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

Background: Purpose and Objective

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the Civil Society Development Foundation (NROS), the CSI country partner in the Czech Republic 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 NROS will also 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 NROS and CIVICUS. Besides it also assessed the project against other key criteria, such as relevance, validity, participation, CIVICUS assistance, 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 achieved and self-assessment by the National Coordinating Organisation (NCO) reflects that the project has achieved a high level, based upon the quality of the country report. According to CIVICUS the quality of the country report is good but the report lacks the expected interpretation and analysis.

Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society within participating countries as well as cross-nationally
This output has been assessed as partially achieved. The reason for the partial achievement is because the project did not involve as many stakeholders as expected.

Shared understanding of the state of civil society among a broad range of stakeholders
This has mostly been achieved. According to the NCO what is absent are strategies to address recommendations made during the national workshop.

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society developed
This output has also mostly been achieved as the project allowed for the generation of numerous forums and facilitated a fairly high degree of participation among (and within) the various stakeholders.

Project Outcomes

Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders
According to the NCO, preliminary results reflect that this outcome is being achieved – especially with the high interest being shown by regional governments towards the findings of the project.

Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development
This outcome, on the other hand, has only been partially achieved. According to the NCO this is due to the highly divided and fragmented nature of civil society in the Czech Republic.

Increased receptivity of civil society by external stakeholders
There has been some achievement with regard to this outcome by way of increased interest by the regional government on the findings of the study.
Project Relevance

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

1. According to the NCO, the project objective is in line with the vision and mission of NROS and therefore is completely relevant to the work of the organization. The project has brought new learning with regard to civil society in the Czech Republic, information that goes beyond any previous attempts to study this sector.

2. With regard to relevance to civil society strengthening, the NCO is of the view that the project is only to some extent relevant. It does not provide any major or new pieces of information regarding civil society in the Czech Republic. Despite this low trend, the evaluation does reflect interest on the part of regional governments in the country, on the findings of the project. Also, NAG members agree that the project does provide important knowledge on Czech civil society. At the very least, the project has encouraged discussions and debates among stakeholders. This is perceived as an important achievement.

Project Validity

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

1. The evaluation reflected that the project provides a reasonably accurate assessment and description of Czech civil society. However, it does concede that the project did not take into account the full range of civil society (e.g. trade unions, unorganized groups etc.) in the gathering and analysis of data.

2. CIVICUS is of the opinion that most of the research followed the guidelines of the project methodology. As well, the Czech team has made the effort to contextualize the research tools to the country context. The only concern was with the use of the media review findings, which CIVICUS feels, could have been better incorporated in the country report.

3. Lack of time is an issue that has been raised by both NROS and CIVICUS. In addition, the project teams agree the number of members working in the project was too small which led to over-burdening of the tasks of the team members.

Project Participation

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

1. According to the NCO, the project has applied various participatory approaches throughout its life cycle. These include increased consultations, inclusion of various stakeholders (to some extent) as well as providing a forum for stakeholders to debate and discuss the project process and findings. However, the project was not able to generate and/or sustain motivation and interest among the NAG members to participate in the project.
Summary of the Czech Republic Evaluation

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. Overall, the NCO assessed that CIVICUS mostly provided useful support to NROS in the implementation of the project. According to NROS, the highlight of the support was the development of the country report.

2. In CIVICUS’ view, the main concern with the systems and structures within the CSI team in the Czech Republic was around the set-up of the teams. As stated earlier, having one person to undertake responsibility of the participatory researcher as well as the civil society expert put a lot of pressure upon that person.

3. Overall, the NCO expressed much satisfaction regarding the support provided by the CIVICUS support person. According to them, a problem with CIVICUS support was mainly around CIVICUS not having tested the tool prior to the full implementation.

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.

Unintended Changes

Have there been any unintended changes (negative and/or positive) due to the project?

1. In the NCOs assessment the CSI project has motivated the students from Charles University on civil society issues.

Project Resources

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

1. Financially, according to the NCO, the project did not stay within the planned budget. This required that the NCO raise additional funds during the course of the project.

2. In terms of human resources, the issue brought up by both teams (CIVICUS and NROS) has been the shortage of core team members to undertake the project. However, CIVICUS takes the position that the NCO was proactive by utilizing volunteer assistance in the project.
Early Impacts

Are there any indications of any early indications of impact due to the project?

1. According to the NCO while it is still too early to accurately gauge the impacts of the project some preliminary results can be determined. These include increased interest by the regional government with regard to the findings, as well as increased communication between regional governments and regional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Also, according to the NCO, the project has definitely helped the students of the University. Preliminary observation of the NCO on the media reveals increased sensitivity of the media towards civil society issues. NROS is keen to take organise a regional workshop for Central & Eastern Europe (CEE) countries or potentially all European countries to share the findings of the project as well as to discuss the findings from other CSI projects in the region.