



## 6.0 Civil Society Empowerment

### 6.1 Introduction

European regions need to confront with demographic changes that are drastically mutating the composition and the social needs and priorities of their communities: immigration, ageing, increasing ethnic and cultural diversity, unemployment, disadvantaged people, changing family structures are posing new and compelling challenges.

In this scenario, local authorities play an important role in order to effectively pursue their priority tasks, which are:

- the promotion of the economic, cultural and social development of their respective community;
- the promotion of innovative methods and mechanisms to support the inclusion and solidarity across different social groups and improve the community cohesion, including through the development of increased social capital, especially among the most disadvantaged categories of citizens (the disabled, immigrants, ROMA peoples and travellers, the elderly, women, the unemployed, and people at risk of exclusion due to poverty or other reasons);
- empower the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in order to set up innovative methods and mechanisms to support the societal changes.

### 6.2 Rationale

Local authorities are called to work on a series of actions and networks with a wide range of stakeholders, capable of bringing **innovative solutions and methods** to overcome the problems related to societal changes, with a view to reinforcing cohesion and the social welfare of the citizens of their territory, and to combating exclusion, by offering new opportunities for labour creation, thus increasing the quality of life of all citizens, especially the most vulnerable groups.

Public authorities, in order to be more effective in their mission, require to develop and to foster a local governance system **that foresees the active participation of all stakeholders and the innovation** that can be ensured by a multi stakeholder approach.

In such a system public authorities should **involve** and **empower** the Civil Society organisations,<sup>1</sup> where CSO refers to an “arena” populated by various subjects as: registered charities, non governmental organisations (NGOs) community based

<sup>1</sup> See UNDP definition “UNDP and Civil Society Organisations: a policy of engagement” and “White paper on European Governance” of European Commission.





organisations (i.e. youth organisations, family associations) social movements, women's organisations, labour market players (i.e. trade unions, employers federations) and all those organisations through which citizens participate in social life. Public authorities are asked also to **build up public mechanisms** to facilitate and improve the participation and the missions of CSOs.

CSOs are invited to become pivotal in implementing effective strategy for a more **concerted and effective policies**, for socio-economic development leading to greater social cohesion.

In the frame of PEOPLE, interventions should be designed to address some of the following challenges:

- Lack of focus for coordinated actions to achieve mutual goals among the CSOs, which limits the effectiveness of actions;
- Lack of knowledge and information on people's needs, specially those at risk of exclusion and on new ways of formal and informal participation;
- CSOs often lack the capability to make the best of cost-effective and innovative, ICT based solutions;
- CSOs tend to depend on public funding and lack competencies for territorial marketing and fund raising;
- Co-management and co-expertise rarely occur between the general public and CSOs;
- Lack of accountability of the not for profit organisations.

### **6.3** *What do we want to achieve?*

The intended results under this sub-theme, is to form a society where there is joint decision making between public authorities and CSOs for the benefit of the community cohesion of the local area.

The priority “Civil society empowerment” has therefore set the following objectives:

- Improve the role of the civil society in the policy decision making process by increasing the early and active participation of CSOs in policy planning and improving consultation mechanisms between the public and policy makers.
- Build up case studies and study experiences where civil society organisations are positively empowered and involved with public authorities, with the aim to set up and qualify public services for the breadth of society (including citizens from the most disadvantaged groups).



#### 6.4 How are we going to achieve this?

Different actions and integrated approaches can work as means to achieve the objectives of this priority:

1. Study, analyse and pilot innovative models (successful and unsuccessful elements) for the organisation of CSOs which could improve the results of their activities and their involvement with the public authorities.
2. Benchmark and exchange of good practices, where CSOs have been involved and empowered with public authorities in defining and setting up new approaches and mechanisms in solving social problems (for example lack of nursery schools, social housing, financial support, intercultural mediation and job matching).
3. Deliver Training (also online), exchange knowledge and skills of CSOs staff, study visits, and participatory events to promote active involvement of the CSOs and overcome the lack of attention of public authorities in order to implement policy and concrete projects for the citizens.
4. Raise awareness among public bodies on the contribution that CSOs can make to policy making process.

#### 6.5 Themes (priorities)

There are “two priorities” and seven operational objectives, which contribute to their implementation.

1. *Supporting and improving the **relationships** between public authorities and CSOs to improve their contribution to the decision making processes:*
  - 1.1. Empower and strengthen the **dialogue** between CSOs and public authorities:  
E.g. *innovative instruments and methods (also ICT) for the dialogue*
  - 1.2. Research of new strategies of **communication and dissemination** to make visible the good practices realised in different areas:  
E.g. *open meetings, planning of communication campaign;*



- 1.3. Elaborate **recommendations** and operative conclusions for enhancing the capacity of the CSOs to be represented in the decision making processes:  
E.g. *reports of recommendation*

2. *Innovation and empowerment of CSOs' **participation** in decision making process*

- 2.1. Elaboration of new transparent forms of **participation** of CSOs  
E.g. *report of recommendations in decision process, best practices report, use of ICT to promote participation, agreements*
- 2.2. **New Training forms** on skills and good practices for CSOs and public authorities  
E.g. *training on specific topics, cyber actions, use of ICT for training, study visits, informal education*
- 2.3. **Creation of supra-sectorial networks** between different kind of CSOs (sanitary, social, educational ...) and public authorities  
E.g. *Feasibility studies, analysis*
- 2.4. **Piloting innovative approaches** to engagement between CSOs and public authorities

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## 6.6 Which stakeholders could be involved?

Stakeholders that are encouraged to be involved in the sub-objective “Civil Society Empowerment”, reach out across all Civil Society Organisations, particularly those who address their activities to groups at risk of social exclusion (including the elderly, migrant workers, ethnic minorities, refugees, low income families, women), for example:

- Public authorities;
- Community based organisations (i.e. youth organisations, family associations, etc);
- NGOs;
- Registered charities;
- Social movements;
- Women’s organisations;
- Labour market players (i.e. trade unions, employers’ federations) and other CSOs.

## 6.7 Indicators

For each theme, outputs and results indicators have been identified:

1. *Supporting and improving the **relationships** between public authorities and CSOs to improve their contribution to the decision making processes*

### **Outputs:**

- Studies and analysis
- Interregional events (work groups, open meetings);
- Planning of dissemination campaign;
- Agreements between CSOs and public authorities;
- Transfer of good practices;
- Pilot studies.

### **Results indicators (such as, but not limited to):**

- No. of women and men participating at the events;
- No. of women and men reached;
- No. of women and men employed;
- No. of citizens reached with promotion and dissemination tools;
- No. of good practices individualised and analysed;





- No. of recommendations expressed;
- No. of agreements;
- No. of public bodies engaging in increased consultation with CSOs;
- No. of entities participating leading by women;
- No. of organisations with equality plans.

## 2. *Innovation and empowerment of CSOs' **participation** in decision making process*

### **Output:**

- Recommendations expressed;
- Training courses for CSOs, public authority staff;
- Study visits;
- Focus groups;
- Training tools and kits;
- Studies and analysis;
- Networks;
- Pilots implemented.

### **Results indicators:**

- No. of CSOs staff with increased consciousness and skills, distinguishing by men and women;
- No. of training sessions delivered;
- No. of study visits and no. of participants, distinguishing by men and women;
- No. of potential agreements between different CSOs;
- No. of entities participating leading by women;
- No. of network created;
- N. of women and men employed.

