

# CSO Development Effectiveness Principles for the Black Sea region

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## WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

**DEVELOPMENT** is one of the most ubiquitous terms in the contemporary political vocabulary. Yet, it is also one of the most elusive.

Though it can be defined in many ways, some of which controversial or specific to certain disciplines, it refers in principle to the **improvement of the well-being and the quality of life of people**, as well as to the policies and processes through which such goals are pursued.

Traditionally, development has been most often associated to the puzzles of governing political communities, as well as to achieving economic growth.

For this reason, national governments and the economic perspectives have been at the forefront of the debates on the matter ever since the issue started to become increasingly relevant in both international politics and in academic research, after the Second World War.

However, in practice, development involves **many different stakeholders**: from governments, parliaments, and courts to civil society organizations (CSOs), trade unions, businesses, and people themselves, individually or collectively.

At the same time, development requires international coordination and cooperation.

For instance, health, pollution or climate change, issues that have a direct impact on human development, cannot be tackled exclusively at national or local level.

Furthermore, countries that are historically, geographically and/or structurally challenged in their development need international support to overcome their difficulties.

This is both a **moral obligation** of the part of those who have been better-off due to rather arbitrary circumstances that created unfair inequalities, and an **investment into better life conditions for all**, including for those who are already better-off.

For a long time, international cooperation in the field has been led and focused at global level from the perspective of the governments of a rather small group of countries that were economically more advanced than the rest.

Under the leadership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which these countries established to better coordinate on the matter, they initially pushed forward the developmental agenda internationally through trade and **Official Development Aid** (ODA, i.e financial or non-financial support offered to poorer countries).

However, ODA has come to be seen as problematic as it sometimes created dependency or subaltern relations between the donors and the recipients, hence fuelling more inequality and generating additional developmental challenges.

For such reasons, the current **international development cooperation** initiatives are called to design and implement approaches that create partnerships rather than hierarchical donor-recipient relations.

## FROM DEVELOPMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As the developmental agenda started to become increasingly visible at international level, it also generated new challenges that revealed relatively quickly the limitations of the perspectives focused exclusively on economic growth and of faith in linear progress.

“By the 1970s the idea of continuous progress was losing much of the fascination it had had for earlier generations. The Great Idea of Progress had by then been exposed as a fiction. ‘Progress’, it was realized, had provided justification for the reign of the free market, for colonial exploitation of non-Western societies, and for ravaging the biosphere. [...] Although it was clear that science and technology would progress ever more rapidly, experience had taught that both the material and moral condition of humankind would remain open to regress as well as progress. [...] Scientific and technological progress was also causing terrible damage to the natural environment. During the period of unprecedented industrial and commercial expansion after World War II people became aware of the threats which rapid population growth, pollution and resource depletion posed to the environment and their own survival as humans.” (Du Pisani 2006: 89)

Within this context, in the early 1980s, under the aegis of the United Nations, an independent group of experts (**The World Commission on Environment and Development**) was given the task to analyse the dynamics between economic growth and economic degradation, as well as to suggest possible paths for positive change.

Under the leadership of former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, this commission published in 1987 a landmark report (*Our Common Future*), which is often credited for popularizing and making place on the international political agenda for the notion of **sustainable development**.

“Humanity has the **ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. The Commission believes that widespread poverty is no longer inevitable. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes. Meeting essential needs requires not only a new era of economic growth for nations in which the majority are poor, but an assurance that those poor get their fair share of the resources required to sustain that growth. Such equity would be aided by political systems that secure effective citizen participation in decision making and by greater democracy in international decision making. Sustainable global development requires that those who are more affluent adopt life-styles within the planet's ecological means - in their use of energy, for example. Further, rapidly growing populations can increase the pressure on resources and slow any rise in living standards; thus sustainable development can only be pursued if population size and growth are in harmony with the changing productive potential

of the ecosystem. Yet in the end, sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs. We do not pretend that the process is easy or straightforward. Painful choices have to be made. Thus, in the final analysis, sustainable development must rest on political will.” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 8, emphasis added)

The Bruntland Commission’s conceptual framework, findings and policy proposals constitute the background against which a more comprehensive global agenda was later developed in two complementary directions.

On the one hand, the environmental concerns and focus led to the adoption of a series of international agreements, principles and mechanisms related to environmental protection, the most significant of which is the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC)**, established in the **1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)** that took place in Rio de Janeiro.

Within the UNFCC, several mandatory international instruments aimed at tackling climate change were then adopted, the latest of which is the **2015 Paris Agreement**, currently the most comprehensive global political commitment on the matter.

On the other hand, at the same 1992 Rio Earth Summit (i.e. UNCED), the UN members adopted **Agenda 21**, which is a non-binding action plan on sustainable development.

Based on this document and after further convergence of the efforts of multiple stakeholders, the UN members adopted in 2000 the *Millennium Declaration*, which then led to the establishment of the so-called **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000-2015)**, the first integrated agenda at global level on development.

In 2015, this was replaced with an even more comprehensive political initiative, **Agenda 2030 – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015-2030)**, which is the current global framework for international, regional, national and local initiatives related to development.

## EFFECTIVENESS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

One of the most difficult issues to achieve for the increasingly complex landscape of international development cooperation initiatives and stakeholders has been to ensure that the developmental efforts produce the expected results (**effectiveness**).

Within the MDGs framework, this concern led to a series of international conferences that placed development aid effectiveness and policy coordination at the core of the debates and actions in international development cooperation, at the same time providing a more significant voice for stakeholders other than governments and intergovernmental organizations.

### Conferences on financing for development

- Monterrey (2002)
- Doha (2008)
- Addis Ababa (2015)

### High Level Forums on aid effectiveness

- Rome (2003)
- Paris (2005)
- Accra (2008)
- Busan (2011)

These established a set of principles, known as the **Busan principles on aid effectiveness**, which were refined during the last decade into the following:

- Ownership and alignment
- Focus on results
- Inclusive development partnerships
- Transparency and mutual accountability

The current framework for monitoring and supporting the implementation of the Busan principles is the **Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC)**.

This is the main multi-stakeholder platform that brings together governments, intergovernmental organizations, and representatives of the civil society, parliaments, trade unions and the private sector.

In parallel and often complementing the government-led global debates on development effectiveness, other stakeholders engaged in discussions on the topic, aiming to provide applicable tools that could create more effective initiatives in the field.

For civil society organizations (CSOs), a major step towards the coagulation of various initiatives at international level was the establishment in 2008 of an **Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness**.

The most important outcome of these efforts is a set of 8 principles adopted by the Open Forum in 2010 in Istanbul.

These form an integral part of the **International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness**, which is a set of principles and documents adopted at the concluding event of the Open Forum that took place in Siem Reap (2011).

Later that year, these were incorporated into a larger set of common principles (**Busan principles on aid effectiveness**) that development stakeholders, including the governments of UN member states intergovernmental organizations, civil society, foundations and private sector representatives, agreed upon at the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

The event, which took place in Busan, was also the first one in which CSO representatives took part in negotiations on an equal footing with the other stakeholders in matters of aid effectiveness.

## THE ISTANBUL CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS PRINCIPLES

The Istanbul CSO Development Principles represent a **blueprint for action for civil society organizations active in development but applicable to all CSOs**.

1. **Respect and promote human rights and social justice**
2. **Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights**
3. **Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation**
4. **Promote environmental sustainability**
5. **Practice transparency and accountability**
6. **Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity**
7. **Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning**
8. **Commit to realizing positive sustainable change**

Their adoption aimed to integrate development effectiveness into the everyday work of every CSO.

These should be understood as both a set of common values that CSOs can embrace, and priorities for action.

Nevertheless, in each individual context, principles may be understood differently according to the specificities of each case.

In order to get a better grasp of what implementing these principles actually means, one needs to transform them into identifiable and measurable dimensions and outputs, a process called operationalization.

In the remaining of this chapter, we propose an operationalization that can be further used in assessments of how these principles are implemented in practice.

## **1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice**

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.*

Some CSOs' main field of activity focuses on the promotion of human rights, while others work in rather different sectors.

The implementation of this principle translates into making human rights an identifiable and monitored dimension of all implemented projects, even those that do not focus specifically on human rights.

### **What CSOs could ask themselves in relation to this principle:**

- How many projects out of their total portfolio have human rights as their focus?
- How many projects in their portfolio include a human rights dimension?
- How are human rights defined/understood?
- Is there an emphasis on individual human rights or on collective human rights?
- In each particular country context, respect for which human rights are the most difficult to uphold? Is the CSO addressing these specific issues?
- What is the legal/political context circumscribing human rights in a particular country? Are human rights protected by the political system? If some are not, how can CSOs work help influence political elites to include them on the agenda for debate?
- Is the CSO involved in creating debate focusing on respect for human rights? If so, is the CSO an advocate for more respect for existing human rights or is the CSO engaged in creating space for debate about extending the set of human rights currently in focus?

- Is the CSO vocal in the public space on the importance of human rights? If so, what are the main avenues for influencing public discourse?
- Is the CSO partnering up with other CSOs or other stakeholders in order to have more impact in terms of raising awareness for the importance of respecting human rights?
- Is the CSO engaging in awareness raising campaigns or education projects aiming to socialize society into understanding the need to protect human rights?

## **2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights**

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.*

Gender equality as a principle is upheld to different degrees in different contexts.

Each society has different norms and rules creating the legal and cultural context in which gender equality can be achieved.

As such, CSOs are perfectly positioned to implement gender equality projects that take into account cultural sensitivities, without losing sight of the importance of the principle itself.

### **What could CSOs ask themselves in relation to this principle:**

- How many of the projects implemented focus on gender equality?
- How many of the projects implemented have a gender equality component?
- How is gender equality ensured in their own work? What about in their new hires policy?
- How is gender equality implemented in the events they organize?
- How vocal the CSO is in the public space regarding the importance of gender equality?
- What are the most problematic issues with gender equality in a particular country?
- Is there a legal landscape focusing on ensuring gender equality? If so, is that in line with global principles, and, if not, what needs to change?



- Is the CSO partnering up with other CSOs and stakeholders in order to create momentum on the importance of ensuring gender equality?
- Is the CSO engaging in raising awareness campaigns or education projects making gender equality a (more) visible issue?

### **3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation**

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.*

Defining the political community is a cornerstone of every political system.

Who the people are and which rights these people have, are essential questions, but answers may not be always easy to provide.

Consequently, CSOs need to engage in ensuring inclusive understanding of the political community and strive for protection of the disenfranchised.

#### **What could CSOs ask themselves in relation to this principle:**

- Which are the disenfranchised or marginalized groups in the communities they work with?
- How can these groups be included more effectively in political and social processes, especially those that have to do with their own projected status and role in society?
- How can marginalized groups be encouraged/supported to voice their concerns more effectively and how can the CSO contribute to their efforts?
- How effective is the CSO in identifying and addressing the needs of different communities they work with? How can a bottom-up approach be rendered functional?
- How can the CSO amass legitimacy in the communities they work with?
- What is the legal and social status of minorities in a particular country? How does the CSO contribute to remedying potential discriminatory laws or practices?

- How can the CSO become a loudspeaker voicing communities' concerns?
- Is the CSO working in close contact with other stakeholders in creating synergies positively influencing disenfranchised groups?
- Does the CSO itself implement participatory decision-making processes in its own work?
- Is the CSO implementing projects that directly focus on citizen participation and empowerment?
- Is the CSO vocal in the public sphere on the importance of participation and inclusion?
- Does the CSO engage with young people in order to contribute to the formation of their civic culture along participatory lines?

#### **4. Promote Environmental Sustainability**

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.*

Environmental sustainability should be both a goal in itself and also a desired side objective for most projects implemented by CSOs.

Given that different levels of economic and social development affect a community's openness and response to environmental concerns, CSOs should engage in both promoting environmental sustainability and finding the ways that are best suited to raise awareness.

A CSO's local knowledge is key here.

#### **What could CSOs ask themselves in relation to this principle:**

- Is the CSO implementing projects that focus directly on environmental sustainability?
- Is the CSO adding an environmental dimension to all/most of their projects?
- How does the CSO communicate environmental sustainability to its beneficiaries, especially in those contexts where there may be resistance to it?

- Does the CSO partner up with other CSOs and/or other stakeholders in order to engage with environmental sustainability more effectively?
- Is the CSO vocal in the public sphere on topics related to environmental sustainability?
- Does the CSO work with local communities in identifying solutions to potential tensions existing between environmental protection and economic development?
- Is the CSO itself involved in other actors' projects on environmental sustainability?

## 5. Practice transparency and accountability

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.*

In many recent democracies, CSOs fight for transparency, integrity and against corruption.

Therefore, it is very important that they set an example in this direction too, by adhering to these principles.

### What could CSOs ask themselves in relation to this principle:

- Is the CSOs activity transparent, starting from their principles and values, and all the way to funding, expenses, human resource policies?
- How are standards of integrity and ethics being monitored in the CSO's activities?
- Is the CSO making all information public and does it facilitate access to information for all interested parties?
- Is the CSO implementing clear standards when contracting out?
- Does the CSO have clear evaluation strategies for new hires?
- Is the CSO constantly monitoring its own performance and evaluating their programs?
- Is the CSO regularly contracting out external auditors?
- Does the CSO regularly publish activity reports?

- Is the CSO vocal in the public sphere about the importance of transparency, accountability and integrity for both public and private institutions?

## 6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.*

Partnerships between actors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders are critical in the development field.

In order to maximize impact and ensure sustainable change, partnerships with various other actors are necessary in many cases.

Therefore, having a clear and fair and ethical strategy of creating and maintaining partnerships is important.

### What could CSOs ask themselves in relation to this principle:

- How does the CSO create partnerships? Is it mostly the CSO's initiative or, more often, a reaction to invitations from elsewhere?
- Does the CSO have clear procedures concerning partnership with beneficiary organizations? If so, do these procedures follow a fair and horizontal understanding of partnerships, and avoid top-down interactions?
- When establishing partnership with beneficiary organizations, how does the CSO encourage them to voice concerns and how does it incorporate their needs?
- Does the CSO have clearly established criteria regarding shared values and principles that are applied when establishing partnerships?
- Does the CSO evaluate adherence to said criteria when establishing relationships with donors?
- How does the CSO ensure that collaboration, rather than competition, is the main idea guiding the CSO's strategy of interacting with other organizations?

- Is the CSO engaged in trying to influence funding organizations in order to make more funding opportunities available for networks/communities of applicants rather than single organizations?
- Does the state have a policy of encouraging partnership between stakeholders active in development?

## **7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning**

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.*

All actors in development need to reflect upon their own work and aim to learn from all experiences and from all of those with whom they interact.

Every implemented project has the added value of creating knowledge on a certain subject, and CSOs should try to capitalize on these knowledge gains.

### **What could CSOs ask themselves in relation to this principle:**

- How does the CSO keep track of and capitalize on the knowledge they gain from different implemented projects? (both the knowledge directly related to the project's focus and additional information arising from its implementation)
- How does the CSO ensure bidirectional flow of information and exchange of ideas in its relationships with beneficiaries and partners alike?
- How does the CSO encourage beneficiaries to bring in new/situated knowledge and how is that knowledge incorporated in new project ideas?
- Is the CSO vocal in the public sphere on the importance of shared knowledge?
- How is new knowledge incorporated in the routines and practices of the CSOs?
- Does the CSO have a practice of reflecting upon previous experiences that may be useful when formulating new strategies of action?

## 8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

*CSOs are effective as development actors when they collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.*

Sustainable change is the most important type of change that actors in development want to achieve. However difficult it may be to effect it, sustainable change is preferred, for, at least, two reasons.

First, emphasizing sustainable change is respectful to beneficiaries by avoiding half measures that affect a community for a short time and then disappear.

Second, sustainable change is also important for CSOs' agenda because they can decide their own priorities directions for a longer term.

### **What could CSOs ask themselves in relation to this principle:**

- How is the CSO monitoring project impact, especially from the perspective of effecting sustainable change?
- Is sustainability a priority and a principle of the CSO?
- How is sustainability taken into account when approaching a funder/donor or establishing partnerships?
- How feasible it is for the CSO to aim to work only in one particular field (thus effecting sustainable change), especially from the perspective of available funding?
- Is the CSO involved in influencing donors to design funding opportunities that emphasize sustainability?
- Is the CSO active in consulting with beneficiaries regarding their own perspective of what sustainable change is?

## THE EUROPEAN UNION, ROMANIA & DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

For more than a decade, the **European Union and its member states** have been collectively the **largest ODA donor in the world**, their input in the field currently amounting to **more than half of all yearly global assistance** according to data provided by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)). Beyond the sheer financial support, EU and its member states are committed to support the global agenda on development effectiveness, including in matters relevant for CSOs.

In the Black Sea region, Bulgaria and Romania are the EU member states with most initiatives and bilateral funds, with Romania being particularly active in the area through various projects and stakeholders (i.e. government, civil society, businesses).

Most of Romania's ODA funding is disbursed through multilateral channels, including EU and UN institutions and programs, but **the largest part of the Romanian bilateral aid is directed towards the Black Sea region**, most significantly towards the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine (OECD s.d.), and often through RoAID – Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation ([www.roaid.org](http://www.roaid.org)).

The focus of Romanian bilateral aid has been largely on social infrastructure and services, and although most funds are disbursed towards governmental projects, **civil society organizations from the region are increasingly present as partners and/or beneficiaries of projects benefitting from EU and / or Romanian ODA funding** (OECD s.d. Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021).

One of the best-known and oldest initiatives of civil society stakeholders in the region is the annual **Black Sea NGO Forum** (<https://blackseango.org>), organized by the Romanian NGDO platform FOND ([www.fondromania.org](http://www.fondromania.org)) with support from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission. This is the largest platform through which CSOs from the region can address and debate their concern in matters related to development effectiveness.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CSOs IN THE BLACK SEA AREA

To understand to what extent the Istanbul principles are known and how they are applied in practice in the Black Sea region, we conducted a survey implemented online, which we distributed to CSOs from countries in the area during August and September 2021.

The target countries for the study were **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine.**

The questionnaire was built based on the operationalization discussed in the previous section.

Its content is presented in the **Appendix** at the end of this material, which can be used also as a **toolkit** for assessing one's own practices and processes related to sustainability and the degree to which the development effectiveness principles are applied in practice in one's own organization and projects.

The distribution process took place through several channels, with a theoretical potential reach of over 10,000 readers: repeated posts in the weekly newsletter of the Romanian NGDO platform (FOND), repeated posts on various social media groups and pages where CSOs representatives from the region are active (including the Facebook page of the Black Sea NGO forum), and distribution through mailing lists of the two Romanian universities at which the authors of the study are affiliated.

In addition, given the timing of the project (i.e. during the summer months in which many take their annual leave), we also sent almost 500 individual emails and reminder emails to more than two hundred CSOs from all the countries in region appearing in the FOND database of participants to past events and projects focused on the Black Sea area, as well as in the authors' own databases from previous projects with CSOs from the region.

Despite the significant effort made to reach as many respondents as possible, at the end of the polling period only 23 responses have been recorded, with 22 from the target countries, (one response also came from Belarus).

About three fifths of the questionnaires were filled in by CSO representatives from Georgia, Romania, and the Republic of Moldova (almost equally distributed). There was only one response from Turkey and no responses from Azerbaijan or Ukraine. One respondent identified as a EU-based CSO with activity in six countries in the Black Sea region.

This situation is potentially indicative of several issues, relevant also for further research on the topic.



Most importantly, **the timing significantly affected the level of input**. The period of the survey coincided with the summer holidays for most people in the region, after more than a year since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple lockdowns. Although we extended the period for collecting responses, there was no noticeable progress.

As an alternative to the survey, we made repeated attempts to conduct individual interviews with CSO representatives, but no substantive meeting could take place in the time frame reserved for data collection in this study.

**After almost one and a half year spent in online meetings and set on emergency mode due the pandemic context, the civil society has reached a high level of both online and mental fatigue.** This was confirmed by both CSO representatives and other stakeholders from the region that we contacted individually.

Not least, the **topic of the survey may also have ranked low on CSOs' agendas**. Therefore, answering questions on the matter may not have been of particular interest.

Although a statistical analysis was not possible for this dataset due to the limited number of answers, those who did answer provided valuable and high-quality insight that we present briefly in the remaining of this section.

## Profiles

Interestingly, although established at various moments during the last three decades, a slight majority of the CSOs that filled in the questionnaire are rather institutionally mature entities, with at least 15 years of activity.

At the same time, almost half of them have maximum 10 employees, and about half have implemented less than 10 projects.

Most organizations involve volunteers in their work, and their number can range from a few people collaborating with the CSO for a longer period of time, to one hundred or more people volunteering usually for shorter projects.

However, most respondents remarked that **work with volunteers has been either brought to a halt or drastically diminished by the pandemic**.

Almost all respondents declared that their organization engages young people in its activities, thus aiming for the formation of a participatory political culture, while more than two thirds declared that they also involve marginalized groups.

There was no information on how the pandemic affected the work with these two categories

In terms of the mission of each organization, the vast majority of the CSOs that provided answers focus on civic participation, and more than half also mentioned their mission as being linked to the protection of human rights, the promotion of CSOs as stakeholders, and gender equality.

Most CSOs engaged as initiators in projects on civic participation and protection of human rights, and many engaged in projects on gender equality as partner.

While almost half of the CSOs mention that some of their projects include a human rights protection dimension, 15 CSOs consider that half or more of their projects in their portfolio have a civic participation dimension.

When assessing the **human rights challenges** in their own countries, respondents named a variety of issues and areas of concern: **protection of minorities** (most frequently), **corruption, abusive governments on matters of basic democratic rights and freedoms, social and economic rights, media freedom, difficulty to uphold free and fair elections.**

In terms of **discrimination, sexual minorities, poor people, religious minorities, and the Roma community** have been most often mentioned.

In matters of gender equality, **gender discrimination**, sometimes as an issue related also to a **salary gap**, the **underrepresentation of women in political and decision-making structures**, and the **rights of transexual minorities** were also mentioned.

In addition, respondents repeatedly emphasized the issue **domestic violence**, especially in the context of a **toxic ultra conservative value system** in which women's roles are often stereotyped.

In terms of **marginalized groups**, answers ranged from noting **infrastructure absence for people with disabilities**, to the existence of a view of the **political community exclusively constructed around the concept of majority**, sometimes supported by radical nativist/ultra nationalist groups.

In many situations, **ethnic and religious minorities** are discriminated against, from societal stereotyping to employment opportunities.

A few respondents considered that even basic rights are sometimes denied to marginalized groups, and the **LGBTQ community was also repeatedly mentioned with respect to societal attitudes leading to discrimination and attacks at human dignity.**

When asked about the **environmental sustainability challenges** in their own countries, most respondents mentioned the issues of **pollution, deforestation, and waste management.**

In some instances, they also noted the **lack of legal infrastructure and of political will** as important factors leading to insufficient attention being paid to environmental issues.

Perhaps most worryingly, respondents remarked, **there is a lack of prioritization of environmental issues coupled with inaction due to missing expertise.**

This is reflected also in the dataset, as only five organizations mentioned that half or more of their projects have an environmental sustainability dimension.

### Partnerships, principles, and transparency

While most organizations who answered the survey work in partnership with other entities, the structure of these partnerships differ significantly in term of choice of partners.

Most work in partnership with local and national CSOs, as well as with local and central public authorities but **there is still little or non-existent cooperation with CSOs from other countries in the region or the European Union.**

The CSOs' behaviour in building partnership also seems to be most often **rather reactive than proactive**: partnerships are usually formed when an invitation is received from others, when the funding conditions require it, or if they might increase the impact and visibility of a specific project.

The structure of partnerships seems to revolve around a **set of shared values and principles**, with most respondents declaring that their organizations have a clearly established set of principles and values guiding the establishment of a new partnership.

Respondents also seem to have a clear attachment to the importance of establishing partnerships, with more than two thirds of them considering that **the context in which they operate encourage partnerships between various stakeholders.**

Respondents also mentioned unanimously that their organizations implement participatory decision-making processes in their own work but without providing details on how these work in practice or which challenges they have experienced so far.

Application of gender equality measures takes place in more than half of the surveyed organizations, especially in their employment policies, internal/organizational procedures, and project implementation.

Only a slight majority of CSOs make public through their website activity reports, while **their funding sources and calls for applications, their employment policies and audit reports are mostly private or made public to a select group, such as their own employees or funders.**

Around two thirds of those surveyed declared that they constantly monitor their performance, evaluate their programs, regularly publish activity reports, and contract out external auditors.

Almost all organizations monitor their projects, but only half of the respondents mentioned including effecting sustainable change in their process of monitoring and evaluation.

### Sustainability and development effectiveness in practice

It is also remarkable that more than three quarters of respondents declared that they consult with the beneficiaries in order to find out the latter's perception of what sustainable change is, and they also try to incorporate such feedback in their project formulation and implementation.

While some organizations conduct surveys with the beneficiaries in order to assess their projects' impact, or to maintain a closer contact with them after the projects end, others have a more complex monitoring and evaluation strategy.

As one respondent put it:

*Sustainability is a key element of our projects' architecture. We aim to empower our beneficiaries to act independently on the long run and [to] be able to make sustainable changes in their communities. We usually check the impact of our projects after [the] project cycle ends and [we] tend to analyze the impact produced at both citizens' and institutions' level.*

Although about two thirds of the respondents stated that their organizations have an official position vis-à-vis incorporating sustainability in their own work, very few provided details.

From those who elaborated on the matter, it seems that usually sustainability is included as **a principle of action in the organizations' mission statement.**

Almost all respondents consider sustainability a **priority for their organization.** However, when thinking about sustainability, most organizations conceptualize it first and foremost as a priority for the organization, and fewer assess the sustainability of each implemented project.

For some respondents, a **multistakeholder approach** and aiming at long-lasting change through sustained dialogue may also be key for applying sustainability principles:

*Multidimensional approach encompassing all stakeholders of the policy process—public servants, expert community, political parties, media, ethnic and religious groups, academia—is key to sustainability, as it yields a critical mass sharing common priorities and mechanisms for gradual development and execution of effective policy*

*process and public administration practices. Further, focusing on the youth is meant to create a group of likeminded young people that can assume the leadership and lead the country to the prosperous, democratic, civic nationhood. The work is directed to pursue sustainability by changing the culture of the institutions and society - representing all key stakeholders of the policy making process. focusing on the country's future policy or opinion makers is the best way to convey that change of culture. Through its activities we strive to institutionalize the public-private dialogue, the decision making that will encompass all stakeholders for producing effective policy initiatives. As this process becomes a norm, the demand for unbiased, objective analysis is created. through creating demand within the government, creates a need and necessity for its advice and assistance. In this process, it is imperative for the organization to maintain its independence and programming work.*

*Another aspect of sustainability is institutional strengthening and improving its core competences. Including supervision and developed Risk assessment matrix which it reviews and fills on a quarterly basis and which involves identification and management of risks, along with the Crises Management/Response Plan.*

When assessing the level of knowledge on the **Istanbul principles of CSO development effectiveness**, more than half of the respondents declared that they have heard of them occasionally, but do not know many details, and the majority mentioned that **they do not know how these principles can be applied, they do not know organizations that apply them, or their own organization does not apply them.**

These results suggest that **while information on both sustainability and CSO development effectiveness may have circulated among CSOs in the region, the substantive meaning and the practical means to apply the concept of development effectiveness are still insufficiently known.**

### **Financial sustainability**

Although half of the organizations consider that, overall, working in their field is not sustainable from the perspective of funding, slightly more than half never or very rarely applied for funding on topics that only tangentially touch upon their mission.

At the same time, about two thirds of the respondents claimed that they afford to apply only for funding that is directly related to their mission.

This result is particularly optimistic, given that within the CSO sector in general opportunistic funding is a problem that not only chips away at an organization's identity and profile, but it also depletes its resources, since it needs to get involved in different directions and, sometimes, acquiring expertise in various fields is not particularly conducive to creating a clear identity/brand.

Moreover, about half of the respondents declared that they are also involved in trying to persuade donors to make funding available for networks or communities of applicants rather than single organizations.

The same proportion of respondents is also engaged in influencing funding entities to offer resources that are directly related to sustainability.

This overall surprisingly optimistic view may be the result of the overrepresentation in the dataset of more institutionally mature organizations who also afforded to allocate human resources to answer the survey during a particularly difficult context (i.e. pandemic, online fatigue), and not necessarily the reality that most CSOs from the region currently face.

## Recommendations

In the last part of the survey, respondents were asked to name what they consider the most effective means that could improve human rights protection, gender equality, environmental sustainability, civic participation, and the status of minorities in the countries in which their organization activates.

Most respondents answered these questions and offered detailed, valuable, and contextual insight.

When it comes to the most effective means for ensuring the **protection of human rights**, respondents asserted that **legal provisions** enshrining those rights and **awareness raising campaigns** familiarizing citizens with their rights are most important.

Legal provisions should also be included the broader overarching narrative on the rule of law and its indispensability for democracy.

Another important mechanism for encouraging respect for human rights is the **mobilization of the society to voice their concerns**, either through petitions, marches, or demonstrations.

The role of CSOs in mobilizing citizens is fundamental, and so is **civic education**.

One respondent noted that **non formal education** plays a critical role in transmitting the importance of respecting human rights.

Finally, the presence and activity of a **truly independent media** was also deemed important in the fight for respecting human rights, especially from the perspective of making public all abuses against human rights.

In terms of **ensuring gender equality**, several respondents considered that the implementation of the **quota system** in various processes is a successful mechanism; as such, establishing gender quotas is part of a broader strategy of ensuring and protecting **gender equality through the legal system**.

**Information campaigns**, especially focusing on the incidence of **domestic violence** and **gender discrimination** situations, are also highly effective, and CSOs have an important role to play in this respect.

**Education** is considered a relevant tool when it comes to **shaking up pre-existing stereotypes on gender roles**.

One respondent mentioned that **international conditionalities** imposed by various entities when regulating **access to funding** or even **EU integration** have been successful mechanisms for fighting gender inequality, and, thus, should continue to be employed.

**Environmental sustainability** requires both **clear legal regulations encouraging the use of green energy** and making direct reference to the importance of limiting pollution and irresponsible waste disposal processes.

Fairly often, in the countries where this survey was distributed, there is no **clear and structured policy on environmental protection**, and some respondents consider that formulating and effectively implementing such a policy is fundamental.

**Awareness raising campaigns** should accompany changes in the legal framework, and CSOs have a significant part to play in this respect.

**Civic participation** is one dimension that most organizations included in this study work on.

Most respondents consider that civic participation can be stimulated effectively and efficiently through education, especially **civic education**.

Moreover, **citizens should be represented** in as many as possible situations or decision-making structures whose measures affect them.

CSOs are very important actors that can work with different groups and spark civic participation, and therefore they should be included as partners by local and central public authorities.

Moreover, significant **investment in local and national CSOs** is fundamental for making sure that they can play the role of mobilizer and educator.

One respondent considered that **social media campaigns** are very useful and efficient mechanisms for increasing the level of civic participation.

The **status of minorities** can be improved by making sure that the **legal system** grants satisfactory status to minorities, as well as through **awareness raising campaigns socializing citizens into the idea that minority rights are necessary in a democracy**.

**Protests** can also be effective in influencing both agenda setting, thus effecting positive change from the perspective of minority protection, and societal attitudes, sometimes heavily affected by a discourse emphasizing the rights of the majority and, correspondingly, portraying minorities' rights as a threat to the welfare of the majority.

CSOs need to be very active on this front, and they can also contribute to the brokering of alliances between different minorities, in order to increase their bargaining potential.

In the countries of the Black Sea region, CSOs face **specific challenges** that may further hinder their efforts to adhere to the development effectiveness principles.

Some of these challenges are:

- CSOs may find themselves at odds with the state/political elites, especially in those countries where the political regime has authoritarian/populist tendencies.
- CSOs may, at times, be accused of a deficit of local legitimacy because they receive funding from foreign states/international organisations.
- CSOs may be the target of discreditation attacks by other forces in the society.
- CSOs may not have a clearly defined legal status, influencing both their financial security and ability to carry out certain types of projects.
- Funding available for CSOs may be unpredictable or improperly sized to the needs of the local context

These challenges need to be considered when designing strategies aiming to encourage CSOs to adopt development effectiveness principles.

Not least, although the Black Sea region seems to be characterized by a diversity of problems and addressing them is a highly contextual decision, the challenges that CSOs face and many of the objectives they have are similar.



Since sustainability is better served if regional networks of CSOs work together in addressing common issues, there is a need for **raising awareness about the importance of transnational partnerships**, and for increasing the visibility and viability of partnerships created with other organizations in the **Black Sea region**, as well as with **EU and other Western partners**.

Based on the overall answers we received in this survey, we also propose below several recommendations regarding the understanding and application of the Istanbul CSO development effectiveness principles among NGO activists/workers in the region.

**Although many respondents mentioned that they are aware and familiar with CSO development effectiveness principles, only a small minority seems to be able to apply them in their activities.**

- As such, we recommend that **concepts such as development effectiveness be communicated more efficiently by scholars, CSO peers and policy makers** in the field of international development.
  - Although development effectiveness is a catchy and easy to understand idea (at least at *prima facie*), we consider that insufficient attention has been paid to the operationalization of most important dimensions making up the full CSO development effectiveness concept.
  - Therefore, we suggest **constructing a more substantial toolkit in different languages** that discusses the most important ideas behind the concept of development effectiveness and offers many examples for each of its dimension would be very useful for CSO activists.
  - The current material can be a starting point for a more comprehensive long-term project that involves **different stakeholders** (academics, CSO activists, policymakers) and **identifies country or/and sector challenges, opportunities and good practices for applying the Istanbul principles**.
  - In addition, CSOs should continue to benefit from **trainings** in which abstract concepts such as development effectiveness and sustainability are deconstructed, and their meanings and relevance are discussed especially from the perspective of implementing them.

**Although in most organizations surveyed in this study development effectiveness, sustainability, participatory decision making or gender equality are observed, CSOs may also benefit from a deeper understanding of these ideas and their historical/social/political origins so that they are not simple boxes that needed to be ticked but genuinely and thoroughly applied.**

- We suggest that **trainings of CSO activists** would help them understand the intrinsic importance of these issues, which, in turn, may lead to addressing them in more coherent ways, rather than just as (sometimes) an obligation required by the funder.

**Although monitoring and evaluation seem to be constantly and regularly conducted by most organizations surveyed in this study, few organizations perceive these processes from the perspective of effective sustainable change.**

- It would be useful if expertise on why and how to include sustainability in evaluation activities was made available to CSOs in the region.
- Since most organizations contract out services of monitoring and evaluation, it would also be important that these services also offer information and help regarding the **inclusion of sustainability in periodic evaluations**, preferably without additional costs for the CSOs.
- Beyond external auditing, it would be beneficial for **CSOs to monitor and evaluate themselves their own organizational processes from sustainability and development effectiveness perspectives**.
  - Such comprehensive tools are yet to be designed for the CSOs sector.
  - The existing expertise is rather limited to particular cases or areas of activity, or the proposed tools are still too sketchy or difficult to apply in practice, but all these could constitute a starting point for **developing standards and principles of monitoring, evaluating and reporting in the CSO sector**.
  - The development of such standards is a **long-term collaborative program that should be developed through transnational dialogue that involves expertise from different sectors of activity, within a platform dedicated primarily to CSOs**.
  - Given its experience, focus and reach, we recommend that the **Black Sea NGO forum take the lead in at least starting the conversation** on the matter.

**Currently, most CSOs collaborate with public institutions and nongovernmental institutions fundamentally at local or national level. Consequently, regional collaboration is less effective, a fact that diminishes also the CSOs' leverage and impact at local and national level.**

- Both CSOs and funders should make a continuous effort to connect beyond national borders.

- It is very important that **organizations providing assistance to CSOs emphasize the need to create regional networks of CSOs**, and, for those **regional networks to be effectively used**.
- Creating **detailed databases of CSOs in every country** is a first step in this direction, and many of the funding organizations already have invested in creating these databases.
  - Nevertheless, merely having access to a database does not guarantee that CSOs would actually use it, so we consider that **organizing multiple events centered upon the structure and membership of civil society in different countries** would be also a useful tool potentially leading to more transnational cooperation.

**Most CSOs also seem to partner up only when receiving an invitation to do so, or when the funder specifically asks for it. Proactive partnerships are thus not as frequent.**

- We suggest that CSOs would benefit from **workshops in which the importance of proactively forming partnerships** is stressed.
  - This is all the more important considering that most organizations in the study mentioned that in order to be sustainable financially they need partners, while donors may prefer to fund networks/communities of stakeholders.
- Donors could also have a stronger impact if **partnerships between CSOs and local/national public authorities are emphasized and encouraged**.

**Most problems that CSOs identified such as human rights protection, gender equality or environmental sustainability can only be addressed if relevant legal provisions are put in place and enforced.**

- Therefore, CSOs' effectiveness fundamentally depends on **having and capitalizing on pre-existing legal requirements** rendering their efforts more impactful.
- When legal changes and/or developments are needed, a **proactive approach to building partnerships is essential**, as lobbying, advocacy and other tools through which the existing legal framework can be improved may consume significant financial and human resources, and are often long-term, endurance initiatives.

Finally, we would like to emphasize once again the **diversity of the CSO landscape in the Black Sea region**.

While most of the countries in the area do share a communist past, they find themselves at very different moments or on different paths in their process of post-communist political transformations: some are more consolidated than others, some are EU member states, others are on a European integration track, while for others EU integration is an uncertain or even improbable outcome at any point in the near future.

Protection of human rights differs according to the national context, and so does protection of minorities, and this is a result of both political institutional development (in some cases definitely influenced by EU integration conditionalities) and the prevailing political culture.

Therefore, while we encourage cooperation between CSOs from the very diverse countries of the Black Sea region, we also consider that attention should be paid to the numerous facets of each context

**Proper dialogue among CSOs and between CSOs and funders in the region should be grounded on acknowledging and accepting country differences and designing tools relevant for the specific local context, and whenever possible in the local languages.**

## APPENDIX

*This questionnaire was administered online in August and September 2021.*

### OPENING SECTION

#### CSO Development Effectiveness Principles in the Black Sea region

This survey aims to assess how civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Black Sea region implement the CSO development effectiveness principles.

It does not matter whether your organization already implements such principles or if you already know about them or about how they could help your organization grow.

If you are working for a CSO, whether as employee or volunteer, irrespective of the field, we kindly ask you to answer our questions, as your views are very important for identifying with the appropriate nuances the challenges and opportunities that CSOs in the region face in matters of sustainability, including financial, and development effectiveness.

Filling-in the questionnaire should not take longer than 15 minutes.

All responses will be treated anonymously, and we do not collect any personal identification information. Your views and shared information will not be revealed neither to the public, nor to the funder.

For any further information regarding confidentiality or any other clarifications, please contact the authors: Luciana Alexandra Ghica (University of Bucharest, [luciana.ghica@unibuc.ro](mailto:luciana.ghica@unibuc.ro)) and/or Bogdan Mihai Radu (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, [bogdan.radu@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:bogdan.radu@ubbcluj.ro)).

This survey is conducted as part of a study within the framework of the CPDE-SIDA Programme „Promoting the Universal Application of EDC for The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” implemented by FOND - the Romanian NGDO Platform (<https://www.fondromania.org/>).

By checking the box below, you agree to take part in this study. \*

Yes

No

## SECTION 1

### Your organization (basic operation)

Where is your organization operating?

If your organization operates in more than one country, please choose the one in which it has most activities.

Armenia  
Azerbaijan  
Georgia  
Republic of Moldova  
Romania  
Turkey  
Ukraine  
Other

**When was your organization established?**

Your answer

**Is your organization a branch / chapter of an international CSO?**

Yes, and we activate under a similar name

Yes, but we activate under a different name

No, but in the country in which we are established we act as the official / publicly acknowledged representative of an international CSO

No

**How many employees does your organization have?**

Your answer

**How many projects does your organization currently implement?**

Your answer

**How many beneficiaries does your organization currently work with? (rough estimate)**

Your answer

**Does your organization work with volunteers? If so, how often? With how many?**

Your answer



## SECTION 2

### Your organization (areas of activity)

The principles of CSO development effectiveness are relevant irrespective of the area of activity. However, CSOs operating in certain areas of activity may be more familiar with these principles because they may be more often mentioned, including in funding contexts. The questions in this section help us understand the potential particularities of CSOs in the Black Sea region on this matter.

#### Is your organization's mission directly related to...?

Options: Yes / No

- ... the protection / or promotion of human rights
- ... gender equality
- ... civic participation
- ... protection of minorities
- ... environmental sustainability
- ... international development
- ... humanitarian aid
- ... promoting the interests of CSOs as stakeholders in the country in which they operate
- ... the protection / or promotion of human rights
- ... gender equality
- ... civic participation
- ... protection of minorities
- ... environmental sustainability
- ... international development
- ... humanitarian aid
- ... promoting the interests of CSOs as stakeholders in the country in which they operate

#### Has your organization got engaged in projects on...

Options: Yes, as initiator/leader / Yes, as partner of other CSOs / Yes, as beneficiary / No

- ... human rights protection
- ... gender equality
- ... civic participation
- ... protection of minorities
- ... environmental sustainability
- ... sustainability (beyond environment)
- ... human rights protection
- ... gender equality
- ... civic participation
- ... protection of minorities
- ... environmental sustainability
- ... sustainability (beyond environment)

**How many projects in your organization's portfolio include a dimension on ... ?**

Options: None / Some / About half / Most / All

- ... human rights
- ... gender equality
- ... participation/civic engagement
- ... environmental sustainability
- ... human rights
- ... gender equality
- ... participation/civic engagement
- ... environmental sustainability

**Does your organization ENGAGE with YOUNG PEOPLE in order to contribute to the formation of their civic culture along participatory lines?**

- Yes
- No

**Does your organization ENGAGE with MARGINALIZED GROUPS in order to contribute to the formation of their civic culture along participatory lines?**

- Yes
- No

### **SECTION 3**

**Have you heard about the Istanbul principles of CSO development effectiveness?**

Options: Yes / No

- I heard about them occasionally but I do not know many details
- I heard about them and I know how they can be applied
- I know organizations who apply them
- My organization applies them
- I heard about them occasionally but I do not know many details
- I heard about them and I know how they can be applied
- I know organizations who apply them
- My organization applies them

**How do you relate with the concept of "sustainability"?**

- I know how to apply it / how it is applied in my organization
- I am familiar with the concept but I do not know how to apply it in my organization
- I do not understand very well the concept but I know that my organization aims to apply it
- I do not understand very well the concept and my organization also has difficulties in applying it
- I do not understand very well this concept and I cannot recognize whether it is applied or not

### **SECTION 4**



**Does your organization implement participatory decision-making processes in its own work?**

Yes  
No

**Does your organization specify and/or applies measures ensuring gender equality in its ...?**

Options: Yes, it specifies / Yes, it applies / No

Mission / founding document  
Employment policies  
Internal / organizational procedures  
Project implementation  
Mission / founding document  
Employment policies  
Internal / organizational procedures  
Project implementation

**Which of these does your organization regularly make public?**

Options: Open access on the website / To the members of the organization / To the funders of the organization / Not public

Employment policy  
Funding sources  
Activity reports  
Audit reports  
Calls for applications/funding  
Employment policy  
Funding sources  
Activity reports  
Audit reports  
Calls for applications/funding

**Is your organization constantly monitoring its own performance and evaluating its programs?**

Yes, in all projects  
Yes, in the projects where it is legally required to do so  
Yes, in the projects where the funding conditions demand it  
No

**Does your organization regularly publish activity reports?**

Yes  
No

**Is your organization regularly contracting out external auditors?**

Yes  
No

**Does your organization ... ?**

Options: Yes / No

- ... considers previous experiences when formulating new strategies of action
- ... keep track of the knowledge it gained from the implemented projects
- ... capitalize on the knowledge it gained from the implemented projects
- ... engage with partners to exchange / develop on shared knowledge
- ... engage with funders to exchange / develop shared knowledge
- ... engage with project beneficiaries to exchange / develop shared knowledge
- ... engage publicly in awareness-raising on the importance of shared knowledge
- ... considers previous experiences when formulating new strategies of action
- ... keep track of the knowledge it gained from the implemented projects
- ... capitalize on the knowledge it gained from the implemented projects
- ... engage with partners to exchange / develop on shared knowledge
- ... engage with funders to exchange / develop shared knowledge
- ... engage with project beneficiaries to exchange / develop shared knowledge
- ... engage publicly in awareness-raising on the importance of shared knowledge

**SECTION 5**

**Sustainability**

**Does your organization monitor project impact ?**

Yes but without considering effective sustainable change  
Yes, also from the perspective of effective sustainable change  
No

**If yes, could you please briefly present how?**

Your answer



**Is sustainability a priority for your organization?**

Yes  
No

**Is sustainability addressed when**

Options: Yes, for the organization / Yes, for the project / No

- ... approaching a funder/donor?
- ... establishing partnerships?
- ... creating a new direction for action?
- ... approaching a funder/donor?
- ... establishing partnerships?
- ... creating a new direction for action?

**Does your organization consult with beneficiaries regarding their own perspective of what sustainable change is?**

- Yes
- No

**Does your organization have an official position on incorporating sustainability in its work?**

- Yes
- No

**If yes, could you please briefly tell us about it?**

Your answer

## SECTION 6

### Partnerships & funding

In this section we would like to understand better your organization's relations with partners and funders, as well as the sustainability challenges that you may have on this matter

**How does your organization create partnerships? (check all that apply)**

- When funding conditions require it
- When invited to collaborate with other organizations
- When the partnership increases the impact of the project
- When the partnership increases the public visibility of the organizations' projects
- When the partnership defends collectively the rights of CSOs' in the country in which it is established / operates

Other:

**With what type of organizations do you usually establish partnerships?**

Options: Always / Most frequently / Regularly / Rarely / Never

- Other local CSOs
- Other national CSOs

Other CSOs in the Black Sea region  
Other CSOs in the EU/Western Europe  
Local public authorities  
Central / national public authorities  
Other local CSOs  
Other national CSOs  
Other CSOs in the Black Sea region  
Other CSOs in the EU/Western Europe  
Local public authorities  
Central / national public authorities

**Does your organization have clearly established criteria regarding shared values and principles that are applied when establishing partnerships?**

Yes  
No

**Does your organization afford to apply to funding that is only directly related to its mission?**

Yes  
No

**Is working in your field sustainable for your organization from the perspective of available funding?**

Yes  
No

**How often does your organization apply to calls for projects that touch on its mission only tangentially?**

Always  
Very frequently  
Frequently  
Not so frequently  
Almost never / never

**Is your organization engaged in trying to influence funding organizations in order to make more funding opportunities available for networks/communities of applicants rather than single organizations?**

Yes  
No

**Is your organization involved in influencing donors to design funding opportunities that emphasize sustainability?**

Yes  
No

**In the state in which your organization is established/operates, is there a context that encourages partnerships between stakeholders?**

In this question, a "positive context" refers to legal, institutional, policy or political factors that significantly encourage stakeholders to cooperate in order to achieve their missions, while a negative

"context refers" to similar factors that significantly encourage stakeholders to ally in order to protect themselves from political pressures and/or existential threats.

- Yes, mostly a positive one
- Yes, mostly a negative one
- No

**On a scale from 1 (worst) to 10 (best), how well do you think human rights are protected in the country in which you are established / operate?**

## SECTION 7

### Country context

In this last section most questions are open. We would be extremely grateful if you shared with us some relevant thoughts on any of the following matters, even if briefly. Your input is very important to identify correctly and with the appropriate nuances the challenges and the development options that CSOs in the Black Sea region currently have.

**In your view, which are the most challenging HUMAN RIGHTS issues in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

**In your view, which are the most challenging GENDER EQUALITY issues in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

**In your view, which are the MOST PROBLEMATIC ISSUES with MARGINALIZED GROUPS in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

**In your view, which are the MOST PROBLEMATIC ISSUES with ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

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**In your view, which have been the most EFFECTIVE MEANS means for HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

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**In your view, which have been the most EFFECTIVE MEANS means for addressing GENDER EQUALITY issues in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

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**In your view, which have been the most EFFECTIVE MEANS means for improving ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

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**In your view, which have been the most EFFECTIVE MEANS means for increasing CIVIC PARTICIPATION in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer

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**In your view, which have been the most EFFECTIVE MEANS means for improving the STATUS OF MINORITIES in the country in which you are established / operate?**

Your answer



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