

## **CIVICUS Civil Society Index**

### **A Summary of the Slovenia CSI Project Evaluation**

#### **Background: Purpose and Objective**

This evaluation provides CIVICUS and the *Pravno-informacijski center nevladnih organizacij*<sup>1</sup> (PIC), the CSI country partner in Slovenia 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 PIC will gain out of this evaluation through the process of self reflection as well as in gauging important lessons learned. The evaluation might also help to develop strategies for future civil society strengthening initiatives.

The evaluation attempted to assess the outputs and outcomes of the project as developed by PIC and CIVICUS. Also, it assessed the project against other key criteria, such as relevance, validity, participation, capacity building, 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 output has been the foremost priority of the PIC and it has s been completely achieved as the “CSI was the first of such report to assess civil society in Slovenia as a whole and in its many dimensions.”

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

For the NCO, this output has been mostly achieved. As a national partner, PIC intends to cooperate with umbrella organisations to share the report after it has been reviewed by CIVICUS.

A set of strategies for strengthening civil society

This output merited a somewhat achieved rating from the NCO. For them, CSI set many recommendations for strengthening civil society; however, there are other documents (strategies, agreements) in Slovenia which provide more thorough recommendations on how to strengthen CS.

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<sup>1</sup>Also known as the Legal-information Centre for NGOs, Slovenia

#### Forums for sharing knowledge on civil society

For the NCO, this output has been somewhat achieved. PIC felt that it was too early to answer this and would rather focus primarily on their main goal to widely disseminate the report before the conduct of such forums.

#### **Outcomes**

##### Increase in knowledge based actions by civil society stakeholders

Although the NCO felt that it is still too early to assess this outcome, they gave it a somewhat achieved rating. According to PIC, “some actions were triggered not entirely by the findings in the report but because of the participants’ own initiative”. During the workshop, PIC reported that the participants discussed some recommendations but no agenda were identified.

The NCO shared their own experience in using the CSI findings to justify proposals submitted to donors, the first proposal aims to improve the influence/impact of CSOs on national budgeting process and the other, to improve transparency issues within the sector.

##### Increased collective voice of civil society in governance and development

In the point of view of PIC, consultative activities within the project such as the regional stakeholders consultation, national workshop, and the NAG meetings, somewhat helped provide a space for civil society and stakeholders to debate and share information on issues concerning CS. However, the NCO reported that they did not notice visible follow-ups or cooperation between stakeholders.

##### Increased receptivity of civil society by external stakeholders

For the NCO, it is still too early to assess this outcome.

#### **Project Relevance**

*How relevant is the project for NAG, civil society, the PIC and other stakeholders in the country?*  
Implementing the CSI project has been completely relevant to the NCO. Completing the project according to PIC, was one of their main goals in 2005. On the other hand, the NAG members felt that the project was only fairly relevant to their work.

#### **Project Validity**

A member of the NIT believed that the Social Forces Analysis was able to produce a completely accurate assessment of the state of civil society in Slovenia while CIVICUS and the other NIT respondent, gave a mostly accurate rating. The community survey, based on the evaluation of CIVICUS and two NIT respondents generated a completely accurate assessment. The Regional Stakeholders Consultation and Questionnaires, media review, fact finding studies, NAG scoring exercise, and the country report received a mostly accurate rating. However in CIVICUS’ point of view, the RSC only generated a fairly accurate assessment. The secondary data review was rated as between fairly and

somewhat accurate and the national workshop was rated as somewhat accurate by the same NIT respondents.

Members of the NIT indicated that the sample of the regional stakeholders' survey was "not representative in all criteria." This was seconded by CIVICUS saying that the "response rates were low and even during regional consultations, PIC find it difficult to get the stakeholders participate or even attend said activities. CIVICUS added that the language and writing style of the country report was "a bit rough and required a lot of editing and re-working."

### **Project Participation**

The use of participatory process/tools, according to the NCO, enhanced the validity of the CSI project. Data were validated as they come from different sources. In some indicators, NAG members had different opinions or views despite the data presented, this also helped in validating the information that were included in the country report.

Several recommendations were made by the NCO to further improve CSI's participatory approach. PIC suggested focusing more on ways to encourage CS actors to participate as well as to simplify the questionnaires. More civil society experts can also be tapped to work on specific issues, like individual reports from the toolkit, in particular, the writing of recommendations based on the media review.

### **Capacity Building**

With regard to capacities or skills acquired by the NCO team members during the CSI project's implementation, PIC indicated that they were able to gain research skills particularly in the conduct of participatory and quantitative survey research methods, as well as data analysis and interpretation. By engaging in the CSI research activities, the NCO reflected that they find it "positive to work with people" and learned "how to get people to cooperate." PIC added that they have learned "useful techniques" from the toolkit that might be helpful when they conduct other projects. The NCO also reported that they were able to gain training and facilitation skills by organizing regional consultations and workshops. Further, PIC added that the "whole concept and approach of CSI could be very useful for their future work."

### **Evaluation of CIVICUS Assistance and overall implementation**

PIC expressed complete satisfaction with the overall support provided by CIVICUS as all of their questions were answered adequately by the latter.

In general, the NCO is completely satisfied with the guidance provided by the toolkit, although in some issues they had to contact CIVICUS for explanations/clarifications. CIVICUS, on the other hand, was mostly satisfied with the support it provided to the NCO specifically in dealing with the project's methods. Further, CIVICUS believed that the grant provided to the NCO was particularly helpful in sustaining the project in Slovenia.

In CIVICUS' point of view, the NCO' overall implementation is between completely and mostly satisfactory. The NCO was “dedicated” and was able to pull the project together despite financial difficulties.

### **Sustainability/Replicability**

PIC indicated interest in replicating the project in the next year or two and the NAG members agreed with this. The NCO believed that the CSI project was able to inform their current programme activities, specifically in drafting project proposals. One NAG member who responded to the evaluation questionnaire said that the project should be replicated in five years.

### **Project Resources**

#### Financial Resources

The NCO felt that financial resources have been mostly adequate. PIC added that they were unsuccessful in fundraising and the lack of resources resulted in the project being stalled for a while. Further, the NCO shared that the project did not stay within the budgeted cost but expressed optimism that costs could be less in subsequent implementation if the project methods would be the same.

#### Human Resources

Human resources were mostly adequate both in the point of view of CIVICUS and the NCO. PIC reported that it did not encounter major problems even though the project coordinator also served as the participatory researcher. CIVICUS reported that the presence of an English editor would have been helpful especially in drafting the country report.

#### Time

As most of the activities took more time than expected, the NCO felt that the time allocated for the project was only fairly sufficient. While for CIVICUS, time was completely sufficient.

### **Short/Long Term Impact**

#### **Unintended changes**

When asked about the unintended changes brought about by the CSI project, the NCO reported that it encouraged cooperation with other CSI partners as well as promoted transparency of civil society organisations in the region. Some donors have also shown interest in the findings of the CSI project even before it was finalized.

**Changes within the organisation:** According to the NCO, they were able to acquire “a lot of useful knowledge” as well as “learn new approach to projects” when it implemented the CSI. The NCO also reported that it was able to “propose projects/action plans to the government and donors based on the findings of the CSI.”

**Changes within Government:** PIC cooperated with the Ministry when organising the national workshop. There was no major change, but there was impact specifically in raising awareness on civil society issues.

### **Conclusion**

The overall implementation of the CSI project in Slovenia was lauded by CIVICUS as the NCO was able to come up with a “well written, analytical, and relevant” country report despite financial difficulties. It also helped that the team members were dedicated and believed that the “whole concept and approach of CSI could be very useful for their future work.”

One of the unintended changes shared by the PIC was the resulting cooperation among CSI partners and the promotion of transparency among civil society organisations in the region. At the moment, the NCO reported positive impact in their organization such as the acquisition of knowledge on new project approaches. The project was also able to raise the government’s awareness on civil society issues. The project’s tools and methodology, according to the NCO, have to be fine tuned for future implementation in order to generate more significant impacts.