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New Civil Society Facility (CSF) - People 2 People Programme (P2P)

Introduction



In line with the EC Communication on the Western Balkans of 5th March 2008, the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission launched a new strategy towards civil society - the "Civil Society Facility" (CSF). This initiative foresees support both at national and multi-beneficiary levels and consists of three strands, which together aim to strengthen civil society's role in the democratic process:

- support to civic and capacity-building initiatives to enforce the role of civil society at national level;
- a **People 2 People Programme** supporting visits to EU institutions and bodies to exchange experience, know-how and good practices between beneficiaries, EU and Member States Civil Society Organisations (CSOs); and
- partnership actions carried out between beneficiary and EU CSOs, leading to a transfer of know-how and the realisation of innovative trans-national projects.

In designing the new facility various stakeholders, including beneficiaries, Member States, donors, CSOs and other EC services, have been consulted in order to construct a useful tool responding adequately to the needs of civil society in the region. While the second strand - the People to People Programme - has already been launched in 2008, the other two strands will become operational in 2009.

Purpose of the CSF - People 2 People Programme (P2P)

The CSF-**People2 People Programme** supports visits of representatives of civil society organisations from the Western Balkans countries and Turkey to EU institutions and bodies, to exchange experiences, know-how and best practices, as well as to establish contacts and share knowledge with European and Member States' CSOs. It also fosters the dialogue between governments, CSOs and EU institutions within the pre- enlargement strategy.

The aims of the CSF - **People 2 People Programme** are:

- 1) to help the beneficiary CSOs to familiarise themselves with the EU institutions and the decision-making process, as well as with key EU policies, legislation and programmes;
- 2) to offer the opportunity to CSOs to interact and network with their national, regional and European-level counterparts and to create new partnerships;
- 3) to stimulate civic participation in the beneficiary countries and in the region by offering CSOs focused training on EU advocacy, project management and negotiating skills.

In the 2008 pilot phase, participants from **162 organisations** have participated in seven CSF - P2P study tours, interacting on topics such as: agriculture and rural development, the role of civil society in EU policy making, women in business, public procurement, intercultural dialogue, EU institutions and the decision making process, social dialogue and employment policy.

Target groups

The programme targets all layers of civil society, and in particular, groups with influence over decision-making. Its intended audience are amongst others: journalists, business associations, NGOs dealing with acquis related subjects,

such as equal opportunities, non discrimination, employment, children rights, youth, etc.; cultural foundations, or organisations active in the cultural, artistic, educational and linguistic fields; teachers and academics from all levels of the educational cycle; human rights groups, including minorities defence groups, human rights activists, legal aid offices, etc; representatives of municipalities/regions; representatives of the agricultural society (farmers, associations groups dealing with land exploitation and preservation, etc); representatives of religious interest groups; consumer protection associations, health related civil society organizations, etc.



What activities are considered under the CSF - P2P Programme?

The Programme mainly entails the organisation of **group visits** such as:

- 1) **Multi-country group visits**, where 3-5 representatives per beneficiary country are invited to Brussels or other venues of EU institutions. In this case the participants would have similar professional backgrounds but from different countries. These visits will build up the regional and European dialogue and enhance cross border networks.
- 2) **Visits for groups of different participants** from the **same beneficiary country** and active in **one particular sector**, with the objective of stimulating and strengthening dialogue and cooperation among interested parties in a given country (e.g. universities representatives, social partners, vocational training organisations, youth organisations – for a visit on employment of young people).
- 3) **"Package assistance" schemes**, in which the study visits will be preceded or followed by a general training session on EU policies in the participants' home countries. These training sessions could also be followed by a "feedback" seminar (in the country of origin of the participants) to be attended by a high number of participants, in order to disseminate the knowledge acquired during the study visits.

Selection procedure

a. Selection of topics

The topics under CSF-P2P are defined by the Directorate General for Enlargement, in accordance with the political, legislative or social priorities established in relation to the targeted region and countries.

b. Selection of participants

The selection of participants for the visits is conducted by the Directorate General for Enlargement with the assistance of the European Commission Delegations in the beneficiary countries. Other EU institutions, such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European Parliament, other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other international organisations (ILO, Council of Europe etc.) may be involved in the procedure too, on a case by case basis.



How is the programme organised?

Once the topics, target group and the programme for a study tour have been established, the Directorate General for Enlargement will deal with all the organisational, logistical and financial aspects of the study tour.

Timing and budgetary resources

Following the successful completion of the pilot phase in 2008 and the encouraging feedback from all concerned stakeholders, the CSF-P2P Programme is foreseen to expand its activities over the next two years with an assigned overall budget of € 4 million.

Contacts:

For further questions relating to the CSF-P2P Programme, please contact us at: Elarg-CSF-P2P@ec.europa.eu or consult our website: <http://taiex.ec.europa.eu/CSF - P2P-Programme>