

# *Civil Society Diamond for Wales*

*A report on the Civicus Index on Civil Society Project in  
Wales*

**WCVA**

**October 2002**



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## *Executive Summary*

Wales has a broad and diverse civil society in which thousands of different groups, organisations and networks come together voluntarily to advance their various common interests. The vital role that civil society plays in public life is increasingly being recognised, not only in Wales but also across the world. However, there remains a lack of knowledge about what civil society is and how it operates compared to the public and private sectors.

In response to this, Wales Council for Voluntary Action and a steering group have implemented a pilot project developed by CIVICUS – an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world – to produce a Civil Society Index for Wales. The project has been conducted alongside 13 other countries across the world and this report outlines the key findings for Wales. The project has aimed not only to increase our understanding of civil society in Wales, but also to act as a useful tool to practitioners. It is also hoped that it will provide a useful way of comparing civil society in Wales with other countries.

The Civil Society Index assesses four key dimensions of civil society in order to assess the overall health of civil society<sup>1</sup>:

- (1) the **structure** of civil society with regard to its basic components, their size and relationship and the resources they command
- (2) the legal, political and socio-cultural **space** that civil society occupies within the regulatory, legal and social environment
- (3) the **values** that civil society represents and advocates
- (4) the **impact** of civil society on social and community well being

The project is based largely on a survey targeted at those with a broad knowledge of civil society in Wales, including civil society organisations, businesses, researchers, the media, government officials and politicians. The report is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of civil society in Wales, but a starting point. The limitations of the project are also discussed in the report.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Diamond Tool, see Anheier, Helmut K., 2001. *The Civil Society Diamond: A Primer*, CIVICUS Occasional Paper No. 2 and Helmut Anheier and Lisa Carlson, *Civil Society: Measurement and Policy Dialogue*, London: Earthscan, forthcoming.

The Civil Society Index for Wales reveals a civil society in Wales of medium health – although the high impact rating is particularly noteworthy. The following shows key results within each of the dimensions:

#### *Structure*

Survey respondents regard the structure of civil society as in a good condition overall and the broad and active membership base is identified as a particular strength. Civil society organisations are also seen to be good at engaging with politicians to express their interests in public life. However, the survey identified a lack of regional distribution of civil society organisations and low co-operation with the private sector as two problematic areas that need to be addressed.

#### *Space*

Civil society in Wales is seen to operate in a rather enabling environment and overall the state is seen to play a positive role by requesting civil society organisations to be involved in policy formulation (particularly at a national level), respecting civil society's independence and recognising people who have shown great public service in civil society. However, employers are not seen to be very active in supporting their employees' activities in civil society and the regulations for registering a civil society organisation are regarded as somewhat burdensome.

#### *Values:*

Civil society in Wales is seen as active in expressing, practising and promoting positive values. According to respondents, civil society has rather good systems of financial transparency in place and promotes internal democracy in the way it selects leadership and makes decisions. However, only slightly more than 10% of respondents agreed that many CSOs are promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. Likewise, civil society is not seen to mirror the cultural diversity of Welsh society - two areas of concern that need to be addressed.

#### *Impact:*

Civil society's contribution towards solving specific social, economic and political problems receives the highest rating among the four dimensions. Civil society

organisations are seen as able to provide their services in a way that would not be possible for the statutory or private sectors and to produce goods and services that reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities. Compared to other organisations, civil society's media image and coverage is seen as rather strong. Civil society organisations are seen to contribute to a positive national identity and most importantly, to improve the lives of the people they work with. They are also seen to be good at putting these issues on the public agenda but notably, are far less able to influence government policies in favour of their constituents. Significant room for improvement was also seen in civil society's ability to mobilise excluded groups to take part in public life. These are two very important areas that the National Assembly will need to address with its civil society partners.

The report highlights many of the real strengths of civil society in Wales, which should give confidence to civil society organizations and underline the value of their work. It also highlights to partners in government and business the important role that civil society plays and the potential benefits of increased co-operation between these areas in society. It also outlines where civil society is weaker in Wales and where these weaknesses need to be addressed, not only by civil society organisations, but also by partners in the public and private sector. Areas for further discussion are also highlighted and it is hoped that the project will act as a first step to addressing some of these issues.

## *Part I*

### ***What/ who is civil society in Wales?***

Civil society is made up of a broad variety of groups, organisations and networks through which people come together voluntarily to advance their common interests. It encompasses the huge range of organised activity outside the public or private sectors, including trade unions, professional associations, religious organisations, voluntary and community organisations. It is different from the private and public sectors – and it operates with or without their support. Civil society reflects the fundamental right of people to organise and co-operate. It is about people, consumers and communities taking action and taking responsibility for finding solutions to their own problems, initiating and managing their own services and facilities, organising in their workplace, and lobbying the public and private sector alike for change and improvements.

*Civil society is the sphere of institutions, organisations and individuals located between the family, the state and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests.*

The steering group agreed to use the above as the working definition for the project in Wales, whilst recognising that existing definitions vary both within and beyond Wales. This definition includes the voluntary sector, trade unions and professional associations but excludes political parties, the media and universities. Civil society is not a term commonly used by researchers, practitioners or their partners in Wales. Indeed, confusion as to the definition of ‘civil society’ was a regular comment in the responses to the survey and was also given as a reason for not replying to the survey at all. However, one of the aims of conducting the project and survey is to increase understanding of and discussion around the term.

### ***History of Civil Society in Wales***

Civil society in Wales stems from different foundations than those of its counterpart countries within the UK. In all parts of the UK it has developed alongside

industrialisation, political and social change and democratisation. In Wales, however, the roots of civil society can be found in the non-conformist religious revival of the early 19th century. Arising from the heartlands of rural Wales the non-conformist movement capitalised on existing kinship ties that have historically been so much a feature of social cohesion, and stimulated not only a religious, but a political and national consciousness. This underpinned the organisation of many social and educational institutions that provided a new route to participation in society. Towards the end of the century in the rapidly expanding urban areas of industrial South Wales civil society developed around the institutions that bound the mining communities together.

The increasing secularisation and latent decline in trade union membership that characterised the second half of the 20th century reduced the role of these two main influences and paved the way for the enormous growth we have witnessed in the voluntary sector. Today, although there is still evidence of rural/urban differences in the structure of civil society in Wales, across the whole country it comprises a diverse set of organisations that represent a far broader range of interests thus reflecting other less communalistic, individualist trends in society.

### ***Roles and characteristics of contemporary civil society in Wales***

Civil society in Wales is diverse and various. There are an enormous number of different organisations working within their communities, their workplaces and advocating policies to government and business. Civil society organisations do not organise themselves under one umbrella and it is worth looking at some of the different dimensions that make up civil society in Wales.

#### ***The voluntary sector***

The voluntary sector in Wales is made up of some 30 000, including community groups, volunteers, self-help groups, community co-operatives and enterprises, religious organisations and other not for profit organisations of benefit to communities and people in Wales. The voluntary sector in Wales itself is extremely diverse and operates at a variety of levels from an informal community groups to formal networks of national organisations. WCVA has an extensive database, called

the 'all-Wales database' which includes 26 000 of these organisations and breaks these down into 46 different areas of activity.

WCVA acts as an umbrella body for national organisations and has a membership of over 800 organisations. Within WCVA there is a Volunteering Unit which works closely with Volunteering Bureaux and advocates policies to promote volunteering at a national level. There are several national umbrella bodies working within specific areas in Wales from advice and advocacy to religions and from children and families to the environment.

At a local level, each county has an umbrella body for the voluntary sector called a County Voluntary Council. These differ widely in size and resources but they all provide core services to support the local voluntary sector. Each county also has a volunteer bureau which promotes volunteering in the area. There are a wide range of local networks, which depend on the specific needs within the area.

The voluntary sector also has formal links with the National Assembly for Wales. The Government of Wales Act 1998, which established devolved government in Wales, gives a statutory duty to the National Assembly to publish a Scheme setting out how it will promote the voluntary sector in its work. The Voluntary Sector Scheme was published in September 2000 and includes two key mechanisms for regular dialogue and co-operation with the Government: the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council and regular meetings with each Minister. The National Assembly also has a statutory responsibility to report on how it has implemented commitments set out in the Scheme during the course of each financial year. The Scheme has been widely welcomed by the voluntary sector in Wales.

### *Trade unions*

At a national level the Wales TUC operates as an umbrella body for trade unions in Wales. It has a membership of 52 trade unions, who in turn represent just under half a million union members or about 45% of all employees in Wales. Trade union membership as a percentage of all employees is significantly higher in Wales than in other parts of Great Britain and this has enabled the Wales TUC to exercise a significant level of influence in public affairs throughout Wales.

The Wales TUC sits on the National Assembly for Wales' Business Partnership Council, alongside other individual trade unions.

The Wales TUC has a regional structure which reflects the four economic regions of Wales and matches the regional committee areas of the National Assembly. There are also 27 regional Trade Union Councils working in tandem with Wales TUC across Wales.

### *Faith groups*

Despite religious groups formally being part of the voluntary sector, this is only the case where they promote activities for public benefit which are not faith specific and so they are also included as a separate category for the purposes of this project.

The various strands of Christian faith have been a very important area of civil society traditionally within Wales and has developed a strong network at a national level in Cytûn – Churches Together in Wales. Cytûn has 11 member organisations which in turn represent 85% of the Christian faith in Wales and 10% of the whole population. Cytûn also has several local networks active across Wales. It also runs a Churches' National Assembly Centre and has been represented religious groups for the first two years of the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council. There is also an Evangelical Alliance in Wales, which represents churches across the nation from some 30 different denominations.

Research undertaken as part of the CIVICUS project revealed however a lack of a well established umbrella body or a single point of contact for the several non-Christian faiths that work in Wales. This is now changing with the establishment of the Interfaith Council for Wales, which had its inaugural meeting in April 2002. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Baha'i faiths as well as the First Minister, Under Secretary of State for Wales and Assembly party leaders. This is interestingly being formed as a sub-committee of the National Assembly for Wales. It appears that this answers a very real need to form greater unity and representation for the variety of faiths in Wales.

### *Professional Associations*

The research for this project has revealed professional associations in Wales as having the least degree of unity and coming together to promote common interests. There is no umbrella body for professional associations in Wales and no single point of contact to access further information about what associations are operating. The most comprehensive point of information is the Yellow Pages telephone directory. This clearly points to an area where further research could be undertaken to establish why this is the case and whether forming closer alliances could strengthen the work of professional associations.

Some individual professional associations, however, are working to develop their profile in Wales both in terms of membership, advocacy and relationships with the Assembly. For example, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is an organisation which has 1 500 members in Wales. They work closely with other professions in the health, social care and education sectors in which their members work. They also work collaboratively with a number of voluntary organisations, for example, Arthritis Care in Wales. A couple of the larger professional associations - the Institute of Directors and the Engineering Employers Federation – also have a place on the National Assembly's Business Partnership Council.

### *Research on civil society in Wales*

Some research has been conducted on civil society in Wales by academic institutions, consultants, government and perhaps most of all by civil society organisations themselves. It has not been possible within this project to collate a list of the research that has been and is being undertaken in relation to aspects of civil society across Wales.

It is difficult to assess the total amount of academic research that has been undertaken on or including various aspects of civil society in Wales, although this has certainly been done in several academic institutions<sup>2</sup>. There has been little academic research to

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Voluntary Sector Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter; Centre for Social Policy Research and Development at University of Wales, Bangor; Institute of Welsh Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth; National Centre for Public Policy Research, University of Wales, Swansea; School of Social Sciences, University of Wales, Cardiff; Centre for Civil Society, University of Glamorgan.

date on civil society as a whole in Wales. This is changing post-devolution with at least two PhDs currently being undertaken on civil society in Wales and the establishment of the Centre for Civil Society at the University of Glamorgan in autumn 2002. This may reflect a new tendency for these separate areas of research to be brought under the umbrella term of 'civil society'.

Civil society organisations themselves have undertaken significant research on civil society in Wales. For example, both the Wales TUC and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action have full time research officers. WCVA produces a Wales voluntary sector almanac which contains information such as the total number of voluntary organisations working in Wales, a breakdowns of the main focus of their work, how many people they employ, how many people volunteer etc. A number of civil society organisations undertake a range of one-off and specific research projects, which it is not possible to collate in this report.

The Welsh Assembly Government collects a range of statistical information regarding civil society in Wales, albeit under separate areas within civil society. It is committed to providing an annual statement of direct and indirect Assembly spending on the voluntary sector. WCVA is currently working with the Welsh Assembly Government to identify research which is already being undertaken and areas where research is needed.

### ***A Children's Commissioner for Wales***

One of the key achievements for Wales since devolution has been the appointment of a Children's Commissioner for Wales with the responsibility to consider and make representations to the Assembly about any matter affecting the rights and welfare of children in Wales. Civil society organisations played a key role in this development.

The appointment of the Children's Commissioner for Wales followed a long campaign led by children's organisations in Wales including Children in Wales, Barnardo's, NSPCC and Save the Children. The National Assembly for Wales committed itself to the appointment of a Commissioner but as the National Assembly only has secondary legislative powers the

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necessary primary legislation to establish the post had to be provided through an Act of the UK Parliament. The Assembly obtained Government agreement for an amendment to the Care Standards Bill to provide the necessary legislation and when the Care Standards Act gained royal assent on 20 July 2000 it established the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales with functions limited to children in various care services.

The Children's Commissioners Bill was published in December 2000 with provisions to extend the Commissioners role to all children. Again it had to be passed through the UK Parliament and was the first Bill since devolution to apply to Wales only - in itself groundbreaking.

Prior to the publication of the Bill Children in Wales, an umbrella body for the statutory, voluntary and academic children's sectors, convened a small lobby group to track and influence development at every stage. This group identified significant omissions and flaws, which were broadly related to the freedom of the Commissioner to consider and make representation on any matter, which affects children in Wales, and to act as an unfettered champion for the human rights of children in Wales.

This group briefed and made representations about the Bill at all levels of UK government and all stages of the process; to civil servants, the Secretary of State for Wales and individual politicians prepared to speak in the House of Commons and at the Committee stage. The forthcoming General Election with the likely dissolution of parliament within 2-3 months time created additional pressures as they were warned that further lobbying could risk the loss of the Bill altogether.

The group however considered the issues of concern were so fundamental that they continued campaigning until the last possible moment. Because time was of the essence, they decided to focus their efforts on the one principled amendment, that the *Children's Commissioner for Wales should be able to consider and make representation on any matter, which affects the rights or welfare of children in Wales*. This was key to ensure that the Children's Commissioner's remit was not limited to that of the National Assembly for Wales. This would have severely limited the Commissioner's reporting powers and have led to confusion and to unworkable anomalies. The group felt it was of paramount importance that the Commissioner

was genuinely free to be a watchdog and champion for children.

They continued to lobby for this one principled amendment through the Report stage, the Third Reading and on to the House of Lords. Finally, in April 2001 just before the Bill received Royal Assent and Parliament was dissolved in readiness for the General Election, the group was awarded an important victory. An amendment moved by Government in the Report Stage in the House of Lords enabled the Commissioner to “*consider and make representations to the Assembly about any matter affecting the rights and welfare of children in Wales*”. This was an important victory for the group as it crucially allows the Commissioner the freedom to enquire and make representations on any matter pertaining to the rights and welfare of children in Wales.

The appointment of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales has been an important and positive development in Welsh society and there is no doubt that civil society in Wales played a huge part not only by campaigning for the establishment of the post, but ensuring it had the broad remit necessary to promote the rights and welfare of children in Wales.

## *Part II*

### ***The Civil Society Index for Wales***

The Civil Society Index for Wales is one of 13 pilot projects being led by CIVICUS – an international alliance dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world - in order to assess and strengthen the health of civil society internationally. In Wales, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) has worked with a steering group comprising of a cross section of civil society organisations (CSOs) and interested partners in Wales to implement the project.

#### *The CIVICUS project*

CIVICUS had developed this project in response to the increasing awareness of the enormous role that civil society plays, whether it be local groups coming together to find ways of improving their communities, or the global movement against neo-liberal

globalisation<sup>3</sup>. Whilst our awareness of the vital role that civil society plays in public life is increasing, there remains a lack of knowledge about what civil society is and how it operates compared to the public and private sectors. There is certainly little way of measuring how civil society is faring, compared to the many economic and government indicators, such as GDP.

In response to this, CIVICUS has developed a project to attempt to capture this information in an index and to empower civil society practitioners in the process. The project attempts to increase understanding of civil society but not simply through providing a greater body research. Crucially, it is also intended to act as a tool for practitioners and strengthen civil society by bringing practitioners together to consider how they can strengthen civil society. CIVICUS outlines how they anticipate the Index project will strengthen civil society in a three-fold process:

- By increasing the knowledge and understanding of civil society through reflecting on and assessing the health and nature of the sector
- By empowering civil society stakeholders through promoting dialogue, alliances and networks
- By providing stakeholders with a tool for developing a vision of civil society in the future, and an agenda to achieve this vision

The Civil Society Index assesses four key dimensions of civil society in order to assess the overall health of civil society<sup>4</sup>:

- (5) the **structure** of civil society with regard to its basic components, their size and relationship and the resources they command
- (6) the legal, political and socio-cultural **space** that civil society occupies within the regulatory, legal and social environment
- (7) the **values** that civil society represents and advocates
- (8) the **impact** of civil society on social and community well being

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<sup>3</sup> See Volkhart Finn Heinrich & Kumi Naidoo, From Impossibility to Reality: A reflection and position paper on the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society project 1999-2001

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the Diamond Tool, see Anheier, Helmut K., 2001. The Civil Society Diamond: A Primer, CIVICUS Occasional Paper No. 2 and Helmut Anheier and Lisa Carlson, Civil Society: Measurement and Policy Dialogue, London: Earthscan, forthcoming.

Working with CIVICUS and the steering group in Wales, WCVA conducted a targeted survey at those with a broad knowledge of civil society in Wales, whether they are working within CSOs or not. Participants were asked to assess the strength of civil society in Wales on a number of issues within the four dimensions. The outcomes have been analysed by CIVICUS and translated into 'scores' from 0-100, where 100 represents a perfectly healthy civil society. This paper reports on the outcomes of this survey and subsequent civil society diamond for Wales.

### ***Objectives and approach of the Wales study***

The objectives of the Civil Society Index for Wales are to:

- increase understanding of the strengths, development needs, challenges and opportunities for civil society in Wales;
- promote dialogue and alliances among civil society organisations
- raise awareness about civil society in Wales and its potential
- feed into setting agendas and goals for action to strengthen civil society, including a Manifesto for Civil Society to be used to campaign for positive change in the run up to the 2003 National Assembly for Wales elections
- provide some basis for comparison and sharing information about civil society in Wales and civil society in the other countries who have participated in the project

In Wales, WCVA has acted as the lead national body and has worked closely with a steering group comprising of a cross section of civil society organisations in Wales and partners including: Wales TUC, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Oxfam Wales/Cymru, Cytun – Churches Together in Wales, Torfaen Voluntary Alliance and Department of Voluntary Sector Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter. The main focus of the project has been a targeted survey at CSOs and those with knowledge of civil society in Wales.

### ***Limitations of the project***

The report does not provide an exhaustive analysis of civil society in Wales, but rather provides a snapshot. The results are based on a survey targeted at a relatively small number of selected organisations within civil society and partners with some knowledge of civil society. As the majority of the responses were from CSOs, this makes the responses from organisations interacting with civil society notably small

and may not necessarily represent the views of others working with CSOs. As the responses came mainly from civil society, the survey may have yielded an overtly positive response to some questions. The steering group recognises that a more accurate reflection of civil society in Wales could be achieved if a similar survey were to target a broader range of individuals and organisations.

Time and resource limitations meant that working groups were not established to agree a common understanding of civil society in Wales before the survey was issued. For similar reasons, but also a low response to invitations, no focus groups or discussion events were held following the survey to put the results in context and to facilitate greater alliances between different strands within civil society.

Both of these factors mean that interpretation of the results must be done with caution. In many instances, the results are pointers for areas where further research or discussion might be facilitated, rather than presenting firm conclusions.

### *Part III*

#### ***Project Implementation***

November 2001	First meeting of steering group to discuss potential of carrying out the Civil Society Index project in Wales. Group decided to undertake the project.
January 2002	Second meeting of the steering group to agree a timetable for the project, agree a draft questionnaire and what secondary research will be needed.
March 2002	Third meeting of the steering group to finalise the questionnaire and agree list of recipients. Steering group agreed to hold a series of focus groups to give context to the results of the survey.
April 2002	Stakeholder survey distributed
May 2002	Fourth meeting of steering group to agree future work.

June 2002	All stakeholder surveys collected to be analysed by CIVICUS
July 2002	Initial results of stakeholder survey received
July 2002	Fifth meeting of steering group to discuss outcomes of stakeholder survey and agree final arrangements for focus groups.
July 2002	Planned focus groups cancelled owing to low levels of interest expressed by stakeholders.
September 2002	Second event around the results of the stakeholder survey cancelled owing to low levels of interest by stakeholders.
September 2002	Internal discussions in WCVA to agree how the findings can be used in WCVA's manifesto for the Assembly Elections 2003, <i>Civil society: civil space</i>
October 2002	Steering Group meeting to agree the final report.
November 2002	Final report and manifesto launched at WCVA's AGM.

#### *Steering group*

WCVA agreed to be the lead national body for implementing the project with CIVICUS in Wales. WCVA aimed to establish a working group with broad representation from civil society organisations in Wales and other interested partners. A range of organisations were invited to join the steering group, including representatives from the Wales Co-operative Centre, the Communities Directorate at the National Assembly for Wales. The final steering group consisted of representatives from Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Wales TUC, Department of Voluntary Sector Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter, Oxfam in Wales/Cymru, Torfaen Voluntary Alliance, and Cytun – Churches Together in Wales. However, the representative from Cytun resigned from the steering group half way through the project owing to pressures of time.

#### *Definition of civil society in Wales*

The steering group decided to use the same definition of civil society that CIVICUS provided and was used in most other pilot projects. However, this term is not widely used or understood in Wales and this was one of the comments made by several

respondents. There is great debate around the definition of civil society and if the project is repeated it would be helpful to have a greater debate with stakeholders on the definition of civil society in Wales.

#### *Stakeholder survey*

CIVICUS supplied a draft stakeholder questionnaire, which had been shared with all countries conducting the pilot project. The questionnaire is divided into 4 sections: structure, space, values and impact, reflecting four key areas through which health of civil society can be assessed.

The steering group used this draft as a template and adapted the questions to reflect the Wales context and to ensure it addressed the priorities in Wales. The bulk of the questions remained the same or similar to the draft to enable comparison with other countries.

#### *Recipients of survey*

The stakeholder survey was sent to recipients from a range of civil society organisations and individuals and organisations that work closely with civil society, including academics, the media, government, political parties and businesses. Whilst civil society organisations would have the most interest and often the most experience of civil society, it was important to have the perspective of organisations outside civil society. The survey was sent out in the following proportion:

Total number of questionnaires distributed: 415

- 62% CSOs (of which 12% trade unions; 39% voluntary organisations; 5% religious groups; 6% professional associations; 1% foundations)
- 17% Government/ politicians
- 7% Media
- 6% Research
- 8% Business

Given the time and resource limitations of the project, the steering group decided to focus on key organisations and individuals who would have the broadest knowledge and experience of civil society in Wales. Within the voluntary sector the survey was

sent to a range of key networks that would give a balance of regional and subject specific knowledge. The survey was sent to 22 trade unions with the largest number of members in Wales and to the regional trade union councils. The survey was sent to members of Cytun – an umbrella of Christian faiths in Wales and to the Interfaith Council for Wales, which is in the process of being established. It should be noted that there was no directory of non-Christian faith groups in Wales and it is hoped that the Interfaith Council may play a part in rectifying this. The survey was also sent to a range of professional organisations in Wales, but there is no umbrella body or directory of professional associations and this is something that may be concluded from the project.

The survey was also sent to a range of government officials who have regular contact with civil society organisations, key figures in local and national media, businesses which have expressed an interest in working with civil society or communities, researchers and politicians. It should be noted that just as civil society organisations in Wales do not work together as ‘civil society’, external bodies working with civil society did not have structures for working with civil society as a whole, but mostly did have some structures for working with a part of civil society, such as the voluntary sector or trade unions. This aspect of the project has been very useful in gathering a database of those bodies operating outside civil society who have an interest in this area.

#### *Responses received*

97 responses were received, which represents 23% of the total number of recipients. The percentage of questionnaires returned from the different categories was as follows:

Total: 100% (97 returns)

67% CSOs (of which 11% trade unions; voluntary organisations 42%; 8% religious organisations; 7% professional associations; 0% foundations)

13% Government/ politicians

2% Media

9% Research

9% Business

Whilst the response rate was relatively good, it is important to note that for some categories, only a very few people are representing the entire category. For example, only 2 responses were received from the media. Even where a higher percentage of responses were received – for example government – this still represents the opinions of only a relatively small number of individuals. Whilst it is outside the scope of the project, it would be interesting to see why the 77% chose not to respond.

The following percentages of responses were received from the different geographical areas:

North Wales	15%
Mid Wales	11%
South West Wales	13%
South East Wales	56%
Outside Wales	3%
Not known	1%

10% of responses were received in the medium of Welsh. Of those who responded to the question, 29% were organisations with fewer than 5 members of staff, 37% were from organisations with between 5-20 members of staff and 34% were from organisations with over 20 members of staff.

#### *Analysis of survey*

Completed surveys were analysed by CIVICUS. The response for each question was given a detailed breakdown to produce a final ‘score’ out of 100 where higher scores represent a stronger civil society and lower scores a weaker civil society. CIVICUS then took the individual scores from each question and aggregated these to produce an overall score for each dimension. In recognition of the complexity of civil society, the CIVICUS methodology does not attempt to aggregate the four different dimensions of civil society into a final ‘score’ for each country in the way that most indexes do. The four dimensions remain distinct and the final ‘diamond’ shape is able to reflect which dimensions are stronger or weaker within a country.

## *Part IV*

### *The Civil Society Diamond for Wales*

#### *What is a 'healthy' civil society*

In developing the Index project, CIVICUS have drawn on research into what a 'healthy' civil society might look like. Based largely on information provided by CIVICUS, the steering group decided that a very strong structure for civil society would include an active membership base with sufficient and effective umbrella bodies, co-operation within civil society and with other sectors, and secure funding. A healthy space for civil society would be one where regulations and taxes support civil society, the right to dissent and the independence of civil society is fully recognised and employers actively support staff in their work with civil society. A civil society that actively promotes good race relations, equal opportunities and sustainable development within its work and in wider society would have strong values. A civil society with strong impact would improve the lives of the people it works with through successfully promoting the interests of its constituents in public policy and providing goods and services that meet people's needs.

#### *Civil Society in Wales*

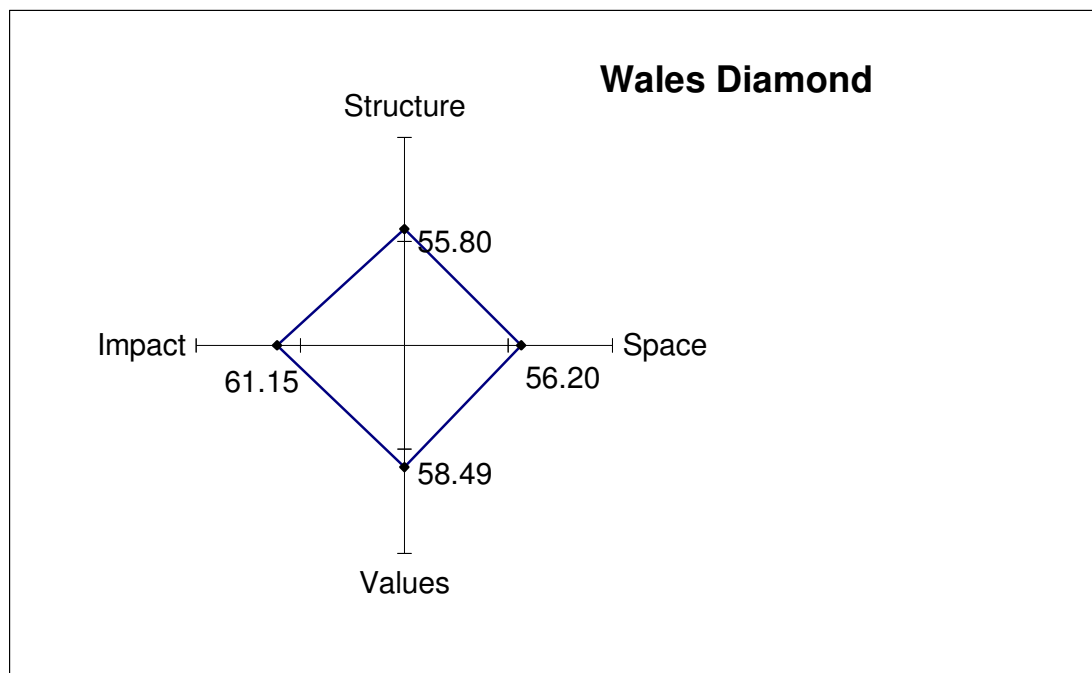
##### *Summary*

The Civil Society Diamond for Wales depicts a civil society that is overall of 'medium health' although the rather strong impact rating is particularly noteworthy. The diamond shape itself, however, is less interesting than a more detailed look at individual factors within these dimensions.

##### *Structure*

Survey respondents regard the structure of civil society as in a good condition overall and the broad and active membership base is identified as a particular strength. Civil society organisations are also seen to be good at engaging with politicians to express

their interests in public life. However, the survey identified a lack of regional distribution of civil society organisations and low co-operation with the private sector as two problematic areas that need to be addressed.



### *Space*

Civil society in Wales is seen to operate in a rather enabling environment and overall the state is seen to play a positive role by requesting civil society organisations to be involved in policy formulation (particularly at a national level), respecting civil society's independence and recognising people who have shown great public service in civil society. However, employers are not seen to be very active in supporting their employees' activities in civil society and the regulations for registering a civil society organisation are regarded as somewhat burdensome.

### *Values:*

Civil society in Wales is seen as active in expressing, practising and promoting positive values. According to respondents, civil society has rather good systems of financial transparency in place and promotes internal democracy in the way it selects leadership and makes decisions. However, only slightly more than 10% of respondents agreed that many CSOs are promoting the sustainable use of natural

resources. Likewise, civil society is not seen to mirror the cultural diversity of Welsh society - two areas of concern that need to be addressed.

*Impact:*

Civil society's contribution towards solving specific social, economic and political problems receives the highest rating among the four dimensions. Civil society organisations are seen as able to provide their services in a way that would not be possible for the statutory or private sectors and to produce goods and services that reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities. Compared to other organisations, civil society's media image and coverage is seen as rather strong. Civil society organisations are seen to contribute to a positive national identity and most importantly, to improve the lives of the people they work with. They are also seen to be good at putting these issues on the public agenda but notably, are far less able to influence government policies in favour of their constituents. Neither is civil society seen as particularly effective at mobilising excluded groups to take part in public life. These are two very important areas that the National Assembly will need to address with its civil society partners.

*Overall comments*

Several people commented on the questionnaire that they were not comfortable with answering on behalf of 'civil society'. Many reasons were given for this. One respondent noted that whilst he or she had a good knowledge of their own area within civil society, they weren't able to comment on other areas of civil society and so their answers were only in relation to some areas of civil society in Wales. Another commented that the questions demanded different responses according to different types of organisations within civil society. One respondent commented that she had asked several managers within the voluntary sector what a 'civil society organisation' was but that none of them understood what this meant.

It is clear that the term 'civil society' is not widely understood in Wales or a term widely used by practitioners to describe their work. Hopefully, this project will go some way towards increasing knowledge around what civil society is in Wales and the enormous role it plays.

Another comment received was that the survey only gives a snapshot of civil society in Wales, without giving any indication of whether various aspects are improving or weakening. For example, it would have been useful to ask whether membership of organisations have increased over the last 5 years or decreased. Has access to the legislature increased or decreased since the establishment of the National Assembly? Again, this project is not intended to provide an exhaustive analysis of civil society but it is hoped that it will lead to more work being done around such important issues. Ideally, the project should be implemented every 2-4 years, to establish whether certain indicators had improved or worsened.

## **Structure**

This section looks at the make up of civil society with regard to its basic components, their size and relationship and the resources they command. Overall, respondents regard the structure of civil society as in moderate condition. As with all of the sections, it is most revealing to look at the individual aspects in more detail.

### *Membership*

Respondents felt that civil society organisations have an active membership base in Wales and this scores highest under the categories within structure – 68 out of 100. It is notable that very few respondents gave a negative response to the question and the extent of involvement in civil society in Wales should be seen as a significant strength.

### *Distribution*

Responses show clearly that civil society organisations are not perceived to be spread evenly across Wales and this received the lowest rating within the section on structure – only 37 out of 100. The regional distribution of the recipients and respondents of the questionnaire shows a heavy bias to the south east, with 56 % of respondents being based in the south east Wales. This in turn is reflected in the population distribution as according to the 2001 census nearly 50% of the population live in south east Wales. The uneven distribution of civil society organisations, as well as other institutions - including government, is regularly expressed as a concern. Many of the larger civil

society organisations have opened offices in north and mid Wales to ensure they do not become focussed on the south.

However, according to the WCVA all-Wales database, this concern is not reflected in the distribution of the voluntary sector in Wales (please see table below). Rather than there being an over-concentration of voluntary sector organisations in the south east, there are significantly more organisations per head in mid Wales. It is not possible to tell in what way respondents felt there was a poor distribution of civil society organisations, but this clearly merits further research. It might be that the high percentage of respondents from south east Wales, and the general concern around the over-concentration of civil society organisations around Cardiff reflects the tendency of the larger ‘national’ organisations to base themselves in the capital. However, it is clear that civil society organisations play a very important role in rural Wales. This is another area that merits further research.

#### **Distribution of voluntary sector organisations**

Region	% population	% voluntary sector organisations
North	23%	24%
Mid	7%	18%
South West	22%	25%
South East	48%	33%

#### *Umbrella bodies*

The survey asked whether there are sufficient umbrella bodies at both a national and local level. Respondents did not express concern with the number of national umbrella bodies at a national level (scoring 60 out of a 100) but the responses suggests that there is room for more umbrella bodies at a local level as this scored 50 out of 100. Perhaps especially following devolution, there are a number of relatively strong national umbrella bodies. The WCVA all-Wales database shows 25 national voluntary sector umbrella bodies alone. At a local level, there are Trades Union Councils, County Voluntary Councils, Volunteer Bureax and local Cytun groups. However, there are not many specialist local umbrella bodies. The WCVA all-Wales

database shows only 32 local voluntary sector umbrella bodies in Wales, of which 21 are County Voluntary Councils. Further research could be done as to what types of local umbrella bodies would strengthen civil society in Wales.

It should be noted that there is no umbrella body for civil society as a whole either at a national level or a local level. The results do not give any indication that respondents regard this as a weakness in civil society. However, one network that has discussed the outcomes of the survey noted that establishing greater links between the different strands within civil society might be an obvious conclusion of this project. It is also notable that there is no umbrella body for professional associations at either a national or local level.

#### *Co-operation within civil society*

The overall scores were not greatly revealing for two questions on whether conflicts between CSOs prevent cooperation between them and whether CSOs join alliances to promote common interests. These scored 50 and 51 respectively. However, a further breakdown of the results shows that whilst 84% gave either a positive or neutral response to the question of whether CSOs join alliances to promote the common interest, 30% of respondents felt that conflicts between CSOs do prevent co-operation between them. This suggests conflicts between CSOs are preventing alliances that would strengthen civil society being formed.

#### *Co-operation with the private sector*

Co-operation with the private sector is notable in its low score – only 42.12 out of 100. Nearly 35% of those who answered the question gave a negative response. Comments received in the questionnaire also emphasise that the relationship between businesses and civil society is not recognised sufficiently in the questionnaire. The emphasis is on the relationships between civil society and the state. The structure of the questionnaire and the low score on this question suggest that CSOs need to re-examine and strengthen their relationships with the private sector.

### *Culturally diverse support base*

CSOs were seen to have a relatively culturally diverse support base and this question scored 56 out of 100. However, interestingly under the section on values respondents clearly do not perceive that the cultural diversity of society in Wales is mirrored in civil society. ‘Cultural diversity’ is itself a broad term and respondents could have interpreted this differently.

### *Political Participation*

Respondents showed strongly that CSOs do contact politicians to express their interest in the public life (with a score of 67 out of 100). Encouragingly, very few respondents replied negatively to this question. However, respondents felt that CSOs are far less likely to use non-violent demonstrations or boycotts to express their interests in the public life and the score in this form of political participation dropped to 53, with 36% of respondents replying negatively.

### *Financial sustainability*

Financial sustainability is not perceived to be a great problem for CSOs with 57% of respondents who answered this question giving a positive response and an overall score of 58 out of 100. However, it should be noted that just under half of the respondents did not feel able to answer this question. This suggests that there is need to do more secondary research around this point in order to gain a clearer understanding.

### *Sources of funding*

CSOs are perceived to have diversified sources of funding with an overall score of 67 and only 11% of those who answered the question gave a negative answer. This is an important strength for civil society in Wales.

## **Space**

This section looks at the legal, political and socio-cultural space that civil society occupies within the larger regulatory, legal and social environment. It looks at the laws and policies which enable or inhibit the development of CSOs and the socio-cultural norms which foster or inhibit the flourishing of civil society. One of the

comments that was received in the survey was that it is noteworthy that this section did not deal with the space taken by economic interests. The overall score of 56 for Space is again not particularly noteworthy, but there are some more interesting comments on the space in which civil society has to operate in the results.

### *Regulation*

Respondents saw the regulations around registering a civil society organisation as notably difficult and this received the lowest score in this section with just 44 out of 100. However, 50% of respondents chose not to answer the question. This shows that not only are the regulations perceived to be unhelpful, but that they are not widely understood. This is a clear issue that civil society organisations will want the government to address. This conclusion is timely as the Strategic Unit in the UK Government's Cabinet Office have recently published a report proposing wide ranging changes in the law and regulation of the charitable and wider not-for-profit sector, *Private Action, Public Benefit: A Review of Charities and the Wider Not-For-Profit Sector*. There has been wide consultation on the report and civil society organisations will want to respond to the documents and ensure several of the recommendations are implemented.

### *Tax*

Over 25% of respondents chose not to answer the question on whether the tax system encourages donations from individuals and businesses, suggesting this is another area which is not well understood. However, 40% of those who did respond gave a positive answer to the question giving this factor a relatively high score of 59 out of 100. The UK Government Treasury has just completed a *Cross Cutting Review on the role of the voluntary and community sector in service delivery*, which refers to the barriers that the current tax system can create for voluntary and community groups and suggests some ways in which these might be overcome.

### *Political pressure*

CSOs are not seen to be under significant pressure to join or endorse political groupings in Wales and this received a score of 67 out of 100. However, one comment on this question was that it has different implications for different areas of civil society. Whilst it would be negative for a community group or a voluntary

organisation to feel pressured to endorse a particular political grouping, this is not the case with most trade unions whose history is very much aligned with certain political groupings, something which is supported by its members.

### *Policy Involvement*

Local and national governments are perceived to request CSO involvement in policy formulation, with a particularly high score of 69 out of 100 for involvement at a national level. This is the highest score in the section on space and can be seen as an important strength. However, discussions with interested networks raised concerns over the quality of civil society organisations' involvement in policy formulation. There is a (almost overwhelmingly) large volume of consultation with the sector, but issues such as length of time given for consultation and the extent to which civil society's concerns are taken on board still need addressing.

### *Dissent*

There was a significant range of opinions on whether CSOs are able to express their dissent from national and local government policies without prejudice to their operation and funding. Whilst just under 75% of those gave a positive or neutral answer to the question, a significant 25% felt gave negative response. Whilst the overall result of 52 out of 100 is rather uninteresting, it may be worth researching further into why a quarter of respondents felt this was not the case.

### *Legislative Access*

There was a range of opinions expressed as to whether CSOs have good access to the legislature to put their point of view with an overall result of 50 out of 100. Slightly more respondents gave a negative reply to the question than positive. This is another area of relationships that civil society organisations may well want to examine. Civil society organisations in Wales may want to access a number of bodies empowered to make legislation affecting Wales – the European Parliament, the UK Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. The survey does not explore these different areas and it would be valuable to investigate which bodies the respondents feel more or less able to access and what steps could be taken to improve this. One of the objectives of devolution for Wales is to allow better access to decision-making,

but the results from this survey may indicate that this new legislature still has a long way to go before civil society organisations feel it is truly accessible.

#### *Independence from government*

Respondents felt relatively strongly that government does recognise that CSOs are independent organisations that determine their own priorities with an overall score of 64 out of 100 and nearly 87% of those who answered the question gave a positive or neutral response. This will be welcomed by civil society organisations as this is regularly expressed as an area of concern for many.

#### *State recognition*

Respondents also felt that the state has in place ways of recognizing people who have shown great public service in civil society with an overall score of 64 out of 100.

#### *Social recognition*

Respondents did not feel that there is as great a level of social recognition for people who join CSOs, with an overall result of 54 out of 100 and some 23% of those who answered the question replying negatively. This will be of some concern to civil society organisations.

#### *Recognition in the workplace*

Respondents felt relatively strongly that employers do not give sufficient recognition to the work employees undertake within civil society with a final score of just under 40. Of those who answered the question, 45% responded negatively and only 12% positively. This is the lowest score within the section on Space and it is an area that civil society organisations and employers should consider how to tackle.

#### *Business philanthropy*

Nearly 20% of respondents chose not to answer the question on whether the private sector is actively engaged in programmes supporting CSOs. However, of those who did, the responses were very mixed with 25% responding positively, just over 25% negatively and almost 50% giving a neutral response. It is difficult to interpret what this means – whether some businesses are more active than others and experiences of CSOs vary widely or whether there is generally little known about this area. This

would merit further research and either work to encourage more active engagement by the private sector or a greater understanding of its activities in this area.

## **Values**

This section examines the values that civil society represent and advocates. The overall score for values was relatively high at nearly 59 out of 100. This can be interpreted positively for the sector, but there were some more concerning results within this that no doubt civil society organisations and their partners will wish to address. Generally, the results show that civil society organisations are perceived to have strong accountability in terms of being transparent about their activities and their finances and operating democratically. However, civil society organisations are perceived to be relatively weak in terms of their commitment to sustainable development and some areas of equality of opportunity.

### *Positive relations*

Civil society organisations in Wales are not seen to promote social conflicts between different cultural and religious groups. The results from this question scored, perhaps unsurprisingly in a country such as Wales, the highest in the whole questionnaire at 85 out of 100. However, respondents did not feel as strongly that CSOs promote positive relations between different groups in society and this received a relatively neutral overall result of 54.

### *Human rights*

Civil society organisations are perceived to be relatively strong (although not overwhelmingly with an overall score of 55 out of 100) at promoting human rights within Wales with 35% of those who answered this question responding positively. However, they were not seen to be so active in promoting human rights internationally with nearly 40% of respondents giving a negative reply to this question. This may reflect the fact that most civil society organisations in Wales are focused on issues of direct concern to the country. The WCVA all-Wales database shows that within the voluntary sector, under 3% of organisations have an international focus.

### *Cultural diversity*

In a similar vein to the first question in this category, civil society organisations are seen to peacefully promote their interests without promoting intolerance towards other cultural groups and this received a final score of 58. It is worth mentioning, however that just over 50% of respondents who answered this question gave a negative or neutral response, which may merit further investigation. More strikingly, the cultural diversity of our country is not perceived to be mirrored in civil society. This received the lowest score in this section of just 41 out of 100 and nearly 50% of those who answered this question gave a negative answer. This is a matter that civil society organisations need to address urgently.

The cultural diversity of Wales may refer to both the diverse number of black and ethnic minority communities and the Welsh language and English language communities. A census was conducted in 2001 and when published this will show the language and ethnicity of people who live in Wales. According to the 1991 census, 1.5% of the population of Wales are from non-white ethnic minorities and just over 60% are based in either Swansea, Cardiff or Newport. According to the 1991 census, nearly 19% of the population in Wales are able to speak Welsh. The majority of Welsh language speakers are based in rural north and mid Wales.

### *Gender*

Respondents did not express concern at the level of positive promotion that civil society organisations undertake surround gender equity both within civil society organisations themselves and within wider society with each scoring 56 and 57 out of a 100 respectively. However, it would be useful to collate secondary information on gender equality within civil society organisations.

### *Sustainable development*

The two questions around sustainable development gave slightly differing results. Respondents did not perceive civil society organisations as particularly strong at promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability with an overall score of 53 out of 100 and just over 50% of respondents giving a neutral answer. However, under 15% gave a negative response and so it is reasonable to say that civil society organisations are not seen as having a negative impact. Civil society organisations

might be concerned that they are not perceived to promote the sustainable use of natural resources with over a third of those answering the question responding negatively. The overall result for this question was only 43 out of 100, which should give concern to civil society organisations and environmentalists alike.

#### *Public accountability*

The public accountability of CSOs in Wales is perceived as relatively strong with this factor receiving an overall score of 58 and 30% of respondents responding positively as to whether CSOs actively ensure information about their general activities is publicly available. However, it is worth noting that the majority of respondents gave a neutral answer to this question.

#### *Financial accountability*

Financial accountability is perceived to be very strong in civil society with this factor receiving the second highest score in the entire survey at 73 out of 100. Civil society organisations are seen to make their accounts publicly available. Again, however, it is worth noting that 25% of respondents chose not to answer this question.

#### *Corruption*

Of those who answered the question on cases of self interest or corruption regarding internal management within civil society again respondents felt clearly that civil society organisations do not encounter this to any great extent in Wales with just over 71% of responding positively. However, only 43% of respondents decided to answer this question which suggests that most respondents did not feel they had sufficient knowledge to give an opinion.

#### *Internal democracy*

Civil society organisations are perceived to have relatively healthy internal democracy both in terms of involving their members and stakeholders in decision-making and in using elections to select their leadership. The overall scores in these areas are 62 and 66 out of 100 respectively.

## **Impact**

The purpose of this section is self-explanatory – it looks at the contribution, or impact of civil society. This section received the highest overall score of 61 out of 100. This is clearly to be welcomed and some areas emerge as particularly strong. However, as with all the sections the overall score also hides some concerning results.

#### *Policy agenda*

Civil society organisations are seen as successful in representing the interests of their constituents and putting them on the public policy agenda and this received an overall result of 61 out of 100. Very few respondents gave a negative response to this question, but a clear majority (62%) of those who answered the question gave a neutral response.

#### *Policy drafting*

The overall score for perceptions of civil society organisations' being regularly invited to participate in generation and discussion of legislation was slightly lower at 57 out of 100. Again, just over half of the responses to this question were neutral, and the proportion of positive responses was identical at just under 30%. However, there was an increased number of people responding negatively. This corresponds with the relatively lower legislative access expressed in the section on 'space'.

#### *Policy making*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the ability of CSOs to influence government policies in favour of their constituents is seen as lower again and scores under 50. Thus, CSOs are seen to be relatively good at representing their constituent's interests and putting them on the public agenda but only moderately successful at ensuring that these interests are reflected in government policy. It should be noted that of those who answered, some 19% gave a positive answer. This may reflect that a minority of civil society organisations are able to influence government policies successfully. These are key points that civil society organisations and the Assembly must work to address.

#### *Policy Implementation*

CSOs are seen to be moderately successful in cooperating with government on implementing policies with an overall score of 54. Again, half of those who answered the question gave a neutral response, but 30% of responses were positive. This

suggests that CSOs are slightly more successful at co-operating in implementing the government's policies than influencing the policies themselves.

#### *Policy monitoring*

CSOs were seen as relatively successful in monitoring government commitments and policy with a score of 60 out of 100. This might be considered as an important factor of the democratic system in Wales and it should again be emphasised as an important strength of the sector.

#### *Comparative advantage*

Civil society's ability to provide their services in a way which would not be possible for statutory or private sectors emerged as a particular strength – and it received the highest score within the entire survey at 73 out of 100. 90% of respondents answered this question, showing that respondents were confident in their opinion on this question. This reveals a key strength of civil society in Wales.

#### *Media image and public profile*

CSOs in Wales are also seen to be relatively successful in being able to attract the attention of the media to report about their cause with this factor receiving an overall all score of 69 out of 100. This may surprise some organisations that have complained of the difficulty of raising their profile within the press. It would be interesting to research further into the reasons for such a high result in this area. The image of civil society organisations in the media was seen to be slightly less positive with a score of 61 out of 100, however, this is still a relatively high result and another important strength of civil society organisations in Wales. CSOs are also seen to have a relatively positive profile with a score of 60 out of 100.

#### *Responsiveness and service impact*

The goods and services that CSOs produce are seen to reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities. This received a very high score of 73 out of 100 and of those who answered the question, nearly 70% gave a positive answer. This will be welcomed by organisations working in Wales and should be taken into consideration by government. CSOs were also seen to have strength in the improving

the lives of people they work with. This shows civil society are currently seen to be stronger in the positive impact they have on improving the lives of the people they work than in impacting on the development of government policies.

### *Mobilizing marginalized*

Most people who answered the question gave a neutral answer as to whether CSOs are successful in mobilizing excluded groups in society to take part in public life. This coincides with research suggesting that civil society in Wales has the potential to play a far greater role in mobilizing groups to take part in public life<sup>5</sup>. It is impossible to make any conclusions from this one question, but it is an area that researchers, political parties and civil society organisations might well wish to explore, especially given the recent trend of low voter turn out in Wales.

### *Popular support*

Respondents felt that people believe the actions of civil society organisations are in line with their opinions, with an overall score of 57 out of 100. However, there is still clear room for improvement in this area. Nearly 24% of respondents chose not to answer this question and of those who did 65% gave a neutral response. This suggests that there is low knowledge around the amount of popular support that CSOs receive and it might be a useful area for future research.

### *National Identity Impact*

Respondents felt that CSOs do succeed in contributing to a positive national identity with an overall score of 66 out of 100. This should be welcomed by civil society organisations themselves, and will be of interest to those researching national identity in post-devolution Wales.

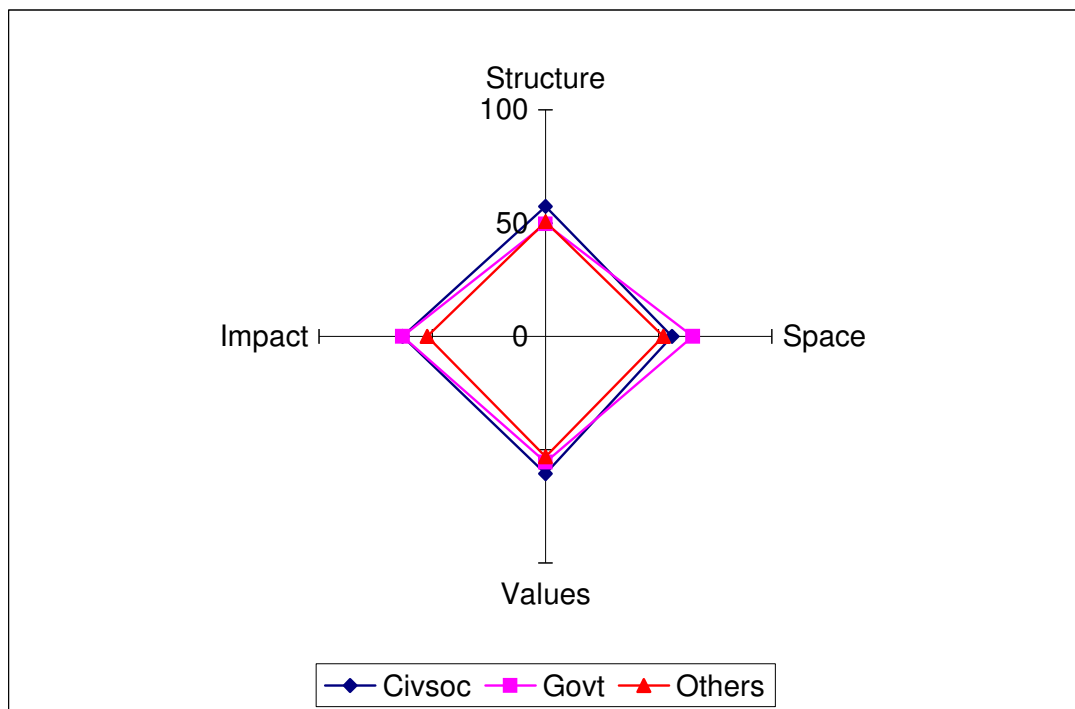
## ***Professional Background***

The results can also be analysed to show how those involved in civil society organisations differed from partners in government and other areas of society. It is

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<sup>5</sup> Lindsay Paterson and Richard Wyn Jones, “Does civil society drive constitutional change”, in: Bridget Taylor and Katarina Thomson (eds.). *Scotland and Wales: Nations Again?*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, pp.169–197, 1999.

perhaps unsurprising to see that those working in civil society organisations perceive the values of civil society organisations and the way they structure themselves as being stronger than other organisations perceive them to be. In contrast, government perceives the civil society organisations having a greater space within which to operate than CSOs have indicated. Similarly, those respondents who do not belong to civil society organisations or government see civil society as being weaker in three out of the four dimensions.



It is important to take this into consideration when considering the results as the majority of respondents were from civil society organisations. The different interpretation also point to the need for a debate across the different sectors in society as to the role that civil society plays in Wales. However, the differences are not very large and do not call into question the general tendency of the results.

## *Part V*

### *Conclusion*

The key finding of the project is that civil society in Wales is perceived to be medium strength. This in itself is significant and challenges some recent discussions around civil society in Wales that conclude that civil society is in a state of relative weakness<sup>6</sup>. This overall conclusion has been reached through exploring the four key dimensions of civil society – its structure, the legal, political and socio-cultural space that it occupies, the values that it represents and advocates and its impact on social and community well being. Significant weaknesses have been revealed in each of these dimensions and it is perhaps by focussing on some of these areas that previous research has concluded that civil society in Wales is such a “fragile plant” (Paterson and Jones, 1999). Civil society organizations and their partners in government and business should now work to address these weaknesses.

It is equally important to recognize the real strengths of civil society, not only to give confidence to civil society organizations and underline the value of their work, but also to highlight to partners in government and business the important role that civil society plays in Wales and the potential benefits of increased co-operation between these areas in society.

The report does not attempt provide an exhaustive analysis of civil society in Wales, but rather a snapshot and to act as a catalyst for further discussion and debate. There has not been a great deal of research around civil society in Wales to date and the report has highlighted several areas where further research might be undertaken.

### *Strengths*

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<sup>6</sup> For a summary of this debate see Graham Day, David Dunkerley and Andrew Thompson, “Evaluating the ‘New Politics’: Civil Society and the National Assembly for Wales” in: *Public Policy and Administration*, Volume 15, No. 2, pp. 25-37, Summer 2000

Civil society organisations in Wales are seen to make a positive contribution to solving specific social, economic and political problems and play a role in the public policy process. Particular strengths of CSOs are seen to be their ability to

- provide their services in a way which would not be possible for the statutory or private sectors
- produce goods and services that reflect the needs and priorities of their constituents and communities
- improve the lives of the people they are working with
- contribute towards a positive national identity
- engage positively with the media

The values that civil society organisations promote and work by are regarded as relatively strong. Particular strengths of CSOs are seen to be their ability to

- make their accounts publicly available
- promote internal democracy through using elections to select their leadership and involving their members and stakeholders in their decision making

Particular strengths in the composition of civil society in Wales and the way in which it organises itself are seen to be that it has

- an active membership base and
- engages with politicians to express their interest in public life

Civil society organisations are also seen to operate in a moderately enabling environment in Wales. Government and political parties in Wales are seen to support civil society organisations by

- requesting CSOs to be involved in policy formulation by national government
- showing recognition to people who have shown great public service in CSOs

These are all positive findings about civil society in Wales and should be used to promote the work of civil society organisations.

### *Weaknesses & points for further action*

The survey highlighted a number of areas that are either seen as weaknesses or that merit action to ensure that they are strengthened. Particular issues that the civil society organisations need to tackle are

- ensuring that civil society organisations reflect the cultural diversity of Wales
- achieving a more even distribution of CSOs across the country
- supporting the growth of local umbrella bodies
- promoting the sustainable use of natural resources
- tackling conflicts between civil society organisations that prevent them from joining alliances to strengthen their work

Civil society organisations also need to work with partners to address perceived weaknesses identified in the survey. Key issues include:

Working with the businesses, statutory organisations and CSOs to

- promote the benefits of employees' involvement with CSOs in the workplace

Working with government and statutory bodies to

- introduce regulations that make it easier for CSOs to establish themselves
- to ensure that government policies take greater account of the agendas that civil society organisations put forward and reflect the interests of civil society's constituents
- mobilize excluded groups in society to take part in public life

Working with the private sector to

- create greater co-operation between civil society and the private sector

### *Areas for further research*

The report highlighted several areas where further research might be undertaken. It might be that this has already been done, or is underway but has not been identified within the report. The following areas were identified:

The following areas were identified for further research

- Professional associations – quantitative information regarding professional associations, why there is no umbrella body for professional associations and whether forming closer alliances could strengthen the work of professional associations.
- Distribution of civil society organisations in Wales – whether and how and functions and numbers vary according to region
- Local umbrella bodies – how could an increased number of local umbrella bodies strengthen civil society in Wales and what types of bodies are needed
- Financial sustainability - how financially sustainable are civil society organisations
- Dissent – why did 25% of respondents feel that CSOs are not able to express their dissent from national and local government policies without prejudice to their operation and funding
- Business - the extent of business philanthropy in Wales and the potential for greater co-operation between the private sector and civil society in Wales
- Media - the relationships between civil society and the media.
- Popular support - the level of popular support that civil society organisations receive
- Legislative access – how this could be improved

The CIVICUS Index has the potential to strengthen civil society in Wales by

- raising the profile and debate around the role that civil society plays
- providing a basis for discussion between different players within civil society and their partners in Wales
- highlighting the perceived strengths of civil society in Wales and identifying areas where action needs to be taken to strengthen civil society
- acting as a trigger for further research and discussion around the strengths and weaknesses of civil society in Wales

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