CONSULTATION REPORT OF

CIVIL SOCIETY FACILITY

2024-2025 PROGRAMMING

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1. METHODOLOGY

EU financial support to Türkiye remains one of the important aspects of EU-Türkiye relations, and this financial support also contributes to the development of Turkish civil society. Despite the rapidly changing global agenda and the fluctuations in Türkiye-EU relations, it is noticed that the importance given by the EU to civil society in Türkiye and its impact on the EU-Türkiye relationship are increasing day by day. These developments are reflected in the financial resources allocated to the sector. The allocation of EUR 94 million for 2021-2023 is an important indicator of this process

The programming process is carried out by the IPA beneficiary countries and the European Commission. Therefore, it is generally not possible for CSOs to directly participate in this highly technical process and submit their inputs and feedback. They can only express their views through consultations held from time to time.

In the beginning of 2023, programming under the Civil Society Facility (CSF) began for the years 2024 and 2025. Within this framework, EUD decided to conduct a consultation process with the technical support of STGM. The results of this consultation will be considered in the programming process. Overall, this consultation process may pave the way for a more strategic approach to EU support to civil society in Türkiye.

Considering the programming preparations and time constraints, a small-scale consultation process was designed by STGM. This short report summarizes the findings from this consultation process.

As part of the consultation process, an open call was first published by STGM on January 4, 2023. Within the scope of this open call, civil society organisations were asked to submit their answers to the following questions to STGM by 26 January 2023.

1. *To what extent has the EU's support so far met the needs of civil society organisations? How do you think the current programs of the EU can be implemented better?*
2. *In your opinion, what are the most important needs of civil society organizations in Turkey that the EU can support?*
3. *In your opinion, what kind of support should the EU provide for the strengthening of civil society organizations in Turkey?*
4. *Is there any issue or problem area that you think the EU should support more? Which issues should be prioritized?*
5. *What do you think can be done for CSOs to contribute more to Turkey-EU relations and the planning process of EU support in Turkey?*

28 representatives (21 institutional and 7 individual contributions) of civil society organizations and activists provided their comments and contributions. (Annex 1 and Annex 2)

As part of the consultation process, an online information meeting was held on January 10, 2023. About 100 CSO representatives attended the information meeting. Contributions received from the participants after the presentation made at the meeting were also included in this report. Finally 3 focus group meetings were organised with participation of 16 CSO representatives. (Annex 3)

This report has been prepared based on the analysis and evaluation of the contributions received. The content of the report is naturally limited to the level of knowledge and perception of the authors of the report. However, every effort has been made to objectively evaluate all contributions received and to include all opinions in the report.

2. HIGHLIGHTS AND THE KEY FINDINGS FROM THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

1. It goes without saying that we are in a phase where the struggle for the existence of civil society organizations is coming to the fore as a natural consequence of the pandemic process, the current economic crisis and the lack of an enabling environment for civil society. At this point, it is important to strengthen the resilience of civil society organizations and contribute to their survival efforts.

2. It can be argued that basic costs such as rent, payment of bills, office expenses, staff costs, technological and physical infrastructure and fixed costs are much more emphasized than in previous periods. In this context, the need for core funding programs has long been emphasized, especially by experts in the field. Core funding programs have been implemented to a greater extent under EU programming, albeit only partially through sub-grant programs implemented after 2017. It is apparent that the need for core funding programs is now expressed by much broader segments of civil society. It is clear that project-based grant support, in particular, falls far short of meeting needs on the field during this period. In this context, it is useful to summarize the statements of a representative of a civil society organization who participated in the consultation process.

   "The prerequisite for a project is the existence of an organization. If the organization is there for a project, it is not possible to call this actor a civil society organization. Therefore, the existence of an organization or institution is a must. These organizations will inherently strive to achieve their goals. After that, you can call it whatever you want... Project, activism or activity..."

3. As a complementary element to the demand for core funding, many participants emphasized simplification and flexibility in project implementation. It was observed that the organizations involved in the process expressed their demands for simplification of the implementation processes based on the problems they experienced during project implementation. In expressing this concern, it is clear that there is awareness of the positive presence of simplified and flexible implementation methods such as Sivil Düşün and Etkiniz in the field. However, it is emphasized that such programs can only meet the needs on the field to a limited extent, as they can provide low-cost support. In addition, the rapid changes in the content, focus, and

approach of these programs following the change of technical assistance teams leading these programs, are criticized by some participants.

4. It is generally accepted that the sub-grant programs implemented in Türkiye since 2017 meet the needs on the field and contribute to the development of the civil society. However, it was observed that the methodology was discussed more, as well as its positive and negative aspects also covered in this discussion. In the implementation of sub-grant programs, the following points can be mentioned as the outstanding positive aspects of the methodology:
   - Receiving applications in Turkish,
   - Implementation of simplified processes,
   - Inclusion of organizations that do rights-based work and are less able to benefit from different funds,
   - Small scale organizations can be included,
   - Relatively less tension between donor and beneficiary in the application, selection, and implementation process
   - A peer-to-peer approach and greater use of non-hierarchical language

In parallel, critical approaches to the methodology were also expressed. In this regard, some participants stated that it is not right for organizations to implement grant programs which do not define their own purpose as capacity building to civil society organisations. It was noted that sub-grant programs have begun to develop an artificial hierarchy among civil society organizations, and there is a risk that they will create a power domain. In addition, it was emphasized that sub-grant programs implemented through international organizations may exclude some organizations due to the bureaucratic structure of these organizations and that the distance they need to maintain from public institutions is being lost in Türkiye. Some participants emphasized the need for coordination among the actors who implement subgrant programs. It was noted that this type of coordination can be beneficial in the following ways.
   - Evaluate impact when the same organizations receive support from more than one program,
   - Dissemination of best practices,
   - Creating common approaches and shared online application and monitoring systems,
   - Strengthening mutual learning processes
   - Creating an environment for civil society actors to be self-critical.

5. Participants stressed that organizations working at the local level should be targeted more and that these organizations should benefit more from EU support. In addition, the need to bring new actors into the field was frequently mentioned. For example, it was criticized as "EU programs always support the same organizations" or that "sectorization and project professionalism have become a major threat to the civil society field." This suggests that effort is required to improve access to grassroots organizations operating at the local level and to allow new actors to benefit more from EU support. In addition, it was noted that more support needs to be given to

flexible organizational models and activists, who do not have legal personalities. Also it is reported that their numbers and existence are increasing.

6. Given the increased awareness on core funding methodology, the demand for simple and flexible methods, the generally positive assessment of sub-grants programs, and the need to reach more grassroots organizations, local CSOs, and new actors, it will be beneficial to implement comprehensive core funding programs. Further implementation of simplified and comprehensive core funding programs can help address problems faced by civil society organisations to strengthen and increase the resilience of the civil society. In this context, the dissemination of the "Framework Partnership Agreement" model, which has limited examples in Turkey, can be put on the agenda.

7. In collectively assessing the contributions to the consultation process, it appears that the most important theme is the need for capacity building support. This need includes concepts such as training, strengthening the quality of human resources, advice on self-regulation, relationships with members and volunteers, strengthening the membership and volunteer base, developing the capacity to create resources, promoting the creation of economic enterprises, legal support, project development and project preparation were mentioned many times. Although there are programs and projects that address these needs, it would be helpful to maintain these supports by diversifying and expanding them.

8. Another important issue highlighted by the organizations participating in the consultation process is strengthening the capacity of human resources, increasing their qualifications, and increasing the number of professional staff.

9. As a result of the repressive environment, particularly in freedom of association and the introduction of the obligation to declare membership, there is widespread discomfort with participation in civil society organizations, especially among younger generations and large segments of society. In particular, this situation prevents the expansion of the membership and volunteer base of organizations that take a rights-based approach or position themselves with a more critical approach. To reduce the impact of this situation, which is largely due to the lack of an enabling environment for civil society, the need to implement programs that strengthen the membership and volunteer base of civil society organizations, enable them to mobilize broader segments of society, and encourage the participation of large segments of society to CSOs, especially young people, has been expressed. Although no concrete proposals have been made on the content of such programs, it is felt that the issue can remain on the agenda and should be analyzed in depth in further studies.

10. The need to establish mechanisms to facilitate cooperation among CSOs, to promote and facilitate the formation of networks, and to encourage higher capacity and small scale organizations to act together was also frequently mentioned.

11. Another issue that can be included in the need for capacity building is the need for in-kind and cash contributions, as well as flexible support mechanisms for reporting, monitoring, and advocacy. Raising awareness and diversifying existing support can be added to the agenda. In this context, it would be beneficial to include more sub-activities such as legal advice, strategic litigation, and advocacy support in the programs.

12. Bar associations also participated in the consultation process. Again, some civil society organisations stated that cooperation with bar associations should be strengthened. The problems arising from legislation and freedom of association, may be the reason for highlighting this issue, albeit indirectly.

13. One of the most frequently mentioned themes in the consultation process was the need to support international and regional cooperation. The need to examine examples of best practices of civil society organizations at the EU or global level and to meet and collaborate with civil society organizations in the EU was expressed. It is assumed that the organizations expressing this need are mainly those benefiting from the "EU-Turkey Civil Society Dialogue Programs". However, no reference to the Civil Society Dialogue Program was made during the consultation process. It will be beneficial to create opportunities that facilitate the meeting of civil society organizations from the EU and Turkey and strengthen the culture of cooperation.

14. The issue of disability and accessibility was also addressed. In particular, it was emphasized that the integration of people with disabilities should be seen as a cross-cutting task. In this regard, it was emphasized that the issue of accessibility should be addressed with a comprehensive approach to application, implementation and monitoring. It was noted that measures can be taken during the implementation processes to ensure that people with disabilities are also included in project activities.

15. Youth organizations showed great interest and widely participated in the consultation process. This situation is considered an important indicator of the growing capacity of the youth organisations in Turkish civil society, especially in recent years. It would be valuable to pay more attention to this potential in the programming and implementation of the Civil Society Facility and to conduct studies to involve young people and increase their level of knowledge. It was noted that while support for youth organizations under the Erasmus+ Youth Program plays an important role in strengthening the capacity of youth organizations, in its current form it falls far short of meeting the needs of the field. It has also been criticized that the Erasmus+ Program's assessment processes for selecting applications are no longer objective. The youth organizations that participated in the process stressed the need for diversification of the programs in the field of "youth rights" or youth organizations with a rights-based approach.

16. During the consultation process, there was also criticism of the thematic approach taken from time to time in EU programming. In particular, the consideration of civil society as a sector and classifications such as "gender equality", "LGBTI+ rights", "youth", "social inclusion", "cultural rights" and even "rights-based civil society organizations" lead to compartmentalization. It was highlighted that this approach excludes some organizations by creating a disadvantaged position and leads to moving away from inclusivity. It was also highlighted that some organizations may develop projects outside of their own areas of work to leverage resources to address these themes. In this context, it was stated that a more strategic approach should be developed that covers the entire field and does not exclude anyone. This means that the thematic priorities or new methodologies that emerge in the EU programs should be discussed with a participatory approach and the lessons learned should be incorporated in the next programs.

17. However, based on questions posed during the consultation process and in addition to the topics listed above, the following topics were also identified as potential priority areas.
   - Designing programs in which innovative and experimental themes can be supported,
   - Supporting social mobilizations that emerge at the local level around the climate crisis and the environment,
   - Programs to strengthen relations with public institutions with a special focus to local level, projects related to participation in the decision-making process of municipalities, support for local governance and city councils, strengthening and facilitating their participation in legislative processes,
   - Support for labor and trade union movements and organizations that advocate for workers' rights,
   - Right to health, patients' rights, rights of the elderly,
   - Right to the city,
   - Strengthening cooperation between civil society organizations and universities,
   - Strengthening cooperation between civil society organizations and the private sector and developing philanthropy,
   - Establishing joint work zones and venues that facilitate the meeting of civil society organizations,
   - Animal rights,
   - Children's rights,
   - Rights of the disabled,
   - Support for women's entrepreneurship,
   - Social assistance, fight against poverty and deprivation.

3. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- It is observed that the contributions to the consultation process are, by their very nature, largely based on the experiences of organizations and individuals, and these experiences are directly reflected in the contributions. In this context, it can be said that the holistic

perspective is an area that can still be developed in the written contributions. However, the focus group participants seem to have a more macro perspective on the civil society field.

- It can be said that the practice of written submissions by CSOs in the consultation process is not strong enough and their ability to contribute to similar consultation processes can be strengthened. However, it was observed that participants are better able to express themselves in online and face-to-face meetings.

- Unexpectedly many individual contributions are received, this is a trend that needs to be addressed in future studies.

- Although this was included as a separate question, there were no comments or marks on civil society participation to Turkey-EU relations. This situation can be taken as an indication that EU-Turkey relations are moving away from the country's and civil society's agenda day by day.

- It may be claimed that the level of knowledge in civil society on EU financial assistance, EU support to civil society and the Civil Society Facility can be improved. It is noted that project results, impact assessments, and comprehensive evaluation studies, especially on EU support to civil society, are readily available to a limited number of civil society experts. Systematic exchange of reports and results of monitoring and evaluation exercises with civil society organizations is a factor that can strengthen knowledge in this field and improve the level of knowledge of civil society organizations.

- For increasing the effectiveness of consultation process and for providing the meaningful participation of civil society organizations below issues could be taken into consideration:

    - The EU Delegation to Turkey and the public institutions involved in IPA programming may establish structured and regular contact mechanisms with civil society organizations,

    - Consultation exercises should not be limited with the tight deadlines of programming process

    - A mixed methodology, including using online tools, surveys, open ended questions, face to face meetings etc., should be used for a better consultation,

    - If *"regularity"* in these consultation exercises could be realized, better results could be achieved in the mid-term.

4. FEATURED CONCEPTS/SUGGESTIONS AND THEIR INTENSITY

Capacity development	++++++++++ ++
Simplification/Flexibility	+++++++++
International/regional cooperation/best practices/forums	++++++++
Core funding	+++++++
Supporting grassroots/local CSOs	+++++++
Networking	++++++
Human resources	+++++
Support for reporting, monitoring, advocacy	+++++
Same actors	++++
Regular consultations/annual meetings/dialogue/mechanisms	++++
Accessibility	++++
Climate crisis	++++
Supporting activists	++++
Sharing knowledge/access to knowledge	++++
Economic activity/social enterprises/extending volunteer and membership base/creating resources	+++
Right to health/ patients' rights	+++
rights of the elderly	+++
Youth	+++
Project management/preparation	+++
Animal rights	+++
Unions, worker rights	+++
Rights of the disabled	+++
Legal support/cooperation with bar unions/access to justice	+++
Cooperation with universities	++
joint work zones and venues	++
Right to the city	++
Social assistance, fight against poverty and deprivation	++
Support for women's entrepreneurship	++
Children's rights	++
Advocacy	++
Dissemination of the rights-based approach	+
Self regulation	+
Philanthropy	+
Cooperation with private sector	+
Visibility of civil society	+
Democratic governance	+

ANNEXES

1. List of contributions
2. List of focus group participants

ANNEX 1- LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Görüş Verenler	Kuruluş
Fatma Dinçer	Tokat Uyuşturucu ve Madde Bağımlılığıyla Mücadele Derneği
Fatma Rana ARIBAŞ	Elektrik Mühendisleri Odası
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Önder Şevik	Bireysel
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Nihal Güngör Kılıç	Bireysel
Osman Selami BUDAK	Anadolu Kalkınma Derneği
Onur GÜLTEKİN	Antalya Değer Yaratanlar Derneği
Bahadır Yasa	GastroKale Yöresel ve Etnik Mutfaklar Derneği
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Itır Akdoğan	TESEV

ANNEX 2- LIST OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Katılımcı	Kuruluş
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Hasan Oğuzhan AYTAÇ	GOFOR
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Güneş ENGİN	TÜSEV
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