



## Priority sector: Civil Society

### EEA GRANTS 2009-14

The EEA Financial Mechanism shall contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area, and to strengthening the bilateral relations between the EEA EFTA States — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — and the Beneficiary States. The programme area shall contribute to these two overall objectives.

## Funds for Non-Governmental Organisations

### Objective

Strengthened civil society development and enhanced contribution to social justice, democracy and sustainable development

### Expected outcomes

- Active citizenship fostered
- Increased involvement of NGOs in policy and decision-making processes with local, regional and national governments
- Cross-sectoral partnerships developed, particularly with government organisations at local, regional and / or national level
- Democratic values, including human rights, promoted
- Advocacy and watchdog role developed
- Developed networks and coalitions of NGOs working in partnership
- Strengthened capacity of NGOs and an enabling environment for the sector promoted
- Increased contribution to sustainable development achieved
- Provision of welfare and basic services to defined target groups increased
- Empowerment of vulnerable groups

## Relevance of support

A strong and vibrant civil society is important for democratic development. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a key role in promoting active citizenship, participatory democracy and building cohesive societies, targeting the needs of and empowering specific groups, including those most at risk of inequalities, exclusion and discrimination. NGOs are also instrumental in engaging in advocacy and policy formulation, as well as raising awareness of key issues and challenges in today's societies. The use of the term NGO under the EEA Grants also refers to Civil Society Organization (CSO). See NGO guidelines for further specification.

The importance of participatory democracy has been recognised by the EU in the Lisbon Treaty - Article 11, which considers participatory democracy as a fundamental democratic principle of the EU and proposes ways to organise dialogue with "representative associations and civil society". The existence of NGOs is closely linked to the fundamental right of citizens to form associations in order to pursue a common purpose. This right is included in Article 12 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, highlighting the whole range of civil, political, economic and social rights of European citizens and all EU residents.

The areas of support reflect numerous commitments at international level such as the OSCE Human Dimension (which extends beyond the protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms to the promotion of the rule of law and democratic institution-building), the European Convention on Human Rights, the Social Charter of the Council of Europe and Art. 3 of the Treaty on the European Union on the overarching long-term goal of sustainable development. Several commitments at EU level on the areas identified also provide a clear policy framework for civil society's role and contribution to achieving progress in these.

## Areas of support

The following areas are eligible for support and should be covered by at least one third of the Programme allocation:

- Democracy
- Human rights, including minority rights (ethnic, religious, linguistic and sexual orientation)
- Good governance and transparency
- Participatory democracy
- Combat racism and xenophobia
- Anti-discrimination
- Social inequalities, poverty and exclusion, including in rural areas
- Gender equality
- Gender-based violence

**Reduce economic and social disparities**  
**Strengthen bilateral relations**

## Suggested activities

- Fostering active citizenship and participatory democracy, including at grassroots and/or local level
- Advocacy, watchdog and monitoring activities
- Awareness-raising activities
- Multicultural dialogue activities
- Participation in policy and decision-making processes
- Capacity-building and organisational support to NGOs
- Strengthening governance in membership-based NGOs
- Network and coalition-building
- Mutual learning and dissemination
- Education and training activities
- Cultural initiatives to promote key areas as mentioned above

## Additional eligible areas and activities

The following areas and activities are also eligible for support:

### Protection of the environment and climate change

- Awareness-raising and civic participation
- Develop umbrella organisations and/or new networks on biodiversity/ climate change
- NGO involvement in national action plans related to biodiversity and/ or climate change
- Mobilising local involvement to protect biodiversity
- Environmental educational activities and training for teachers

### Provision of welfare and basic services

Provision of key services to vulnerable groups: children and youth at risk, people affected by HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities and/or mental disorders and their families, victims of trafficking and gender-based violence and/or domestic violence, where such services are not otherwise or not adequately provided by governmental institutions.

## Programme area specificities

- Exclusively targeted at NGOs
- Suitable for one or more small grant schemes
- Could be relevant for cooperation between entities in a Beneficiary State and an entity located in a country outside the European Economic Area bordering on the respective Beneficiary State
- At least 10 % of the total Programme allocation shall be allocated to children and youth-driven organisations and/or activities targeting children and youth