CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI)
A Summary of the Croatia CSI Project Evaluation

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the Centre for Development of Non-Profit Organisations (CERANEO), the CSI country partner in Croatia with an assessment of the implementation of the Civil Society Index project. It is hoped that the evaluation will be used to generate lessons that will inform current and future phases of the project as well as the final global evaluation undertaken by CIVICUS. It is also expected that CERANEO will gain out of this evaluation through the process of self reflection as well as gauging any important lessons learned. The evaluation might also help to develop strategies for future civil society strengthening initiatives.

The evaluation attempted to assess the outcomes and outputs the project as developed by CERANEO and CIVICUS. Besides, it also assessed the project against other key criteria, such as relevance, validity, participation, CIVICUS assistance, and sustainability, effective use of project resources, unintended changes and early impacts.

The evaluation included a mix of self-assessment surveys by the project partners as well as their evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the project. The report was shared with the country partner and a final phone call was organised to discuss the evaluation and next steps. This document presents a brief summary of the key findings.

Key Findings

Project Outputs

A body of knowledge on the state of civil society and civil society strengthening practices at national level

This has been mostly achieved. For the NCO, the CSI "is the first systematic (and) empirical assessment of civil society in Croatia". With regard to the assessment of the quality of the country report, both CIVICUS as well as CERANEO expressed satisfaction.

Shared understanding of the state of civil society among a broad range of stakeholders

This output perceived as the most important output has been assessed as mostly achieved. Events such as RSC, NW meetings helped build a shared understanding on the state of civil society in Croatia. The project has possibly lead to better and increased communication and attempt at undertaking joint efforts by CSO. Also important is that events such as these allowed for increasing 'visibility' of the various roles of CSOs.

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society developed

This output has also mostly been achieved. A clear set of strategies and recommendations were presented at the National Workshop. However the NCO raised the concern that these suggestions and ideas were not necessarily recognized by many stakeholders.

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society within participating countries as well as cross-nationally

This output has not been fully achieved. The reason stated is because the concept and the function of civil society is yet not fully understood (or recognised) in Croatia. Nevertheless, some of the CSI activities facilitated in bringing together stakeholders from various sectors, to share ideas, experiences and strategies for civil society strengthening.

Project Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders

The NCO considers this priority as mostly achieved. There are numerous examples that have been shared with CIVICUS that highlights that stakeholders are making use of the CSI findings/data to gather information on Croatian civil society.

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development

This output has been fairly achieved.

Increased openness to civil society by external stakeholders

There has been some positive response in governments' receptiveness towards Croatian CSOs since the implementation of the project.

Project Relevance

How relevant is the project for civil society, the NCO and other stakeholders in the country?

1. NAG members agree that the project has been completely relevant to their work. It has provided an opportunity to meet with representatives of a variety of civil society organisations. Overall it has also helped broaden their understanding of civil society in Croatia.
2. Many NAG members also perceive that the project is relevant to civil society strengthening. The project has helped greatly in providing an opportunity for CSOs to learn more about their sector. It comes at a time when the understanding on civil society is low in Croatia.

Project Validity

Did the project succeed in providing an accurate picture of the status of civil society in the country?

Project related activities and events such as the RSC, community survey and the National Workshop, country report and the scoring exercise all completely fulfilled the objective of generating an accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Croatia. At the same time

there were some challenges in the implementation of the media review and the policy impact study.

Project Participation

What was the extent and quality of participation by relevant stakeholders in the project?

The NCO expressed satisfaction as to the extent of participatory tools and methods used in the project. Of special mention were the NAG meetings and consultation exercised as well as the National Workshop. There were some problems getting the NAG members to participate through the project as they were busy in their own organisational and programme level work.

Capacity Building

Have any specific skills been gained as a result of implementing the CSI project?

According to the members of the NIT, the CSI helped them practice on the SPSS package. Further the project provided ample opportunities in training, facilitation as well as convening workshops and building/strengthening networks.

CIVICUS Assistance

What was the quality of CIVICUS's support to the NCO as well as the NCO's role in executing the project?

1. The support provided by CIVICUS has mostly been satisfactory. The NCO appreciated the systems and procedures that have been in place in the CSI project. However some concerns were raised with regard to instructions that CIVICUS had provided on data analysis. Other concerns included local funders not recognizing or acknowledging the recommendation letters that CIVICUS had supplied to CERANEO.
2. According to CIVICUS, the support and guidance provided to the NCO was mostly satisfactory. The only major concern raised by CIVICUS was that the time spent on editing the country report was more than planned. Also, CERANEO failed to complete the feedback questionnaires.

Sustainability/Replicability

What is the NCOs perception regarding implementation of the project in the future?

1. According to the NCO, this project should be implemented again after 3-5 years. A large percentage of NAG members are also of the view that this project should be repeated in the country in the future.

Project Resources

To what extent has the human and financial resources been appropriate for the implementation of the project?

1. According to CERANEO the financial resources to undertake the project was mostly adequate and to a large extent, the project was able to stay within the budget.
2. While HR was considered mostly adequate by the NCO, there were some concerns raised with regard to implementation of some of the activities especially media review. While agreeing to this assessment, CIVICUS also stated that there were some concerns as to the poor English language with regard to the country report. This delayed the finalisation of the report.
3. CERANEO agree that the time allocated for the project was sufficient.