



Developing Strategy for Civil Society in the Black Sea Region

Black Sea NGO Forum, 21-23 October 2010

About the Project

TUSEV
Türkiye Üçüncü Sektör Vakfı
Third Sector Foundation of Turkey



- Aims to raise awareness, assess strengths and challenges, and galvanize action to strengthen civil society in the region.
- Uses **CIVICUS Civil Society Index Project** as an action planning tool
- Inspired by TUSEV & Counterpart Armenia's Cross-border Initiative
- **Project Partners:** TUSEV & Counterpart Armenia
- **Funded by** **B | S | T** The Black Sea Trust
for Regional Cooperation
- **Activities:** **A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND**
 - **Istanbul workshop, July 2010**
 - 19 researchers, practitioners and academicians from eight countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia and Turkey
 - Country profile presentations
 - SWOT Analysis
 - Some action planning
 - **Comparative Report**
 - Country profile presentations (same as above) and SWOT Analysis
 - **E-group**
 - volunteer-run activated as a communication tool between workshop participants and a venue for those who did not attend the Istanbul workshop
 - **Constanta Workshop , October 2010**
 - Presentation of Istanbul Workshop outcomes
 - Action planning based on causes and effects

About CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI)

- An action-research project that assesses the state of civil society in countries around the world
- Past phase (2003-2006) covered 53 countries
- Current phase (2008-2010) covers 56 countries
- **Five Core dimensions**
 - Civic Participation
 - Level of Organization
 - Values
 - Perceived Impact
 - Environment
- **Diverse research methods**
 - Secondary Literature Review
 - Population Survey
 - CSO Survey & Focus Groups
 - External Stakeholder Survey
 - Case Studies (5)
 - Country Forum



Istanbul Workshop and Comparative Report Findings

Strengths and Weaknesses
&
Opportunities and Threats

- Civic participation
- Level of organization
- CS- Government Relations
- Policy Impact



State of Civil Society in the Black Sea Region - Strengths and Weaknesses

- **Level of organizational development** of civil society
 - Varies a lot between countries, half relatively strong, the other half relatively weak
 - One common trait – it is either all weak or all strong
 - Technological resources are strong and improving
 - Increasing levels of international communication
- **Government – Civil Society Relations***
 - Transitioning in every country
 - General agreements that autonomy and dialogue improved in recent years, but remains selective and ad hoc - yet to assume a formal and structured character.
 - Changes (both positive and negative) to civil society legislations in all countries - symptomatic of the volatility of these relations.
 - State resources quite narrow and new in all countries
- **Policy impact***
 - Active but only somewhat successful in each country.
 - CSO capacity and political will to include civil society in policy making are the key factors.
 - *Data not fully comparable.

Future of Civil Society in the Black Sea Region – Opportunities and Threats

- **Level of organizational development** of civil society
 - CSOs with expertise, organizational capacity and embracing certain positive values = opportunity to lead by example.
 - Improvements in technological resources and international communication = opportunity to share good practices
 - Major sustainability threat: dependency on foreign aid
- **Government – Civil Society Relations***
 - Persisting “strong state vs. small civil society” tradition
 - Rapidly changing nature of laws and regulations
 - Successful public-private partnerships (PPPs), esp. at the local
- **Policy impact***
 - No **policy impact** without any “external push”
 - Danger of being perceived as spokespeople of external forces
 - Potential to achieve policy change if CS strategizes with international actors.
 - *Data not fully comparable.

Civic Participation in the Black Sea Region

- **CSI Conceptual Framework**
 - Described by formal and informal activities undertaken by individuals to advance shared interests at different levels, from recreation to social and political interests.
 - The 'active citizenship' element is a crucial defining factor of civil society and participation within civil society is multi-faceted.
- **Three specific sub-dimensions**
 - *Extent of engagement*
 - *Depth of engagement*
 - *Diversity or inclusiveness of civil society*



Civic Participation: Strengths and Weaknesses

- Low level of civic participation a major weakness and obstacle
- Citizens that do engage with civil society do so rather frequently and extensively.
- Participation remains rather diverse.
- Strong tendency to volunteer and associate in informal ways
- Elite domination and low levels of social capital (only in some countries)



Civic Participation: Opportunities and Threats

- Diversity and depth of participation assets to build on
- Increasing involvement of youth, unaffected by the negative legacies of the Soviet period, also an opportunity
- Low levels of social capital and elitism of CSOs - major threats, potential to cause even more disconnect between the CSOs and general public.

Summary: SWOT Matrix

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Civic Participation	<p>Diversity of civic participation (despite some elitism)</p> <p>Depth of civic participation</p>	<p>Extent of civic participation (small percentage of population)</p> <p>Tradition of informal volunteering</p>	<p>Youth as an agent of change</p>	<p>Low levels of social capital</p> <p>Disappointment in democratization – gap between expectations and reality</p> <p>Increasing social disparities</p>
Level of Organization	<p>Technological resources</p> <p>International communication</p>	<p>Unsustainable financial resources</p>	<p>Presence of CSOs with institutional expertise, capacity building and good governance</p> <p>Use of new media</p>	<p>Dependency foreign aid</p> <p>Losing sight of core mission in pursuit of financial resources (opportunism)</p> <p>Losing connection to constituencies</p>
CS – Government Relations	<p>Existence of a space for autonomy</p> <p>Existence of some form of dialogue</p>	<p>Ad hoc nature of dialogue</p> <p>Nascent stage of cooperation and fund transfer</p>	<p>Service delivery in cooperation with the state</p> <p>New media (web...)</p>	<p>Strong central state tradition</p> <p>CS legislation volatile</p> <p>Service delivery focus compromising watchdog function</p>
Policy Impact	<p>Civil society is active in influencing policy</p>	<p>Reactive rather than pro-active</p>	<p>Strategizing with international actors</p>	<p>No success unless there is an external push</p>



Thank you!

- Q&A