff and their readiness to take into consideration the opinions of all stakeholders in respect of various issues.

However, the fact is certain that absence of the necessary guidelines and clear procedures, including in the process of programming, for public involvement in the decision making process, creates some inconvenience to both the non-governmental organizations and the EU Delegation's staff.

Presently, the EU Delegation to Georgia is closely cooperating with the Coordinating Council of Eastern Partnership National Platform (self-elected unit) that has removed a number of inconveniences, to a certain extent. The existence of predetermined principles, such as, for example, in case of candidate countries, would really be a step ahead.

At the same time, it will be desirable if the Delegation has a possibility to hold thematic discussions on the implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan. It will be an organic addition to those annual consultations on the implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan, which are carried out by the European Commission.

**Question 16/17/18:**

- **How should country level political dynamics be considered in engaging with CSOs and supporting their governance-related roles? (max. 3,000 characters)**
- **In your view, what are the implications and opportunities for CSOs related to the above mentioned trends? (max. 4,000 characters)**
- **How should the EU respond to these trends in your opinion? (max. 4,000 characters)**

The ongoing trends in the country, especially with respect to watchdog organizations, are quite problematic. The authorities try to increasingly accuse the non-governmental organizations of low professionalism, to undermine their business reputation and marginalize them. But in those cases, when the problems pushed forward by the non-governmental organizations are reflected in the reports issued by international organizations or donor countries, the authorities try to explain it by the fact that these organizations rely on the complaints expressed by civil society organizations without verification them.

Therefore, not only the European Commission should annually publish the report on the progress of implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan, but it should recommend the government how to act in order to eradicate the revealed discrepancies. In addition, it is vital to establish more dialogue with the society and to ensure media coverage about those particular problems which the European Union has revealed and how these problems should be settled within international law (we do not mean giving some concrete recipes – that would be equal to direct interference in domestic affairs – but we mean offering some directions based on international legislation).

The more open the European Union is with the society concerning the existing problems, the more open the public space will be for discussions that will, ultimately, have a positive effect on the increase of the government's openness and accountability.