



POLICY BRIEF

BPFF GRANTS

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Introduction:

BPPF grants have been awarded for the implementation of activities for building functional mechanisms of cooperation between the government and CSO's in Bosnia and Herzegovina since in B&H in reality there is no efficient institutional cooperation on any level: municipality, cantonal, entity of state level. In 50% of municipalities agreement of cooperation between the government and CSO's is signed as well as in three cantons but not on entity level. In 2007 an agreement was signed on the state level but in the years since then not much has been done and a revision of the agreement and it's signing is expected in 2016. Thus, all the levels of government beneath the state level are in logical order since the basic principles of agreement between the levels of government and CSO are the same in key elements. A large part of the agreement signed on the state level can be used in aligning agreements between lower levels of government. It is expected that from the time crucial documents are adopted, the cooperation between the government and civil society, is going to add to the creation of better environment for civil society development in B&H but also to be a bigger support or guide for both government and civil society in adequately structuring and implementing public policies with the support of CSO's.

Background:

The dialogue and cooperation between government and civil society is one of the political criteria for full membership in EU and is an important part of strategy of enlargement of EU in the Western Balkans.

In May 2007 the Council of Minister of BiH adopted and signed the „Agreement of cooperation between the Council of Ministers and CSO's in BiH“. The adoption of this document by the Council of ministers is a recognition for years of work one by CSO's needed for the enhancement of political and institutional framework which needs to add to further civil society development in B&H. Unfortunately, since 2007 up to this day, much wasn't done on applying the Agreement in practice so the meaning and the significance of this document stayed on the level of political declaration which wasn't followed by practical steps by those who have signed it on fulfilling the obligations which are in the document.

The activities focused at the campaign for activation of the 'Cooperation Agreement between the BiH Council of Ministers and the NGO Sector in BiH', established in 2007 order to provide general institutional framework for the cooperation and dialogue between state and civil society organizations in BiH. It foresaw the establishment of several mechanisms for cooperation between CSOs. After almost eight years most of the mechanisms are not yet established and where the case is otherwise - the government failed to fulfill overtaken obligations. In the meantime CSOs in BiH on several occasions tried to put in force the Agreement but with little success.

Because of this, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, projects focused on campaigns for establishing functional mechanisms of cooperation between government and CSOs. These projects were chosen because of the synergy they create with initiatives done on state level. On the entity level there are similar initiatives so the chosen projects needed to conduct similar campaigns in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Republika Srpska- the two B&H entities.

Project title for ZAJP was „Effective cooperation of CSOs with institutions of power as a precondition for the development of the society“ - Association for the analysis of public policies ZAJP, Banja Luka.

The project focused on sub-area 3.1 - Campaign for establishing functional mechanisms of cooperation between government and CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The activities supported the proper establishment of cooperation between CSOs and government institutions is an important aspect of the reform of public administration. It was the part of a multiple projects and programs aimed at supporting the development of civil society in BiH. This cooperation was also part of the political conditions for membership in the European Union, as was confirmed by the „EU Enlargement Strategy and key challenges for 2013/2014. “And „Guidelines to support civil society in the candidate countries for membership of the EU for the period 2014-2020. “

The work done for Republika Srpska analyzed the impact citizens have on decision making processes. There are two ways on which the citizens can affect this process:

- Choosing representatives in the institutions of government
- Through civil society organizations.

The report concludes on the current situation with suggested models which could enhance cooperation. The goal of the research is to propose a model for enhancing the cooperation between CSO's and institutions of government. Analysis was done on:

- Existing legislation (legal framework for cooperation of institutions of government on entity level, with CSO's)
- Analysis of institutional capacities for cooperation of government with civil society
- Analysis of the existing cooperation between the institutions of government and civil society.

The research consisted of three parts:

- Data collection and analysis.
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Reporting.

Through direct contact, opinions of relevant stakeholders were researched during discussions about different models of cooperation applicable to the level of Republika Srpska. It is of importance to the Western Balkan countries to establish institutional mechanisms of cooperation between the government and CSO's because it's one of the key elements for membership in the European Union for the countries of the Western Balkan.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are 14 constitutions, as same as governments, parliaments and the entire network of courts of which everyone has its own procedure and jurisdiction.

Civil society needs to take over the role of monitoring and criticism of the work the institutions do as well as be the creators of change in a specific measure.

Model of cooperation of two sectors-both public and non-governmental is an extra component of the control of government in stable societies with democratic traditions.

The problems with which CSO face is:

- Who to survive (when it comes to financing for operational functioning)

- Professionalization (professional work force in different segments)

Participation of citizens in the creation of public policy in the prism of the legal framework is not limited but it's also not motivating in a way which encourages the participation of citizens.

Advocating for proper implementation of the 'Cooperation Agreement between the BiH Council of Ministers and the NGO Sector in BiH' – support to the group of the NGOs "Civil dialogue"– Association for Democratic Initiatives, Sarajevo

Activities in the project included:

Meetings with the representative of the MoJ FBiH, COM FBiH and members of the Parliament of FBiH
Assessment of activities that are already in the scope of the CBGI project
Meetings with the representative of the MoJ FBiH, COM FBiH and members of the Parliament of FBiH (10 meetings)
Two introductions of the Initiative to the CSOs across FBiH (not members of the Coalition)
Round table

A round table was held on the theme: " Agreement on Cooperation between the Council of Ministers of FBiH and non-governmental sector - The reasons and opportunities for the establishment and challenges of practical application. „The round table was attended by 23 participants, representatives of NGOs and government institutions.

Key topics discussed are:

The objective of the Agreement.
Models of possible cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sector.
How should relations between civil society and government be dealt with?
Who should be involved in the signing of the agreement- executive or legislative branches?

Recommendations and conclusion:

Since campaigns lasted for 6 months, their main goal is to inform the public and relevant stakeholders included in the process to establish contacts in a way which would result in thinking the same about the things which concern both CSO's and the government when it comes to working together and form policies which work on the development of civil society and the way governments can benefit from working with 'the third sector'. Representatives of governments of and CSO's from both entities formulated their expectations from future initiatives:

Enhance the institutional capacity of government cooperation with civil society organizations
Establish the Council for Cooperation with NGOs, academic institutions, religious communities and the media, which would be a permanent character without depending on the term of office and election
Establish a public foundation that financially supported NGOs
Establish of the National Office for Cooperation with Civil Society and the Council for Civil Society

Establish of instruments and mechanisms of coordination between the National Office for Cooperation with Civil Society with ministries within the Council of Ministers and the Entity ministries;

Establish instruments and mechanisms for coordination between the State Office for cooperation with civil society and sectoral networks within civil society

Establish a Fund for the Development of Civil Society

Establish of an electronic registry of interested CSOs in the relevant ministry for participation in the dialogue for the adoption and implementation of public policies

Establish a transparent and efficient mechanism for participation of CSOs and citizens in the process of setting priorities and creating programs that will be financed from the budget, which is associated with the process of budget planning

Additional recommendations are:

- ❖ The Agreement must be a general and detailed plan formulated through entity strategies;
- ❖ While advocating to take advantage of the political parties that have parliamentary majority;
- ❖ Develop a consolidated register of NGOs at the national level
- ❖ Support the establishment of sectoral networks;
- ❖ Put more pressure on the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to cooperate with non-governmental organizations institutionalized
- ❖ Develop and strengthen local resource centers in BiH, in particular sector ones;
- ❖ Develop think tanks that deal with research and analysis of public policies and research needs of citizens in B&H
- ❖ Defining the appropriate legal and institutional framework that will stimulate the development of civil society;
- ❖ Develop a strategy to establish an enabling environment for sustainable development of civil society;
- ❖ Capacity building of the State Office for cooperation with civil society to coordinate the programs of EU external assistance intended for the development of civil society;
- ❖ -; Increase the participation of NGOs in decision-making and consultation in the fields which are of particular interest to the NSA
- ❖ Adopt clear and quantified plans, mechanisms and tools based on which it will be possible to monitor and evaluate the effects of public policies;
- ❖ Conduct training programs for administrative bodies of the role and benefits of civil society in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies;
- ❖ Improve the legal framework so that monitoring and evaluation, as well as the involvement of civil society in this process are adequately regulated;
- ❖ Improve the capacity of public involvement in the adoption and implementation of public policies;
- ❖ Regulate the ways and criteria for financing NGOs from public funds in BiH
- ❖ Standardize and harmonize local practice when it comes to procedures and methods of financing the NGOs and the selection of proposed projects
- ❖ Avoid funds with no public. Adopt the principle that an independent external expert is one of the members of the committee for awarding grants, and information about external experts are available on the Internet;
- ❖ Include CSOs in the process of evaluation and analysis of the achieved results of the program and process efficiency of resource allocation;

- ❖ Analyze the existing mechanisms of resource allocation with the inclusion of CSOs, and thus jointly develop more efficient funding mechanisms.
- ❖ Conduct a public campaign to inform a greater number of non-governmental organizations on the agreement;