



ENoP position on a strong multi-actor approach in the NDICI programming

CSO-LA PROGRAMME (2014-2020): LACK OF MULTI-ACTOR PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

In the last thematic programme “Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities” (CSO-LA) of the Development Cooperation Instrument, the implementing actors are specified in the following way:

“The actions to be financed shall be primarily carried out by civil society organisations and local authorities. Where appropriate, in order to ensure their effectiveness, actions may be carried out by other actors for the benefit of the civil society organisations and the local authorities concerned.¹”

Considering that the programme addresses both civil soci-

ety organisations and local authorities, it would seem likely that joint projects are encouraged. However, when translated into calls for proposals, the two groups of actors are addressed separately in the majority of cases: In the past year (25/09/2019-24/09/2020), in almost 60 % of all calls for proposals published in the framework of the thematic programme CSO-LA, a joint proposal was not possible due to the restrictions of the eligibility criteria. The amounts give an even clearer picture: 81,91 % of the funding was committed in calls for proposals, which did not allow joint project applications by CSOs and LAs (See Annex 1 for details).

THE RELEVANCE OF MULTI-ACTOR PROJECTS



Type of actors

Sustainable development is often most effective when applying a multi-stakeholder approach, as also recognized by SDG 17, Target 17.16: “Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”.

While actors can be involved in a project in various ways, the most effective way to ensure ownership and mutual trust building by these actors is to include them as partners or “co-ben-

eficiaries” in EU-funded projects. This means that they have to be eligible as (co-) applicant in a call for proposal. This way, these actors are in the driving seat of the joint project. Particularly, the thematic priority areas that EU defined for its external action, such as sustainable growth, climate action and peace and governance, would benefit from employing a multi-actor approach in order to significantly strengthen the impact of a project, through establishing a strong joint ownership of the involved actors from the start instead of letting them operate in separated silos.



Nationality of actors

The reality in many countries is that local actors, including local authorities, lack the infrastructure, capacities and resources to successfully apply for and implement an EU-funded project. European organisations, such as political foundations, and their respective offices in the partner countries can play a central role: They can coordinate the application process, the

project management and the financial administration according to all EU rules, while their local project partners deliver the main contents of the project and the implementation on the ground. This is a common model applied by most ENoP members, which has proven successful.

¹Article 8 of REGULATION (EU) No 233/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020

ADDED VALUE OF POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS IN MULTI-ACTOR PROJECTS

European civil society organisations, including European political foundations focusing on development cooperation have long-standing experience in the implementation of co-operation projects. Many European political foundations have field offices all over the world. This experience of working in the local context and with local actors including CSOs, governments, local authorities, parliaments, grassroots activists, media, political parties, trade unions and other relevant stake-

holders allows political foundations to be a unique bridge builder between different actors on the ground. This expertise is very valuable to enable knowledge and skills transfer, including from European local authorities to local authorities in partner countries. The following points summarize the main elements of the unique added value of political foundations in international multi-actor projects:

- “ They are sensitive to local cultural, social, economic and political conditions and the feasibility of successful cooperation approaches.
- “ They have political access to key local and national decision-makers and are trusted counterparts for all their local partners.
- “ They have the necessary experience to bridge cultural contexts and norms, as well as translate practice exchanges between various actors, including European local authorities and local authorities in partner countries into sustainable actions. This includes the adaptation of European LA experiences (i.e. green cities, planning processes, decentralization policies) into feasible actions, which are adapted to the local context.
- “ They have a well-established network in the various countries where they are active. This way, they can coordinate multi-actor partnerships with local CSOs, local parliaments and the media.
- “ They can support the local governments in applying participatory methods and tools for engaging citizens in local planning and decision-making.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROGRAMMING OF THE NDICI

Article 28 Point 9 of the NDICI regulation currently allows the restriction of applicant eligibility: “The eligibility rules of this Article may be restricted with regard to the nationality, geographical location or nature of applicants, where such restric-

tions are required on account of the specific nature and the objectives of the action and where they are necessary for its effective implementation.” In order to allow multi-actor consortia whenever possible, we recommend the following:

- “ Ensure that Local Authorities are included as eligible (independent) actors. The local level is the closest to the citizens. Municipalities or other kinds of local authorities can and should be important democratic actors. In (semi-) autocratic regimes, they could however not access EU support if it is included in the bilateral cooperation channeled via the capital.
- “ Ensure that civil society organisations, including political foundations, are considered eligible actors. They are important development actors, which can also play an important coordinating role in a multi-actor project. Therefore, they should not be limited to the (thematic) programmes directly dedicated to them.
- “ Encourage multi-actor partnerships and avoid the development of silos between which actors cannot cooperate further. Allowing joint project applications by CSOs, LAs and other actors from Europe and the partner country where the action takes place should be the norm rather than the exception. In concrete terms, this means ensuring the eligibility criteria are not unnecessarily restricted. Especially CSOs should be considered as major development actors, which can make a difference in a number of different fields.

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