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THE ROLE OF CROATIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION ACCESSION PROCESS

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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU.

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Executive Summary

The research study on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process has been conducted within the Technical Assistance Service Contract for the implementation of the project “Capacity Building of Civil Society in the IPA Countries and Territories”. The research focuses on the IPA 2007-2013 period. In this research an interdisciplinary and participative methodology is applied to answer the following research questions: *What role did the CSOs play in the accession process of Croatia? How did the Croatian CSOs participate in the accession process? In what ways did participation in the accession process influence CSOs capacities? How did CSOs use the opportunities created by the accession process to influence public policies in Croatia? How did the accession process influence networking/partnership capacities of Croatian CSOs? How did the accession process influence relationship of state and non-state actors?* Besides key stakeholder meetings and interviews undertaken during the research period, a Survey on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process was conducted in March 2013. The main findings were presented in the International Conference “Civil Society Transformations on the Way to the European Union” organised by TACSO in April 2013 in Zagreb. Targeted by the Survey were representatives of CSOs in Croatia and the questionnaire was sent to 1,156 recipients, accessed by 251 of them (or 21.7%).

The Survey key findings were the following:

- The most common mode of participation was through active engagement in preparation and/or implementation of EU projects continuously (32% of respondents). A small number of CSOs were directly and continuously involved in programming processes on national level in Croatia (8%) and occasionally (22.5%). As for indirect involvement, in almost 62% of the cases CSOs were either continuously (18.6%) or occasionally (42.6%) active, which corresponds to their capacities to involve in public consultation processes, meetings or activities requiring written or oral contributions, apart from belonging to bodies in charge for particular issues; other activist approaches were occasional.
- In one third of the cases CSOs covered costs of co-financing through engagement of own staff. In 34.4% cases CSOs searched for financially “stronger” partners that covered the co-financing share. This can, however, lead to dependency and loss of autonomy in decision-making. Some organizations (22.9%) ensured co-financing through savings from past revenues. In 8.4% of responses the organization took a loan to co-finance the project. This is a significant burden for CSOs future participation in projects funded through the structural funds as pre- and interim financing will be necessary for successful implementation of projects approved for EU funding. Strong requirements and limited options for taking loans, including the problem of interest payments, will be hard to fulfil for many Croatian CSOs and may lead to their closure.
- In the period 2007-2013, Croatian CSOs funded their projects mostly from public sources. Around two thirds of respondents reported that their projects are funded from national, regional or local budget. Almost 20% indicated that the major source of funding was

from EU sources. The lowest number of CSOs (15.4%) received funding from other sources than public or EU sources. Some reported funding from the private sector and through provision of consulting services.

- The Survey revealed that there were organizational changes in 16% of the cases, in which a new level of organizational hierarchy has been introduced. In 12.2% of the cases a new department, unit, or service has been established and in 3.8% of the cases, respondents indicated that the existing ones have merged. In 1.5% of the cases one or more existing levels of organizational hierarchy have been eliminated. In one third of the cases, CSOs reported that the number of employed persons increased. This increase is likely connected with a need to employ more persons in implementation of EU projects that require skilled personnel in project management.
- In almost two thirds of the cases, additional education through seminars, trainings, or courses related to EU accession was required, to successfully respond to new challenges and requirements of the EU accession process. Quite a large number of responses (40.4%) show that the organization built competence and capacities to transfer knowledge to others. This proves that certain Croatian CSOs have capacities to acquire and to further disseminate knowledge. Such CSOs are very valuable and should be nourished and further expanded, leaving and transferring gained experience among Croatian CSOs and final beneficiaries.
- More than half of the respondents confirmed that administrative procedures became more complex and time consuming, and led to increased costs. This can have a strong negative influence at operational level requiring additional skills, financing and/or personnel to ensure sustainability of CSO. A positive influence is reported in 16.2% of responses, confirming that administrative procedures imposed by EU donors are more transparent, which in the end gives greater credibility to CSOs and results they produce.
- For more than half of the respondents EU funding opportunities had a significant impact on the widening scope of activities. These changes show that Croatian CSOs are flexible and have capacities to recognize a need to make necessary shifts towards implementation of those activities/projects that will ensure sustainability of their regular operations, maintaining their primary vision and mission or revising them accordingly.
- The majority of new partnerships were created during preparation and to a lesser extent during implementation of the EU funded project. Promising results for Croatia and IPA countries are those related to creation of partnerships *after* finalisation of the EU funded project (in Croatia in 29.6% of the cases, while in IPA countries in 13.3%). In a significant number of cases existing partnerships continue their joint cooperation (Croatia 47.8%, EU countries 32.1%, IPA countries 22.1%). The accession process has a very positive influence on sustainability of partnership of CSO with other organizations/institutions.
- In one fourth of the cases the relationship of CSOs and the State/public sector has slightly improved, while 18.6% of respondents think that the relationship has significantly improved. Almost one third of respondents indicated that there was no change of this relationship.

- The perception of CSO on their relevance for the accession process of Croatia varies. In 22.5% of responses, it is reported that the role of CSO was passive, with no significant influence on the accession process. Some CSOs reported (20.2% of the responses) are still involved in the accession process, although occasionally and upon request from relevant authorities. Only a low number of CSOs played an active role in the accession process (4.7% of the responses), while 14% are still active. The majority of the respondents believe that the role of Croatian CSOs will change (slightly or considerably).

As a result of the many expert interactions and stakeholder contributions during the conduction of this research, the main conclusions and recommendations can be summarised as follows:

- CSOs need to put additional efforts into cooperation and creation of partnerships with the units of local and regional self-government, and increase through cooperation the capacities of units of local and regional self-government.
- The Government's office and National foundation for development of civil society as well as local community foundations should create activities through which units of local and regional self-government will get familiarized with important concepts that CSOs strive to vivify such as gender equality, decrease of harmful activities, social inclusion, etc.
- The evaluation system should be more transparent and project assessment comments should be shared with the applicants in summary form.
- Donors should better consider sustainability of projects before awarding funds and grants.
- A (central) registry on project applicants including their ex-post assessment (after project implementation) could be established.
- Pre-financing and interim financing of projects should be systematically solved (incl. grant schemes, long-term programme financing, re-granting).
- Various grant schemes implementing bodies interpret PRAG procedures differently. Responsible institutions should harmonize among themselves project implementation procedures.
- Identification of new pressure models needed „after the end“ of ex-ante conditionalities, e.g. reporting obligation on the implementation of the National reform programme and Partnership Agreement between Croatian and the European Union.
- Capacity building on public policy advocacy, analysis and shadow reporting is needed.
- Institutional stability is necessary as to enhance resilience to change in established relationships, administrative practices and processes after each (local) election.
- Expertise of programme managers and administrators needs to increase and staff fluctuations need to stabilise in respective institutions.
- Evaluation needs to be understood as an integrative input into the next programming cycle.

1. Introduction

It's May 2013. The Republic of Croatia is at the doorstep of the European Union. For ten years, this has been the overall objective of our future. Though one of the rare examples – there has been even political consensus reached in Croatian Parliament on that point. A few years more were needed, but now we are there! Croatia is Number 28.

*It has been a long way to go.
Quite difficult paths have been passed.
Lots of things have been learned.
But we forgot to ask - where are we going thereafter?
Do you know?*

(Marijana Sumpor, May 2013)

The EU accession process can be seen also as a process of democratisation throughout which the civil society sector has evidently played an important role. As put forward by the European Commission (2012) *“an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is an asset in itself. It represents and fosters pluralism and can contribute to more effective policies, equitable and sustainable development and inclusive growth. It is an important player in fostering peace and in conflict resolution. By articulating citizens' concerns, **civil society organisations** (CSOs) are active in the public arena, engaging in initiatives to further participatory democracy. They embody a growing demand for transparent and accountable governance. While states carry the primary responsibility for development and democratic governance, synergies between states and CSOs can help overcome challenges of poverty, widening inequalities, social exclusion and unsustainable development. CSOs' participation in policy processes is key to ensuring inclusive and effective policies. CSOs therefore contribute to building more accountable and legitimate states, leading to enhanced social cohesion and more open and deeper democracies.”*

In line with this, the research study on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process has been conducted within the Technical Assistance Service Contract for the implementation of the project “Capacity Building of Civil Society in the IPA Countries and Territories”. The main objective of this project is to strengthen the overall capacities and accountability of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) within the IPA beneficiaries and to guarantee the quality of services of CSOs and a sustainable role of the CSOs in the democratic process. The main purposes of the project are to increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSOs and to improve the democratic role of CSOs. The aim of this assignment is to contribute to strengthening CSOs capacities by conducting a research on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process. For this purpose, the researchers Dr. Irena Đokić and Dr. Marijana Sumpor were engaged to develop an appropriate methodological approach and conduct the

research in close cooperation with TACSO representatives based on the jointly agreed framework of objectives and activities.

This report is structured in nine Chapters. First chapter is introductory, followed by the second chapter on Methodology and definitions used in research. Subsequent chapters (from 3rd to 7th) refer to the particular experiences of Croatian CSOs in the EU integration process, during the period 2007 – 2013, and they are analysed on the basis of a number of interlinked questions. These range from the question on how did the Croatian CSOs participate in the accession process; in what ways did their participation in the accession process influence their capacities; how did they use the opportunities created by the accession process to influence public policies in Croatia; how did the accession process influence networking or partnership capacities; and how did the accession process influence the relationship of state and non-state actors? With the aim to provide an in depth overview of the most important issues currently discussed regarding the experiences of Croatian CSO's in the EU accession process, a literature review of the most recent publicly available documents has been undertaken. To receive real world insights, the broadest group of stakeholders were consulted through an electronic survey. Identified key stakeholders gathered in a stakeholder meeting to discuss key questions, while a selected number of stakeholders were directly interviewed. The findings of the study will be of interest for other countries in the Western Balkan and Turkey (WBT) region facing similar challenges as Croatian CSOs in the recent past. The last two chapters of the study are dedicated to conclusions and recommendation on the future role of CSO after Croatia becomes the 28th EU member state.

2. Research Questions, Methodology and Definitions

2.1 Research Questions and Methodology

This research is based on interdisciplinary and participative methodology encompassing social science research approaches including literature review, survey, stakeholder interviews, a stakeholder workshop in March 2013 and the International conference “Civil Society Transformations on the Way to the European Union” organised by TACSO in April 2013 in Zagreb¹. The findings of each step during the research process are interwoven in the structure of this study based on the initially defined key research questions:

- *What role did the CSOs play in the accession process of Croatia?*
- *How did the Croatian CSOs participate in the accession process?*
- *In what ways did participation in the accession process influence CSOs capacities?*
- *How did CSOs use the opportunities created by the accession process to influence public policies in Croatia?*

¹ Detailed methodology is explained in Annex 1 – Research Questions and Methodology

- *How did the accession process influence networking/partnership capacities of Croatian CSOs?*
- *How did the accession process influence relationship of state and non-state actors?*

A combination of research methods and tools were applied in this research consisting of the following components: literature review; desk research; stakeholder analysis; electronic survey; semi-structured interviews; stakeholder workshop; international conference; and research study.

2.2 Definition of Civil Society, Key Institutions and Documents in Croatia

The understanding of civil society and its organisations, what they are and what they represent, depends on the specific cultural, political, institutional and administrative context of a particular country. Also, the definition depends on the spatial or territorial perspective, for example when viewed from the perspective from within a country e.g. Croatia and its regions and localities, a wider regional perspective such as the Western Balkan region with particular commonalities, or European Union perspective trying to encompass many different cultures and traditions. Straightforward translations of definitions without considering the mentioned territorial and social particularities can cause difficulties in future development processes and eventually particular policy formulation and implementation. Another important dimension is the particularity of a time period that is significantly impacting the creation, evolution and changes within civil society and the ways that it transforms. A further important point refers to translations, and it should always be borne in mind that the applicability of “the other” or “coming from outside” needs to be questioned continuously by the stakeholders in the various development processes, territories, contexts and time periods in which the civil society actively participates.

***What the EU means by CSOs* (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2012)**

The concept of "CSOs" embraces a wide range of actors with different roles and mandates. Definitions vary over time and across institutions and countries. The EU considers CSOs to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations. The EU values CSOs' diversity and specificities; it engages with accountable and transparent CSOs which share its commitment to social progress and to the fundamental values of peace, freedom, equal rights and human dignity.

A general definition of civil society is proposed by Croatian researchers Bežovan and Zrinščak (2007, p. 20) as “the space between family, state and market where people engage in cooperation with the aim to promote common interests”. In institutional terms, there is a

broad array of not-for-profit, non-governmental associational forms that are recognised by the Croatian Law². These include associations, foundations, funds, political parties, national minority councils, trade unions, economic interest associations, institutions and religious organisations. In the Republic of Croatia, in April 2013 overall 48.000 associations or organisations were registered.³ This number changes on daily basis and represents a cumulative overall number of all registered organisations. Their status in terms of activity can only be followed on local level where they have formally the obligation to submit reports on their annual assembly meetings or when changes in the statutes are adopted. No systematic monitoring of their activities is set up on national level. The Ministry of public administration is responsible for the Registry data base, which contains basic information on the organisations according to their main field of activity, subgroups of activities, location and county where the organisation is registered. The existing categorisation does not correspond with the CIVICUS categorisation of civil society organisations. Changes can be expected in the future with regard to the registration and improvements in information management. The general administrative affairs departments of government offices on regional level are responsible for the registration of associations as well as for their supervision. The request for founding an association has to be submitted to the respective government office located in the county where the association will have its seat. In the City of Zagreb this is handled by the City office for general administrative affairs.

In Croatia, the typical small CSO functions on voluntary basis, lacks professional infrastructure and has limited access to funds. Well developed, publicly present and fully professionalised CSOs are concentrated in Zagreb and are generally oriented towards advocacy and capacity building activities in the field of different rights (TACSO, 2011).

The EU accession process has created an additional incentive for stronger activation of the civil society in the policy formation process. As stressed in TACSO's needs assessment report (2011) Croatia has established an innovative and comprehensive set of institutions for mediating relations between the government and civil society and supporting its development. The new Croatian civil society related institutional system was initiated in 1998 and is built on three pillars:

- **The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs** – administrative body of the Government responsible for creating conditions for cooperation and partnership with non-governmental, non-profit sector, especially associations in Croatia;
- **The Council for Civil Society Development** – consultative body of the Government, responsible for the development of cooperation between the Government and CSOs in Croatia (12 representatives of government bodies are appointed, 12 representatives of

² For full list of relevant legal acts, see www.uzuvrh.hr.

³ Ministry of public administration – Registry of associations of the Republic of Croatia (Registar udruga Republike Hrvatske), 15th May, 2013 the number of associations in the Registry was 48,943 (<http://www.appluprava.hr/RegistarUdruga/faces/WEB-INF/pages/searchForm.jsp>).

citizens' associations are elected by the CSOs in a transparent procedure and 3 representatives of other CSOs (foundations, employers associations and trade unions);

- **National Foundation for Civil Society Development** – public institution for cooperation, networking and financing CSOs in Croatia.

Key documents related to the development of civil society in Croatia are the following:

- **National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2012-2016** – guidance document for the improvement of the legal, financial and institutional supporting system for CSOs as important factors for the socio-economic development of the Republic of Croatia, as well as for important stakeholders in the implementation of EU policies.

The creation of the National Strategy has been participatory and the elaboration process can be highlighted as an example of good practice. The quality of the final document is exemplary and can be used in other similar contexts of policy and strategy formulation. An innovative participatory method (open space method combined with brainstorming and situational analysis) has been used at a very early stage in the process where participants were invited to nominate the most relevant topics that were to be discussed and further analysed during the workshop. The most important topics were selected in a democratic way, and the proposer of the topic was the moderator of the particular working group in which the topic was discussed. The strategy formulation process continued with active involvement of key stakeholders and broad public consultation process. The elaboration of the strategy took one year.

(Vesna Lendić Kasalo, Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, April 2013)

- **Code of Good Practice and Standards for the Financing of Programmes of Civil Society Organisations out of State and Local Budgets (2007)** - regulates the basic standards and principles of practice of state administrative bodies and offices in the procedure of awarding grants from the State budget to CSOs for implementation of their programmes and projects that are of special interest for general/public good in the Republic of Croatia. In 2009, the National Foundation for Civil Society Development and the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs published the *Manual for the implementation of the Code of Positive Practice, Standards and Criteria for Financial Support to the Programmes and Projects of Associations* that elaborates in detail all phases of the process of awarding financial support to CSOs from public sources.
- **Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts (2009)**⁴ - provides guidelines for efficient consultation of state bodies and interested public in procedures of adopting laws and other

⁴ In early 2010 the draft Guidelines for the Implementation of the Code was introduced through public consultations organised in four major cities in Croatia (Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek, and Split).

regulations and acts, as well as existing practice of consultations that already exist in some bodies of state administration.

In the course of 2010 the following three working groups were established:

- Working group for the support of the participation of civil society in the public policy shaping process,
- Working group for monitoring financing policies of civil societies, and
- Working group supporting the creation of an incentive environment for public advocacy initiatives and sub-sector co-operation.

The new model of organizational structure for development of civil society in Croatia, based on consensus, has resulted in "...a jointly owned institutional apparatus which guarantees substantive participation of civil society, particularly in the field of policy making, and a clear set of agreed policy instruments defining civil society's role in Croatia's development as well as the government's responsibilities towards civil society..." (TACSO, 2011: 16)

2.3 About the Survey and Involved Civil Society Actors

The Survey questionnaire on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process (March, 2013) was structured into three thematic groups consisting of 27 questions in total. Thematic groups are the following:

- I. Basic information – within which the information on primary field of activity, number of years of operation of CSO, location of registration, number of members and permanently employed persons, involvement in EU projects from 2007 to 2013 and similar information were gathered;
- II. Participation, networking/partnership capacities – within this thematic group, the information on participation of CSO in the EU accession process 2007-2013, influence of the accession process on networking/partnership opportunities of CSO with other organizations/institutions and on quality and sustainability of built networking/partnership, as well as information on accession process influence on the relationship of CSO and the State/public sector were gathered;
- III. Capacities – the focus of the questions in the last thematic group, was on CSOs' capacities and influence of the accession process on organizational changes, employment policy changes, knowledge and skills, procedural requirements regarding administration and finance, change of scope of their activities due to EU funding opportunities, and on those questions addressing funding and co-financing issues.

The target group selected for this survey were representatives of CSOs in Croatia and the questionnaire was sent to 1,156 recipients. The questionnaire was accessed by 251

respondents, which is 21.7% of the total number of recipients⁵. Basic information on representatives from CSOs participating in this survey is provided in this Chapter.

In this research CIVICUS⁶ categorisation of CSOs was used, which slightly differs from classification offered in the Register of CSOs in Croatia⁷. Therefore, representativeness in this sense is not comparable between this sample and registered CSOs in Croatian Register⁸. The most active CSOs and those most experienced ones are active in the following fields of activity: disabled people, social care and humanitarian, children, youth and students, civil society development, democracy, human rights and rule of law and health and health protection. The majority of responses (more than a half) are provided by the representatives of these CSOs, which confirms their continuous interest (and experience in various types of involvement in EU issues) in this and similar researches (see Table 1). The lowest number of responses (1.6%) was provided by the representatives from CSOs acting in the field of consumer organisations, information and IT, and non-violence and tolerance.

Table 1: Primary field of activity (CIVICUS categorisation)

	Response (%)	Cumulative
Disabled people	12,0	12,0
Social care and humanitarian	9,6	21,6
Children, youth and students	8,8	30,4
Civil society development	8,4	38,8
Democracy, human rights and rule of law	7,6	46,4
Health and health protection	7,2	53,6
Other	7,2	60,8
Women and gender issues	7,2	68,0
Environment protection and nature	5,2	73,2
Culture	4,8	78,0
Rural development	4,4	82,4
Education and science	3,6	86,0
Economic development	3,2	89,2

⁵ Contacts were provided by TACSO Croatia office. The contacts database consist of organisations and their representatives that are in various ways related to EU integration, programmes, projects and education, and which had in this respect communicated with the TACSO office in the past couple of years.

⁶ CIVICUS – World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

⁷ The Croatian Registry of Associations contains the following categories: spiritual, ecological, ethnic, economy, hobby, humanitarian, information, cultural, national, gathering and protection of children, youth and family, gathering and protection of women, other fields, education, social, technical, homeland war, protection of rights, health, scientific, sport. The following categories are in the Register, but not within the CIVICUS classification: spiritual, national, technical, homeland war associations. As for those within CIVICUS classification, but not in the Croatian Register are as follows: disabled people, civil society development, rural development, elderly, professional association, consumer organisations, non-violence and tolerance.

⁸ In Croatia, almost 35% of citizens' associations are registered in the field of sports. As they have not been intensively involved in EU issues and to prevent biased statistics due to a large number of them, they are excluded from the sample in this research.

	Response (%)	Cumulative
Sports, hobby and recreation	3,2	92,4
Elderly	2,8	95,2
Professional association	1,6	96,8
Ethnic communities	1,2	98,0
Consumers organisations	0,8	98,8
Information and IT	0,4	99,2
Non-violence and tolerance	0,4	99,6

Source: Authors calculation, 2013.

Respondents were asked about the number of years of operation of their organization or institution (see Table 2). From the results provided, it can be concluded that the most represented group of CSOs operates between 6 – 10 years. Almost half of CSOs (48.9%) operates 11 or more years, and can be considered as mature organizations with significant experience in the civil society sector. More than three fourth of CSOs operates in the period that overlaps with the period which is the focus time period in this research, i.e. the IPA period 2007-2013. This can be of significance for observing to what extent activities implemented in the pre-accession period stimulated the development of civil society.

Table 2: Years of operation

	Response (%)
1-5	23.20
6-10	27.60
11-15	20
16-20	13.20
More than 20	15.70

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Table 3: Location of registration

County	No. of respondents	% of total	Counties per representativeness in total no. of CSOs in CRO	% of total CSOs in CRO
City of Zagreb	88	35.34	City of Zagreb	23.41
Zagreb	26	10.44	Split-Dalmatia	9.01
Primorje-Gorski kotar	20	8.03	Primorje-Gorski kotar	7.78
Split-Dalmatia	19	7.63	Osijek-Baranya	7.69
Osijek-Baranya	17	6.83	Zagreb	5.90
Istria	12	4.82	Istria	5.45
Vukovar-Sirmium	9	3.61	Vukovar-Sirmium	3.78
Koprivnica-Križevci	9	3.61	Dubrovnik-Neretva	3.72
Karlovac	9	3.61	Sisak-Moslavina	3.65
Sisak-Moslavina	7	2.81	Varaždin	3.54
Varaždin	7	2.81	Zadar	3.01
Šibenik-Knin	6	2.41	Brod-Posavina	3.00

County	No. of respondents	% of total	Counties per representativeness in total no. of CSOs in CRO	% of total CSOs in CRO
Međimurje	4	1.61	Bjelovar-Bilogora	2.77
Dubrovnik-Neretva	4	1.61	Karlovac	2.75
Zadar	3	1.20	Šibenik-Knin	2.53
Lika-Senj	3	1.20	Krapina-Zagorje	2.46
Virovitica-Podravina	2	0.80	Koprivnica-Križevci	2.44
Požega-Slavonia	2	0.80	Međimurje	2.38
Brod-Posavina	1	0.40	Virovitica-Podravina	1.86
Bjelovar-Bilogora	1	0.40	Požega-Slavonia	1.70
Krapina-Zagorje	0	0.00	Lika-Senj	1.19
TOTAL	249	100.00		100.00

Sources: Authors' calculation, 2013, Register of CSOs in Croatia, 2013 (18th May 2013).

This survey questionnaire has been sent to recipients in all Croatian counties. Representativeness of the sample per counties generally corresponds to representativeness of the counties in total number of CSOs in Croatia⁹. It is worth to mention that CSOs from Zagreb, Šibenik-Knin and especially Koprivnica-Križevci counties (see Table 3), have somewhat better ranking in the sample. Even though the share of CSOs in these counties is relatively smaller in total number of CSOs in Croatia, these CSOs showed a greater interest to participate in the survey and research. On the contrary, CSOs from Brod-Posavina, Bjelovar-Bilogora and Krapina-Zagorje, with relatively greater share in total number of CSOs in Croatia, showed lower interest in participating in this survey (only two respondents from these three counties filled in the questionnaire).

CSOs exert their activities at different levels. In this research, CSOs were asked about their pre-dominant location of project operations or implementation of activities (see Table 4).

Table 4: Pre-dominant location of project operations/implementation of activities

	Response (%)
Local level	39,2
County or more counties	28,1
National level	22,8
IPA countries	5,8
EU countries	2,9
Other countries	1,2

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

⁹ The provided data on the number of CSOs per county is from the Croatian CSO Registry (May 18, 2013). The CSOs representativeness by counties according to the TACSO contacts data base generally corresponds to the representativeness in the Croatian CSO Registry, except for the city of Zagreb, where the relative share of CSOs is much higher.

In total 223 recipients responded to open type question on number of their members. A number of CSOs (15 of them) reported more than 1,000 members. These 15 CSOs count 340,208 members, i.e. 22,680 members per CSO in average. If these CSOs are excluded, the average number of members for remaining 215 respondents is 98, which is more objective data for further statistical operations. Average number of active members involved in the implementation of EU projects is 7-8, which means that less than 10% of staff is involved in EU projects. However, this data has to be taken very carefully in consideration since 80 respondents (37% of respondents) reported zero persons employed in EU projects. Quite a high percentage (with zero persons employed in EU projects) can be expected also for the whole sample (1,156), considering that 18.6% responded to this question. However, with EU accession and the opportunities that will be at disposal, in the long-term, this figure should be attached greater values.

Almost 40% of respondents act primarily at the local level (see Table 4) the level actually closest to the citizens and with the possibility to directly and quickly respond to their needs or provide various types of services or assistance. Together with those acting at the county level, they compose more than two thirds or 67.3% of all CSOs. This fact also has to do with the sources of financing, whereby the majority of CSOs still search for financing predominantly at these two levels. For those smaller and less experienced ones in project management, financing is ensured through rather simple procedures of yearly allocation of local and county budgets planned for CSO activities. More than one fifth of CSOs act predominantly at the national level. Their primary role is focused on changes in public policies and improvement of conditions for civil society operations, as well as advocacy campaigns stimulating discussions on important issues.

In the Position paper of the European Commission for Croatia (2013b), one of the most important issues to be addressed refers to inefficient public governance on central and local level and *weak involvement of civil society* and social partners. Coordination between the key stakeholders at national, regional and local levels remains weak. Many local and regional administrations have not yet developed a comprehensive cooperation strategy with civil society. The involvement of CSOs in the policy-making process is still rather limited. Therefore, the role of the civil society should be strengthened so it can act as a partner to government in the preparation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the projects on national and regional, local level. It is necessary to further develop and make better use of the existing networks mobilising citizens, business, NGOs and other partners for initiatives essential for the smooth implementation of operational programmes.

3. Participation of Croatian CSOs in the EU Accession Process

According to the European Commission (2013a) civil society participation is a key factor in ensuring good quality comprehensive legislation and in developing sustainable policies that

reflect people's needs and are accepted by those most concerned by them. This also applies to the reforms a country needs to implement to qualify for EU membership. Having adequate structures and mechanisms for civil society cooperation with public institutions as well as free, clear and accessible flows of information on matters of public interest through structured durable mechanisms are of critical importance.

Marina Škrabalo (2012) presents a critical review on Croatia's EU negotiation process. She states that if key outputs are considered, the Croatian negotiations were a highly successful endeavour - the Government of Croatia closed the negotiations, signed the Accession Treaty and got the green light from two thirds citizens who voted for accession with two-third majority vote. But on the other hand, she emphasises that the key challenge encountered was a discrepancy between stated political commitments to transparency and inclusiveness and the actual negotiation and policy-making practices. In her view, the process was driven by a sense of urgency and even fear that public disclosure of negotiation documents, public consultations on acquis-related legislation and extensive public debates might stifle the process, weaken Croatia's position and create political resistances. This should be understood in the context of inherited political and administrative culture and silence, lack of experience of state administration with horizontal coordination and engagement of non-state actors.

The following recommendations on how to enhance the transparency of the EU accession process and enlargement policy as a whole in order to ensure public ownership and meaningful participation of citizens and civil society not only in its legitimisation are based on the lessons learned from the experience of Croatian advocacy oriented civil society organizations with the EU accession process: (Škrabalo, 2012)

- Policy on public disclosure of information and documents directly related to the negotiation process should be mutually agreed and adopted by all parties in negotiations, in order to reconcile overarching public interest and right of the citizens to know what governments are negotiating about.
- Information that provides parameters for negotiations and which is diagnostic, i.e. screening lists and screening reports or non-negotiable, i.e. the translation of acquis and opening and closing benchmarks should be publicly disclosed promptly.
- All documents regulating the negotiation structure, procedures and appointments should be publicly disclosed at the time of their adoption and they should also include internal rules of procedure on information management and participation in document drafting and negotiations.
- Effective and democratic legal and institutional framework for public access to information and public consultations in the policy-making process should be treated as prerequisites for Governments' capacity to engage in negotiations. The proactive deliberative and oversight role of the national parliaments in the accession process should be examined and ensured in a timely, strategic manner, together with creating a

forum for fostering political consensus and strengthening parliamentary capacities for policy analysis and legislative review.

- Both the Parliament and the Government should strategically engage in structured, two-way communication with citizens and civil society on the purpose, contents and outcomes of the accession process, geared towards the creation of public dialogue without discrimination of divergent perspectives, engagement on non-state actors in the process and building public trust in political institutions and state administration.

According to data received and analysed in the recent Report on implementation of the Code of Good Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, other Regulations and Acts, prepared by the Government Office for Co-operation with NGOs (Ured za udruge Vlade Republike Hrvatske, 2013), in 2012, bodies of state administration and Government offices conducted the procedure of consultations with interested public for 144 regulations (for 27 regulations the procedure lasted less than 15 days). This represents a big step forward compared to 2011, when 48 consultations in total were conducted.

Table 5: Elements of consultation procedure (status 2012)

	TOTAL
Regulations for which consultations are conducted	144
Internet consultations	136
Other forms of consultations	67
Objections and comments	4786
Consultations in which senders of objections and comments received confirmation of reception and gratitude	77
Consultations in which objections received are published on internet websites	61
Consultations in which reports on conducted consultations are published	76

Source: Ured za udruge Vlade Republike Hrvatske (Government Office for Co-operation with NGOs), 2013.

The values for each individual element presented in Table 5 significantly increased compared to 2011. Accordingly, in 2012 a total of 4,786 written comments on law and regulations proposals were received, which is a significant improvement compared to 173 written comments received during 2011. This increase is the result of continuous education and trainings attended by consultation coordinators, conduction of a few public hearings and preparation and publishing of the Guide for consultations. Actions implemented by this Government office are important for bridging the gap and building a good quality relationship between CSOs and public sector, enhancing their role in the society as a whole.

The group of questions focused on issues of participation in the accession process during 2007-2013 within the Survey on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process (March, 2013) include any mode of activity related to EU accession process (see Table 6).

Table 6: Mode of participation in the EU accession process

Mode of participation in the EU accession process	Continuously	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	None of the above	Response Count
Active engagement in PREPARATION OF EU FUNDED PROJECTS	52	38	19	12	27	148
Active engagement in IMPLEMENTATION OF EU FUNDED PROJECTS	42	28	25	19	33	147
Direct involvement in programming processes on national level in Croatia	12	33	22	46	34	147
Indirect involvement in programming processes on national level in Croatia	28	64	29	11	18	150
Other activist approaches e.g. advocacy, lobbying, media campaigns	16	60	28	17	24	145
Our organization tried to participate, but an attempt(s) was/were not successful	6	28	24	16	50	124
In case you participated in some other mode of participation, please, specify.						12
answered question						150
skipped question						101

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

CSOs have a number of ways in which they could participate in the EU accession process 2007-2013, which is presented in Table 6. These include preparation and/or implementation of EU funded projects, direct involvement in programming processes on national level in Croatia (e.g. as a member of working group, monitoring committee, evaluation committee, partnership council etc.) and/or indirect involvement in programming processes on national level in Croatia (e.g. participation in public consultation processes, at consultation meetings, commenting documents, public hearings, information sharing etc.). Results provided in Table 6 show that the most common mode of participation was through active engagement in preparation and/or implementation of EU projects, in the majority of the cases continuously, but also occasionally, as a response to open opportunities offered. Almost 32% of respondents have actively and continuously participated in preparation and/or implementation of EU projects, while 22.4% of them have occasionally participated in preparation and/or implementation of EU projects. A small number of CSOs were directly and continuously involved in programming processes on national level in Croatia (8%), although occasionally this score shows better value (22.5%). This confirms previous findings from TACSO Report (2011: 18), stating *"The government's institutional capacities for engaging CSOs are often not matched with the comparable capacities of the CSOs to engage with government. That is, CSOs often are not able to respond to invitations to participate in the consultative processes initiated by government and they are very seldom able to exercise a considerable impact on the public agenda..."* In the same Report (TACSO, 2011: 23), it is indicated that *"...CSOs are often consulted on important issues but their role in most cases remains consultative and dependent on individual sensitivity, knowledge and the capacities of politicians and civil servants to co-operate with CSOs..."* These results are also comparable to those presented in the Target study (2010) confirming that in spite of networking trend, there is no greater influence of CSOs on the government. Two thirds (67.6 %) of the CSOs

that participated in the Target survey believe that the network they belong to exerts only a slight influence, while 81% of CSOs believe that non-governmental networks overall have only a minor influence in Croatia.

As for indirect involvement, in almost 62% of the cases CSOs were either continuously (18.6%) or occasionally (42.6%) active, which corresponds to their capacities to involve in public consultation processes, meetings or activities requiring written or oral contributions, apart from belonging to bodies in charge for particular issues. There are also other activist approaches available such as advocacy, lobbying and/or media campaigns, which according to obtained results were rather at occasional basis, when a prompt response to particular issue was required.

Even though it was not often a case, some organizations tried to occasionally participate in EU related activities, but their attempts to get involved were not successful.

Respondents were also asked about their involvement in EU projects from 2007 to 2013. The responses are following:

- Average number of contracted EU projects is 2.63 projects (137 respondents). If responses for value zero contracted projects are excluded (50 cases), then the average is 4.18 projects;
- Average number of implemented EU projects 2.11 projects (132 respondents). If responses for value zero implemented projects are excluded (54 cases), then the average is 3.56 projects;
- Average number of EU projects in which organization/institution is a lead partner is 1.33 projects (129 respondents). If responses for value zero projects as lead partner are excluded (69 cases), then the average is 2.87 projects.

Combining these results (with or without zero values), although with a certain degree of caution in interpreting results based on average values, it can be concluded that almost in every second contracted project CSO is the leading partner. This proves that CSOs have potential not only to play as partners or associates in the project, but acting as the lead partner, with full responsibility for management and implementation of complex EU funded projects.

According to 129 respondents the average project value in the period from 2007 to 2013 was 60.070,00 EUR. If responses for zero value are excluded (56 cases) then the average project value is 106.160,00 EUR. For 125 respondents the average EU funded project value was 54.140,00 EUR. If responses for zero value are excluded (57 cases) then the average EU project value is 99.520,00 EUR.

An often heard problem among CSOs relates to co-financing required in EU funded projects. The results provided in Table 7 indicate that in one third of the cases organizations covered

costs of co-financing through engagement of own staff. Even though this can be one of the solutions, this is not always the most convenient. The level of the current gross salary becomes in that case the basis for calculation of co-financing. Additionally, it can considerably limit involvement of that person in other projects. In search for co-financing, CSOs seek for financially “stronger” partners that can cover the co-financing share. This is reported in 34.4% of responses. Sometimes, this is the only way that CSO can get involved in particular EU funded projects. This in the contrary can lead to a certain level of dependency causing loss of autonomy in decision-making about substantial issues.

Table 7: Co-financing in EU funded projects

	Response (%)
None of the above	35,9
Organization covered costs of co-financing through engagement of own staff	35,1
Project partner(s) covered co-financing share	34,4
Organization covered co-financing part with savings from past revenues	22,9
Organization had to take loan to co-finance the project implementation	8,4

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Some organizations (22.9% responses) ensured co-financing part with savings from past revenues. This is however possible mainly for “older” CSOs operating already for a few years and having experienced finance management staff and regular income base. Only 8.4% of responses refer to statement that the organization had to take a loan to co-finance the project implementation. This is considered to be a significant burden for CSOs for future participation in projects funded through the structural funds as pre- and interim- financing will be necessary for successful implementation of projects approved for EU funding. Both strong requirements and limited options for taking loans, primarily because of the problem of interest payments, will be hard to fulfil for many Croatian CSOs and may lead to their closure. Through open response, respondents provided information that co-financing was also covered through public sources (national bodies, local budgets, other donors etc.).

Table 8: Sources of funding

	Response (%)
Public sources (national, regional, local)	65,44
EU sources	19,12
Other sources	15,44

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Even though, a number of various grant schemes were opened as well as other sources of financing in the period 2007-2013, Croatian CSOs funded their projects mostly from public sources (see Table 8). Around two thirds of respondents reported that their projects are funded from national, regional or local budget. Almost 20% indicated that the major source

of funding was from EU sources. The lowest number of CSOs (15.4%) received funding from other sources than public or EU sources. Some reported funding from the private sector and through provision of consulting services. This result also reveals that CSO should strive more to turn to other sources of funding than those commonly used (public sources such as budgets), which generally do not require complex application preparation, covering co-financing, ensuring bridge financing during implementation and before receiving funding, additional management and other project related skills.

4. Influence of Croatian CSOs Participation in the EU Accession Process on their Capacities

Capacity development in the spotlight (*European commission, 2012*)

In order to increase their impact, local CSOs must overcome capacity constraints ranging from limitations in technical management and leadership skills, fundraising, to results management and issues of internal governance. The EU will reinforce its support to the capacity development of CSOs, particularly local actors, as part of a long-term, demand-driven and flexible approach, giving particular consideration to constituency building and representativeness.

As stated by the European Commission (2013a), CSOs take many forms and operate with different degrees of formality. The Commission wants to engage with CSOs that are committed to strengthening their own capacity to fulfil their objectives. This requires many CSOs to improve their autonomy, representativeness and accountability by strengthening their membership base, by higher internal governance standards, including democratic structures, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, transparency, geographic outreach and cooperation. CSOs can increase their effectiveness by increasing their capacity for analysis, monitoring and advocacy as well as networking, partnership, coalition-building and active involvement in the policy and law making processes.

Another important aspect regarding CSOs capacities refers to financing aspects, where the European Commission (2013a) emphasises the use of an appropriate mix of funding instruments to respond to different types of CSOs, needs and country contexts in a flexible, transparent, cost-effective and results focused manner. This will include: aiming for longer term contracts, recognising that capacity building and advocacy work requires time and resources; moving away from project based support to a more flexible approach that fosters partnership and coalition building; and doing more to reach out to grass-root organisations, in particular through re-granting and flexible support mechanisms to respond to their immediate needs. It is emphasised that civil society will also be supported under sector programmes through measures that enhance their role and capacities to participate actively in formulation and implementation of sector strategies for EU financial assistance. This process is already visible in Croatia, where CSO representatives have the opportunity to

participate in the programming process through the thematic working groups coordinated by the Ministry of regional development and EU funds.

A critique stressed at the TACSO International Conference (April 2013) should be mentioned though with regard to the participation of CSO representatives in the programming process. A concern was raised that public administration officials have the tendency to fulfil formal programming requirements in accordance with common EU programming principles. So, it is not always clear if the representation of CSOs in such processes is just used for legitimisation purposes and not true interest in the improved quality of policies and programmes, and as such not being truly participatory. Similar concerns are mentioned by Škrabalo (2012).

Findings from TACSO Report (2011) indicate that the public image of civil society in Croatia is generally favourable, although public knowledge and understanding of the sector is at best partial. The public familiar with the activities carried out by CSOs, but do not have a deeper understanding of civil society and its role in society.

According to the Survey on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process (March, 2013), the information on the number of permanently employed persons is provided in Table 9.

Table 9: Number of permanently employed persons

	Share (%)
0	32.10
1	11.60
2	11.20
3	9.20
4	6.00
5	6.40
More than 6 persons	23.50
TOTAL	100.00

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

In almost one third of cases (32.1%) CSOs do not have a single permanently employed person¹⁰. This influences considerably scope of their activities and possibility to engage in projects/actions in long-term period and ensure viability of CSO, as staff fluctuations (especially in smaller CSOs) are common and frequent case. In 44.4% cases, there are one to five persons employed in CSOs, while more than 6 permanently employed persons are registered in 23.5 % of the cases.

¹⁰The data obtained by Bežovan and Matančević (2011) are also very similar to those above showing that 31% of CSOs do not have employees at all and (if the few CSOs with more than 100 employees are excluded) other CSOs have three employees on average.

Within the survey a group of questions was related to ways in which participation in the accession process influenced capacities of CSOs (see Table 10). Issues tackling organizational changes, employment and employment policies, knowledge and skills of CSOs members, administrative and finance related changes, as well as financing and co-financing questions were addressed in this part of the survey. In the majority of the cases CSOs reported that there were no changes or nothing from offered answers matched their case. However, there were organizational changes in 16% of the cases in which a new level of organizational hierarchy has been introduced, in 12.2% of the cases a new department/unit/service has been established or in 3.8% of the cases, respondents indicated that existing departments/units/service have merged. In a very low number of cases (only 1.5%), one or more existing levels of organizational hierarchy have been eliminated. In total in one third of the cases some organizational change has occurred. Whether that change led to better efficiency, improved results or had other interesting impacts, should be further investigated.

Table 10: Influence of the accession process on organizational changes in CSOs

	Response (%)
Participation in the accession process did not influence any organizational change(s)	44,3
None of the above	26,7
A new level of organizational hierarchy has been introduced	16,0
A new department/unit/service has been established	12,2
Existing departments/units/services have merged	3,8
One or more existing levels of organizational hierarchy have been eliminated	1,5

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Participation in the accession process influenced also employment changes in a number of CSOs. This is evident from the Table 11. In almost one third of the cases, CSOs reported that the number of employed persons increased. This increase is likely connected with a need to employ more persons in implementation of EU projects that require skilled personnel in management of such projects. If the number of EU projects in one particular CSO is growing, this need will be more emphasised. In 36.8% of the cases the number of employed persons remained the same, i.e. the accession process did not influence employment changes.

Table 11: Influence of the accession process on employment changes

	Response (%)
Number of employed persons remained unchanged	36,8
Number of employed persons increased	31,6
None of the above	27,9
Number of employed persons decreased	3,7

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Respondents had an opportunity to provide answers as to whether the accession process influenced change of employment policy in their CSO. A number of multiple choice answers provided information presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Influence of the accession process on change of employment policy

	Response (%)
None of the above	35,8
Participation in the accession process did not influence change of employment policy	30,6
Employment of persons with competences in management of EU projects	22,4
Knowledge of English language (and preferably one more foreign language) as a prerequisite for employment	19,4
Obligatory basic computer skills as a prerequisite for employment	14,2
Employing of unemployed women is taken more into consideration	12,7
Employing of socially disadvantaged persons is taken more into consideration	11,9
Employing of persons with special needs is taken more into consideration	4,5

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

The results indicate that the competence in management of EU projects seems to be the most relevant for new employment, as confirmed in 22.4% responses. This is followed by the knowledge of English language (and preferably one more foreign language) as a prerequisite for employment in 19.4% of responses. It is also expected that the person that will be employed has obligatory basic computer skills (14.2% of responses). In terms of horizontal policy issues, when it comes to considering of employing of unemployed women or socially disadvantaged persons responses are similar, showing that there is rather low number of CSOs that take these elements into consideration in employment procedure. This is also valid for employing of persons with special needs (only 4.5% responses). As EU policy puts a strong emphasis on horizontal policy issues, CSOs should be more encouraged in the future to take these elements more into consideration. This is very likely the result of low level of knowledge on potential that these persons have and that can be exploited in activities carried out by CSOs.

Through participation in the accession process many CSOs experienced need to broaden their knowledge and improve their skills to be able to cope with new challenges and requirements. In Table 13, responses show what was the influence of the accession process on knowledge and skills of CSOs. The results in the table clearly indicate that in almost two thirds of the cases, additional education through seminars, trainings, or courses related to EU accession was required. As more and more CSOs will be involved in EU projects, further and constant education on EU projects related issues will be of relevance.

Table 13: Influence of the accession process on knowledge and skills

	Response (%)
It required additional education through seminars/trainings/courses related to EU accession issues	65,4
Organization built competence and capacities to transfer knowledge and skills to other	40,4
None of the above	16,2
It required additional formal education	10,3
There was no influence of participation in the accession process on knowledge and skills	6,6

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

In some cases, the accession process even called for an additional formal education, which is considered as the long term investment in knowledge. This in turn has to be continuously renewed to keep up with constantly changing environment and challenges that have to be coped with. It is interesting to point out that quite a large number of responses (40.4%) show that the organization built competence and capacities to transfer knowledge to others. This proves that certain Croatian CSOs have capacities to acquire and to further disseminate knowledge. Such CSOs are very valuable and should be nourished and further expanded, leaving and transferring gained experience among Croatian CSOs and final beneficiaries.

Participation in the accession process influenced also procedural requirements regarding administration of CSO (see Table 14). More than half of the respondents confirmed what was often discussed that administrative procedures became more complex and time consuming, and led to increased costs. A combination of these elements can have a strong negative influence at operational level requiring additional skills, financing and/or personnel to ensure sustainability of CSO. However, a positive influence is reported in 16.2% of responses, confirming that administrative procedures imposed by EU donors are more transparent, which in the end gives greater credibility to CSOs and results they produce.

Table 14: Influence of the accession process on procedural requirements regarding administration

	Response (%)
Administrative procedures became more complex	55,1
Changes in administrative procedures led to increased costs	30,9
Administrative procedures became more time consuming	27,9
There was no significant change in administrative procedures	19,1
Administrative procedures became more transparent	16,2
None of the above	16,2
Changes in administrative procedures led to decreased costs	1,5

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Though, only a few respondents used the opportunity to give additional comments with regard to procedures. They have mainly criticised the functioning of the system at the national level, whereby procedures (award of grants, feedback on reports, payment procedures) take too long, responsible persons are not sufficiently competent and there is negligence in communication and support to CSOs in complex bureaucratic processes. Similar results as for influence of the accession process on procedural requirements were obtained regarding finance related procedures of CSO. Results are provided in Table 15.

Table 15: Influence of the accession process on procedural requirements regarding finance

	Response (%)
Finance related procedures became more complex	47,4
Changes in finance related procedures led to increased costs	32,6
Finance related procedures became more time consuming	30,4
Finance related procedures became more transparent	17,8
None of the above	17,0
There was no significant change in finance related procedures	16,3
Changes in finance related procedures led to decreased costs	0,7

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

In almost half of the responses, respondents indicated that finance related procedures became more complex, that changes in these procedures led to actually increased costs (32.6% of responses) and that these processes became more time consuming. Positive is that as with administrative procedures, finance related procedures became more transparent, which contributes to more credibility and accountability of CSOs in communicating their results towards donors, partners, final beneficiaries and public.

For the period observed, 2007-2013 it was interesting to find out in what ways participation in the accession process influenced change of scope of activities towards EU funding opportunities of CSOs. The responses are provided in Table 16.

Table 16: Influence of the accession process on change of scope of activities towards EU funding opportunities

	Response (%)
Scope of activities towards EU funding opportunities has widened	51,1
Scope of activities remained the same	27,8
None of the above	15,8
Implementation of some previously implemented activities has ended during the period 2007 – 2013	8,3

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

EU funding opportunities had a significant impact on widening scope of activities towards these opportunities. Namely, more than a half of responses confirmed this statement. Also, in some cases (8.3% of them) implementation of some previously implemented activities has ended during observed period. These changes show that Croatian CSO are flexible and have capacities to recognize a need to make necessary shifts towards implementation of those activities/projects that will ensure sustainability of their regular operations, maintaining their primary vision and mission or revising them accordingly. Even though it is not evident from these responses, it can be assumed that there is a number of CSOs established with their primary purpose to implement EU related activities/projects, therefore their scope is already focused on EU funding opportunities.

Here it needs to be stressed that the issues regarding CSOs experiences in EU funded project implementation has been discussed in several occasions in the past year. TACSO supported an initiative with the EUCLID Network in June 2012 and a report was published with recommendations to improve the EU's Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions (PRAG), which IPA funds managers and users have to respect.¹¹

Also, an initiative of 85 Croatian CSOs has prepared recommendations for the harmonisation of managing authorities' practices in grant scheme management.

Advocacy initiative regarding programming and use of the European Social Fund

In January 2013 a public consultation on the Role of Civil Society in Programming and Using the European Social Fund was organised in Zagreb and supported by TACSO Croatia. An informal initiative made up of 85 civil society organizations organized a public debate on the subject of programming and using the European Social Fund. Representatives of relevant public bodies as well as CSO representatives attended the debate, and an effort was made to answer crucial questions in regard to the future of civil society funding after Croatia's accession to the EU. This public debate is a part of an advocacy initiative launched in September 2012, in Osijek. One of the already accomplished positive steps of the Initiative was the inclusion of CSO representatives into thematic working groups for the preparation of programme documents for structural and the Cohesion Fund.

Based on the existing experiences, involved CSOs discussed problems they faced due to inconsistencies in EU fund management practices of the different contracting and managing bodies and prepared recommendations to overcome the identified problems. The main impacts of inconsistent practices in fund management for CSOs lead to:

- Difficulties in project planning and implementation
- Inability to respect set deadlines
- Financial and legal operational difficulties for CSOs
- Additional workload that could have been avoided with clear rules and their implementation

¹¹ Workshop report on the PRAG initiative (2012) available at: http://www.tacso.org/doc/hr_prag_initiative_en.pdf.

- Unclear situations regarding conflicting national and European legislation.

The CSOs prepared a list of identified inconsistent practices in managing EU funds. The list of 17 findings regarding the management of EU grant schemes and projects was the following: delays in tendering; delays in report acceptance; fluctuation of people in managing authorities; recording of human resource engagement; change of rules during project implementation; planning of costs for events and travel; engagement of experts from publicly funded institutions; engagement of experts from partner organisations; office costs of lead partner in project; human resources costs; visibility; reporting; submission of additional documents to reports; information on eligible costs; contingency costs; linking budget lines to persons and not positions; and budget proposal negotiations.

Summary report, Croatian youth network, March 2013

Key findings of the discussion during the Stakeholder meeting (March 2013) regarding CSOs' experiences in project management during 2007-2013 period are presented in Table 17:

Table 17: Stakeholder meeting – key findings on CSO's project management experiences

Positive findings	Negative findings
It has led to recognition of CSOs as a quality partner, experienced in a certain field	Low State budget sources
Positioning of CSOs	Financing of new projects, and not continuous activities
Recognition of skills, knowledge and contacts	Risk of survival CSOs since they are not able to implement regular activities
Widening of scope of activities – change of mission/vision	
	Employment of new persons, meaning not real growth, leading to lack of sustainability with regard to mission/vision
	Very seldom core-business is financed
	„Projectitis“ – projects containing strategic part and part formulated in line with funding opportunities offered
	Model of project financing is not convenient for policy oriented organizations
	CSO (at the same time) act as: – <i>expert organizations</i> (think-tanks, institutes) – inadequate financing, it should be programme based to operate in dynamic environment – <i>activist organizations</i>
	High level of detail required in project proposals - impossible to know what will happen far in the future
	Difference in models/level of democracy in EU countries and Croatia without adequate adjustment to Croatian circumstances

	Dependency of unrecognised (but competent CSOs) on larger or stronger CSOs
	Elitist characteristics of the civil sector
Other important issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different project quality – differences in partnerships (e.g. strong partnership SMART/Volonterski centar Zagreb) - Problem of sustainability (weaker partnerships) – no long-term results - Capacity building needed – management and cooperation with local-government units - Lead (stronger CSO) – likes to have a control over the process, is willing to include CSOs for long-term cooperation and future - Continuity of collaborators on project (fluctuation of volunteers, collaborators) - Good partnerships – stronger/experienced CSOs carry out part of work for smaller CSOs 	

Source: Authors' systematization, 2013.

5. Influence of Croatian CSOs Active in the EU Accession Process on Public Policy

Citizens' engagement in influencing political decision-making

- A third (34%) of respondents says that they have signed a petition in the last two years. However, the proportion of people who have done this ranges considerably, from 53% in the UK to 7% in Cyprus.
- Other relatively popular forms of engagement are expressing one's views online (28%), expressing one's views with an elected local representative (24%), and taking part in a public debate at local or regional level (18%).
- Men are more likely than women to have attempted to express their view using most of the means under discussion; they are also more likely to be members of an NGO or similar association.
- A fifth of respondents (20%) are members of an organisation with a specific economic, social, environmental, cultural or sporting interest, while 17% are in another organisation with a special interest, and 16% are Trade Union members.
- The Nordic countries demonstrate a very high level of participation in NGOs and associations, especially Trade Unions. However, in 18 Member States, more than half of the respondents say that they have not had any involvement with this type of organisation.
- Respondents who have expressed their views or joined an NGO are more likely to believe that ways of influencing political decision-making, such as voting, are effective, and also that NGOs can influence political decisions.

Effectiveness of different ways of influencing political decision-making

- Roughly seven out of 10 respondents think that voting in local or national elections is an effective way to influence political decisions.
- Figures are lower for EU elections and membership in NGOs, although a majority of respondents (54%) still think that voting in EU elections or joining an NGO is an effective means of influencing political decision-making.

- A majority of people in all 27 Member States think that voting in local elections is an effective way of influencing political decision-making; a majority in all countries, with the exception of Slovenia, also think that voting nationally is effective in this regard.
- In four EU countries – Latvia, the Czech Republic, the UK and Slovenia – a majority of respondents think that voting in European elections is not an effective way to influence political decisions.
- Most people in Latvia and the Czech Republic also think that joining an NGO is ineffective when it comes to influencing political decisions.

(TNS Political & Social, Flash Eurobarometer 373, 2013)

The involvement of civil society in the pre-accession process can according to the European Commission (2013a) contribute to deepening citizens' understanding of the reforms a country needs to complete in order to qualify for EU membership. This can help ensure EU accession is not just a government exercise and stimulate a balanced public debate, which is crucial to achieving a well-informed decision on EU membership at the end of the pre-accession process.

NGO advocacy campaigns have been instrumental in bringing about certain positive changes in public opinion in favour of marginalised groups and against anti-social behaviours. (TACSO, 2011: 34). There is no effective civil society forum or national network, which provides the whole sector collective leadership, and there is no mechanism for individual CSOs to participate in sector-wide debate and communication. (TACSO, 2011: 35)

Findings of research carried out in the period September 2011 to February 2012 (GONG, research centre, 2012) show that only 14% of units of local and regional self-government has a document that formalizes their cooperation with the civil society, like Charter on cooperation. This demonstrates insufficient recognition of contribution of civil society to quality of life and development of its local communities (see Table 18). Surveyed units of local and regional self-government indicate statutes of towns/municipalities, budgets or programmes of public needs as relevant documents, which implies that there is a need to exchange experiences and disseminate good practice of cooperation formalisation between units of local and regional self-government and CSOs. On the other hand, units of local and regional self-government recognize the value of multi-sector advising bodies as platform through which various actors in community can efficiently solve some of the problems encountered.

Table 18: Indicators of transparency and openness of work in local and regional self-government units

Indicator	Total	Towns	Municipalities	Counties
At unit of local and regional self-government level multi-sector advising body exists	42%	74%	29%	100%
At unit of local and regional self-government level functional Youth Council exist	41%	77%	26%	90%
Information or text of call for CSOs conducted in the last two years is available on internet	33%	66%	21%	65%
At least one call for CSOs was conducted during 2010	33%	68%	18%	95%
Representatives of the council held at least one meeting or enabled representatives of Youth Council participation in at least one council/assembly during the last year	23%	50%	12%	70%
Valid document formalizing cooperation between local government and CSOs exists	14%	28%	7%	55%
Unit of local and regional self-government representing body has received at least one response from Youth Council during current mandate	11%	26%	4%	50%

Source: GONG research centre, 2012.

Almost half of units of local and regional self-government (42%) have at least one active advising body composed of representatives of units of local and regional self-government, CSOs and/or business sector (examples are economic-social councils, councils for communal prevention and commissions or advising body for gender equality etc.). These bodies represent an example of “top-down” initiatives introduced by institutions in charge at State level, and it is evident that such incentives bring certain impacts. Further findings from GONG’s research show that almost two thirds of units of local and regional self-government (62%) in the last two years financed CSOs’ activities or projects. On the other hand, in only one third of these units of local and regional self-government, financing is based on public tender, implying that the Code of Good Practice, Standards and Benchmarks for the Allocation of Grants for Programmes and Projects of NGOs, to a large extent is not applied at the local level, even though it has been adopted in 2007, followed by publishing of the Guide for application. This practice is especially recognised in municipalities that mainly do not award financial support through tenders, which can be a result of their significantly weaker capacities for conducting tender procedures, as well as of small number of CSOs in some municipalities, but also low recognition of need for such practice.

In the most recent research on quality of government at the national level (GONG, research centre, 2013) the index on good governance was determined. Eight dimensions were included, among others Informing of public and ensuring access to information, and Involvement of public in policy decision process. It should be emphasised that the Government Office for Co-operation with NGOs scored high second place for index of good

governance (from 29 units in sample) confirming that the Office has very important role in promotion of development and role of civil society in Croatia.

Key findings of the discussion during the Stakeholder meeting (March 2013) regarding advocacy and public policies during 2007 – 2013 period are presented in Table 19:

Table 19: Stakeholder meeting – key findings on advocacy

Positive	Negative
Advocacy as a tool to convince the State on commitment to public policy implementation	Institutions actually do not internally change
Participation in EU negotiations (Chapters 19, 23,24 and partially 31, on introduction of directives, fulfilling ex-ante conditionalities)	At the national level a lot has been done, but it is not transferred to local level
Reforms are implemented as initially envisaged	Units of local and regional self-government not familiarised with problems, while implementation of public policies is under their jurisdiction
CSOs had to be involved in writing laws (discrimination, criminal law, free legal assistance)	Only a small number of CSOs is fully active
Law on ombudsman, Law on CSOs	Still a lot has been done on volunteering basis
Participation in preparation of Codes	Capacity building process was not systematic (rather <i>ad hoc</i>)
Participation in preparation of the Strategy on development of civil society	
Introduction of civil and health education in schools	
Platform 112	
Consulting/advising role	
Other important issues:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem of financing, taking up loans to bridge project funding (personal assets guarantee) - Slow procedure on approval of reports (late payments problems) - Administrative staff in implementing agencies/institutions frequently change 	

Source: Authors' systematization, 2013.

6. Accession Process Influence on CSO's Networking/Partnership Capacities

Through this research an attempt was to answer a question in what way did the accession process influence networking/partnership opportunities of organization/institution. Table 20 shows the answers to this question. The majority of new partnerships were created during preparation of the EU funded project, primarily in Croatia, and followed by partnerships created in IPA countries. New partnerships were created also, to a less extent, during implementation of the EU funded project in Croatia as well as in IPA countries. Promising results for Croatia and IPA countries are those related to creation of partnerships *after* finalisation of the EU funded project (in Croatia in 29.6% of the cases, while in IPA countries in 13.3%). In a significant number of cases (in Croatia 47.8%, in EU countries 32.1%, in IPA countries 22.1%) existing partnerships continue their joint cooperation. Figures for both parameters observed indicate that partnerships created were not only one-time cooperation business agreement, very likely imposed by the rules of calls for applications in EU tendering

procedures, but these CSOs managed to build more sustainable substance for future cooperation with partners.

Table 20: Influence of accession process on networking/partnership opportunities

Influence of accession process on networking/partnership opportunities	In Croatia	In IPA countries	In EU countries	In other countries outside EU	None of the above	Response Count
New partnership(s) was/were created during PREPARATION OF THE EU FUNDED PROJECT	75	29	45	12	37	142
New partnership(s) was/were created during IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU FUNDED PROJECT	55	29	46	14	53	141
Opportunities for new partnership(s) were created AFTER FINALISATION OF THE EU FUNDED PROJECT	40	18	31	12	71	135
Existing partnership(s) still exist	67	31	45	13	47	140
Existing partnership(s) ended	6	3	6	1	105	117
No influence on networking/partnership opportunities of our organization/institution	12	3	6	4	91	107
If existing partnerships ended, please provide reasons					12	12
answered question						144
skipped question						107

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

In a low number of cases existing partnerships ended or there was no influence of EU accession process on networking/partnership opportunities of organization/institution. The results obtained can be also linked to previous findings on networks, reported in TACSO Needs Assessment Report (2011). Two thirds of CSOs belong to some network, they are still mostly domestic rather than international (or members of both) and their number is growing since August 2009. As stated in the Report (p. 30), *"...One of the possible reasons for the increase in networking might be the response of CSOs to donor-driven policies where partnerships and networking are highly promoted..."*

In terms of other influences of the accession process on networking/partnership opportunities, respondents were given possibility to express their own opinions. Some of the answers are as follows:

- Project activity methodology led to further opportunities for networking with similar organizations in countries of the region;
- Through participation at international conferences and establishing of contacts for future partnerships;
- New partnerships have been created with countries such as Israel, Ukraine, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia etc.;
- We have created alliance of NGOs at the local level allowing us to become member of international (European) alliances/NGOs and therefore enabling access to EU funding;
- Increased visibility and influence of CSOs, leading to greater opportunities for creation of new partnerships;

- Adjustments to policy and its implementation possibilities have motivated stakeholders to create networks that have not previously existed.

The results obtained, are much in line with the previous findings in the TACSO Report (p. 24), indicating that „...The most commonly reported reasons for networking were joint interests and programmes, information and knowledge sharing, co-operation, facilitation of rights and programme implementation and enhancement of reputation...”.

The accession process has also had an influence on the quality of partnerships of CSOs with other organizations/institutions. The results in Table 21 show that the quality of partnership(s) significantly improved in 29.1% and in 19.9% of the cases slightly. Therefore, in almost half of the cases (49%) there was a positive change on the quality of partnerships of CSOs with other organizations/institutions, while in one fourth of the cases no influence has been recorded.

Table 21: Influence of the accession process on the quality of partnerships

	Response (%)
The quality of partnership(s) significantly improved	29,1
The accession process did not influence the quality of partnership(s)	25,5
The quality of partnership(s) slightly improved	19,9
None of the above	23,4
The quality of partnership got worsened.	2,1

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Very little number of CSOs (2.1%) reported negative experience with regard to influence on quality of partnerships. This is usually connected to the low level of knowledge about partners and low satisfaction in implementation in the end, increased, but not equally shared responsibility in management of EU projects and creation of partnerships for formal reasons, rather than for substantial ones.

Table 22: Influence of the accession process on sustainability of partnerships

	Response (%)
Cooperation within partnership(s) established in EU related activity/project has often continued	45,7
None of the above	22,5
The accession process did not influence the sustainability of partnership(s)	18,1
Cooperation within partnership(s) established in EU related activity/project has rarely continued	7,2
Partnership(s) established only for implementation of a particular EU related activity/project	6,5

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

One of the elements usually assessed during different assessment procedures refers to various sustainability dimensions (see Table 22). The accession process has also had an influence on the sustainability of partnerships of CSOs with other organizations/institutions. This process had very positive influence on sustainability of partnership of CSO with other organizations/institutions. Namely, cooperation within partnership established for activity/project implementation purpose has often continued (confirmed by 45.7% of respondents). Relatively small number of respondents (6.5%) is of opinion that the partnership has been established only for implementation of one concrete activity/project. These results are encouraging. Namely, in light of this results often heard statement that creation of partnerships is rather imposed through EU funding policies, should be revised since sustainable partnerships is possible to create and maintain longer than implementing period of one activity/project.

7. Accession Process Influence on Relationship of State and Non-state Actors

Citizens' views on non-governmental organisations and associations

- Most respondents feel that NGOs can influence local (75%) and national (70%) decision-making, and to a lesser extent EU-level decision-making (53%).
- A majority (59%) of people think that NGOs share their interests and values, while only four out of 10 people (41%) think European citizens do not need these types of organisations.
- However, a majority of respondents in five Member States – Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal and Cyprus – say that European citizens do not need NGOs.
- A majority of people in all Member States except for Spain, the Czech Republic and Estonia think that these organisations share their interests and values.
- At least two-thirds of people in all EU countries believe that NGOs can influence local decision-making; over half of the people in all countries take the same view on national decision-making.
- But in six Member States, a majority of people question whether these organisations can influence EU-level decision-making.

TNS Political & Social, Flash Eurobarometer 373, 2013

The Lisbon Treaty created several tools for consultation and dialogue. The general principle is stated in Article 10.3 of the Treaty, which says that every citizen has a right to participate in the democratic life of Europe. This requires a new level of openness and transparency, which is the very basis of citizens' trust in the European Union. The Treaty says:

1. The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.

2. The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.

3. The European Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that the Union's actions are coherent and transparent. The Treaty also requires that the institutions create the possibilities for civil society to participate in the political debate.

The third paragraph has been put into practice and the Commission now reports four times a year on the advice it receives from the EESC. The real door opener for civil society, as described in the Lisbon Treaty, is the first paragraph, which offers citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views.

European Union, 2013c

CSOs have directly participated in the development of national strategic documents on a regular basis. Civil society has played a significant role in a variety of strategic processes. Examples are the following:

- The National Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2012-2016
- The National Programme of Action for Youth 2009 - 2013
- The establishment of the current institutional framework for the advancement of gender equality.

In regards to negotiations with the EU, almost three quarters of the respondents (71.6 percent) think that CSOs are not sufficiently involved in the activities of the negotiating teams or the consultation processes (almost half of them did not follow the negotiation process due to not being invited for discussions, not being interested in negotiations or they lacked specific knowledge and access to basic information). The representatives of only a few (7.5 percent) of them are members of the negotiating teams (Target, 2010).

CSOs also joined in 2011 to draft the Joint Opinion of the Croatian Civil Society Organisations on the readiness of the Republic of Croatia for the closing of negotiations regarding Chapter 23 – Justice and human rights. (TACSO, 2011: 30)

According to data received and analysed in the recent Report on implementation of the of Code of Good Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, other Regulations and Acts, prepared by the Government Office for Co-operation with NGOs (Ured za udruge Vlade Republike Hrvatske, 2013), in 2012, bodies of state administration and Government offices conducted the procedure of consultations with interested public for 144 regulations (for 27 regulations the procedure lasted less than 15 days). This represents a big step forward compared to 2011, when 48 consultations in total

were conducted. In total in 2012, 4,786 written comments on law and regulations proposals were received, which is a significant improvement, compared to 173 written comments received during 2011. This is among others, the result of continuous education and trainings attended by consultation coordinators, conduction of a few public hearings and preparation and publishing of the Guide for consultations. Actions implemented by this Government office are important for bridging the gap and building a good quality relationship between CSOs and public sector, enhancing their role in the society as a whole.

Apart from creating partnerships with other organizations/institutions, the accession process has also influenced the relationship of CSOs and the State/public sector in a positive way. Based on the results of the Survey on the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process (March, 2013) and as presented in Table 23, in one fourth of the cases the relationship has slightly improved, while 18.6% of respondents think that the relationship has significantly improved.

Table 23: Influence of the accession process on the relationship of CSO and the State/public sector

	Response (%)
Relationship has remained unchanged	31,4
Relationship has slightly improved	25,7
Relationship has significantly improved	18,6
None of the above	18,6
Relationship has worsened	3,6
Other influence of the accession process on relationship	2,1

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Almost one third of respondents indicated that there was no change of this relationship. Respondents also had a chance to provide additional opinions and comments on this question. Some CSOs experienced less financing provided from budgets (national, county, local) and even cancelation of co-financing of already approved projects, while others did not receive sufficient support from relevant bodies in attempt to prepare and apply for EU financing. Some noticed that their participation in various processes has been (mis)used for purposes other than their mission.

Key findings of the discussion during the Stakeholder meeting (March 2013) regarding programming processes for the 2014-2020 period and the role of CSOs are presented in Table 24:

Table 24: Stakeholder meeting – key findings on programming processes

Positive	Negative
Participation in preparation of (good) policy paper for ESF	Activities are done in the last moment
Involvement in public hearing during the drafting document phase	Just fulfilment of formal requirements, participation through working groups
Positive influence on inclusion of representatives of CSOs in bodies (working groups)	Institutions still implement activities in compliance with the scope of work and are not ready to implement new practices
	No real understanding of the substance of reforms
	No recognition of true needs
	ESF/ERDF still not defined which brings uncertainty and raises questions
	No established consultation process (continuous need to “push” things to happen)
	Participation in thematic working groups means volunteering

Source: Authors' systematization, 2013.

Participants in the stakeholder meeting had a chance to reflect on experiences at the project level. Conclusions were the following:

- Problem of co-financing, pre-financing and interim financing and lack of clear dynamics of project financing;
- Appearance of new CSOs without experience receive finance for project implementation;
- Lack of systematic approach in application of new practices and project results as positive examples for change/adjustments of public policies;
- Evaluation process – best projects fail already at „concept note“ stage;
- Interpersonal relationships influence project assessment (animosities result in low scored of competitive projects);
- Transfer of responsibilities problem;
- Consultations at individual level.

As stressed by the European Commission (2013), the enlargement countries face a range of challenges, especially in fields such as the rule of law, corruption, organised crime, the economy and social cohesion. In these fields, Croatian civil society actors and organisations have gained significant experiences and found their areas of action during Croatia's EU accession process, which was in particular reinforced by the fact of the EU ex-ante conditionalities for Croatia in the mentioned fields. Their contribution has manifested itself through lobbying, advocacy and oversight activities, primarily at national, but also on regional and local level. These activities of Croatian CSOs have been funded by international donors throughout the past decade as well as through the grant schemes within the pre-accession programmes (CARDS, Phare, IPA component I).

8. Conclusions on the Role of Croatian CSOs in the EU Accession Process

One of the research questions refers to perception of CSO on their relevance for the accession process of Croatia. Respondents were asked if their role was or still is active or passive in the accession process (see Table 25). In 22.5% of responses, it is reported that the role of CSO was passive, with no significant influence on the accession process. Some CSOs reported (20.2% of the responses) are still involved in the accession process, although occasionally and upon request from relevant authorities, and they are of opinion that they have some influence on the accession process. Only a low number of CSOs played an active role in the accession process (4.7% of the responses), while 14% are still active (since this is a multiple choice question it is very likely that those who provided an answer that they played an active role actually still play an active role in the accession process).

Table 25: Relevance of CSO for the accession process of Croatia

	Response (%)
Role of our organisation/institution WAS PASSIVE	22,5
Our organisation IS still INVOLVED in the accession process occasionally	20,2
None of the above	18,6
Our organisation WAS INVOLVED in the accession process occasionally	16,3
Role of our organisation/institution IS still PASSIVE	14,7
Our organisation still PLAYS an active role in the accession process	14,0
Our organisation PLAYED an active role in the accession process	4,7

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

Respondents are also asked if they think that the role of CSOs will change after accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU. Their responses are provided in Table 26.

Table 26: The role of Croatian CSOs after Accession to the EU

	Response (%)
The role of CSOs will slightly change	51,8
The role of CSOs will considerably change	23,4
The role of CSOs will not change	20,4
None of the above	4,4

Source: Authors' calculation, 2013.

The majority of the respondents, three fourth of them, believe that the role of Croatian CSOs will change. More than a half of respondents are of opinion that the role of CSOs will only slightly change, while the remaining 23.4% are in favour of considerable change. Part of respondents thinks that actually the role will remain the same. Respondents provided additional information with regard to role of Croatian CSOs after the accession as follows:

- It will be necessary to develop different ways of financing;
- Greater transparency can be expected;
- Better recognition of small CSOs and those with focus on socially sensitive issues;

- Intensifying of relationship with policy and decision makers and greater influence of CSOs in decision-making processes;
- More control and restrictions can be expected within civil society;
- More employment in CSOs due to a greater institutionalization;
- Decrease in number of CSOs due to budget cuts at national, county and local level.

9. Recommendations on the Role of CSOs in the EU Accession Process Formulated by Participants of the Stakeholder Meeting

The conclusions with regard to the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process of the participants in the Stakeholder meeting organised within the frame of this research by TACSO (March 2013) were the following:

- It is important that CSOs themselves invest additional efforts in creation of cooperation and partnerships with their units of local and regional self-government, and through cooperation increase capacities of units of local and regional self-government;
- The Government's office and National foundation for development of civil society as well as local community foundations should create activities through which units of local and regional self-government (especially municipalities) will get familiarized with important concepts that CSOs strive to vivify (gender equality, decrease of harmful activities, de-marginalization, social inclusion...).

9.1 Recommendations for Improvement of Preparation, Selection and Management Procedures of EU Funded Projects

- Evaluation system should be more transparent; Project assessor's comments should be shared with applicants in summary form;
- Donors should better consider sustainability of projects before awarding funds/grants;
- A (central) registry on project applicants including their ex-post assessment (after project implementation) could be established;
- Pre-financing and interim financing of projects should be systematically solved (regarding grant schemes, long-term programme financing, re-granting);
- Different implementing bodies of grant schemes interpret PRAG procedures in different ways. Therefore, responsible institutions should harmonize among themselves project implementation procedures;
- Partnership building is a learning process. There is a need to ensure knowledge transfer to less experienced partners.

Example of good practice: Additional National Co-financing for EU Funded Projects

Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs provides financial support for co-financing of projects approved for funding through IPA grant schemes. In 2012 approximately 150 projects of CSOs that were approved for EU funding (IPA grant schemes or other EU programmes) received additional financial support to cover part of their co-financing requirements.

9.2 Recommendations on Advocacy and Public Policies

- Identification of new pressure models needed „after the end“ of ex-ante conditionalities, e.g. reporting obligation on the implementation of the National reform programme and Partnership Agreement between Croatia and the European Union;
- Capacity building on public policy advocacy, analysis and shadow reporting;
- Necessary changes within CSOs - different types of organisations – advocacy or thematic focus - will have to change their ways of doing;
- Institutional stability necessary; how to enhance resilience to change in established relationships, administrative practices and processes after each (local) election?

Example of good practice on advocacy: PLATFORM 112

Platform 112 is an initiative developed by 69 civil-society organisations in Croatia that are continuously working on protection of human rights, democratisation, peace-building, combating corruption, and protecting public resources, especially the environment.

The Platform was established to monitor the status of human rights and the rule of law in the context of the finalization of Croatia's Accession Negotiations with the EU, demands a different Croatia – Croatia in which the rule of law represents the foundation of individual, institutional and political action. On the eve of parliamentary elections in December 2011, they have formulated 112 requests directed towards all political options and defined priorities and concrete measures for Croatia in which the rule of law is the basis for individual actions, institutions and political elites. They demand and expect consistency and political responsibility of the Government, an all other political actors and institutions, for real and durable improvements in five interrelated high-priority areas:

- Stable, accountable and democratic government institutions and equal access to justice;
- Quality of democracy;
- Fight against corruption and the public interest;
- Equality and dignity of all people;
- Legacy of war, dealing with the past and peace-building.

They closely monitor the work of the government during its entire mandate and keep the domestic and international public systematically informed on any positive shifts or

setbacks in these areas, while **calling the government to account in relation to undertaken commitments arising from** international treaties, **as well as in relation to the pre-election promises**, on which they will also make their statements here.

Information available in English on web sites of Croatian CSOs, for e.g.:

[http://www.gong.hr/en/active-citizens/platform-112/;](http://www.gong.hr/en/active-citizens/platform-112/)

http://www.centar-za-mir.hr/index.php?page=article_news&article_id=711&lang=en

9.3 Recommendations on the Programming Process of Policies and Strategic Documents Related to the European Union

- Expertise of programme managers and administrators needs to increase and staff fluctuations need to stabilise in respective institutions;
- Evaluation needs to be understood as an integrative input into the next programming cycle;
- EU2020 strategic objectives need to be linked to good quality situational analyses;
- New Operational Programme on Employment – creation of new working places should be linked to establishment of new companies.

Example of good practice: Involvement of CSO representatives in Programming

The Ministry of regional development and EU funds is responsible for the drafting of the EU related strategic documents including the Partnership Agreement and related Operational Programmes. In this process inter-ministerial and inter-institutional thematic working groups were formed during 2012 to work on drafts of future operational programmes for Croatia. On the basis of actions undertaken by the Council for Civil Society Development most active representatives from the civil society organisations are involved now in the thematic working groups coordinated by the mentioned ministry. Without organised intervention from above, it would have been difficult to enter such arenas in which future development policy is formed.

A step towards the future regarding the involvement of CSOs in EU programming can be sensed in the proposed Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2013). In this document is stated that CSOs in the (WBT) region have demonstrated their ability to initiate effective anti-corruption initiatives, contribute to regional integration and reconciliation processes, support independent media, and campaign for gender equality, fight against discrimination, social inclusion and environmentally sustainable policies and practices. *In line with this statement, it can be finally recommended that the evolving good practices need to be continuously reported, discussed and reflected upon in order to keep this truly important societal learning process in motion...*

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Annex 1 - Research Questions and Methodology

Research Questions

This research is based on interdisciplinary and participative methodology encompassing social science research approaches including literature review, survey, stakeholder interviews, a stakeholder workshop in March 2013 and the International conference “Civil Society Transformations on the Way to the European Union” organised by TACSO in April 2013 in Zagreb. The findings of each step during the research process are interwoven in the structure of this study based on the initially defined key research questions:

- *What role did the CSOs play in the accession process of Croatia?* This is the main research question which cannot be answered directly before receiving answers to a number of sub-questions regarding the particular roles of CSOs in Croatia’s EU accession process. Within the context of this research, it is the role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process that is relevant and not necessarily their registered field of activity. It is also evident that the focus of activities changes through time due to specific funding criteria, as well as changes in society initiated by the EU accession process and the fulfilment of the various ex-ante conditionalities.
- *How did the Croatian CSOs participate in the accession process?* It can be assumed that most CSOs participate in the accession process through active engagement in EU funded projects. While only a selection of CSOs have the opportunity to be more involved in the programming processes on national level in Croatia – directly as a member of a particular body (e.g. working group, monitoring committee, evaluation committee, partnership council); or indirectly through participation in public consultation processes (e.g. consultation meetings, commenting documents, public hearings, information sharing) or other activist approaches (e.g. advocacy, lobbying, media campaigns). The majority of answers to this particular question were received through the electronic survey sent to the identified CSOs and institutions; and findings from interviews provide additional insights on this issue.
- *In what ways did participation in the accession process influence CSOs capacities?* Through the electronic survey and interviews the following issues have been considered: organisational changes; employment; knowledge and skills; adaption to specific procedural requirements regarding administration and finance; change of scope of activities towards EU funding opportunities; and other capacity related issues.
- *How did CSOs use the opportunities created by the accession process to influence public policies in Croatia?* Closely related to this question is the question on the mode of Croatian CSOs participation in the accession process. Through the interviews, the modes as well as the effectiveness of CSOs in influencing public policy were questioned. Further insights were gathered through the stakeholder meeting and the international TACSO conference.

- *How did the accession process influence networking/partnership capacities of Croatian CSOs?* The partnership principle is a key principle of the EU Cohesion policy. Therefore, participation in EU funded projects puts significant emphasis on partnership building and networking in project implementation. Through the survey, a number of questions addressed the experiences, quality and sustainability of the established networks and partnerships among CSOs and other institutions.
- *How did the accession process influence relationship of state and non-state actors?* Based on the findings of the survey, this question was discussed on the stakeholder meeting and international conference. Recommendations at the end of the study are directed towards the specificities of this challenging relationship.

Research Methodology

A combination of research methods and tools were applied in this research consisting of the following components:

- *Literature review and desk research* - With the aim to provide an in depth overview of the most important issues currently discussed regarding the experiences of Croatian CSO's in the EU accession process, a literature review of the most recent publicly available documents has been undertaken.
- *Desk research* - As a continuous activity during the elaboration of the research encompassed the collection of available data and information from various sources collected from institutions, organisations and individuals. The information collected during this research from the survey, interviews, stakeholder meeting, and international conference, was analysed. The respective findings and conclusions represent the main basis for recommendations to the client, policy makers, stakeholders and wider public.
- *Stakeholder analysis* - During the literature review and through consultations with the Client, a stakeholder analysis of the most relevant actors in the Croatian CSO arena was done. On the basis of this analysis, the main target groups and representatives for the electronic survey and interviews were identified. The experts jointly with the Client identified the key stakeholders that were invited to the stakeholder meeting, where the initial findings of this research were presented and discussed.
- *Electronic survey* - The main purpose of the electronic survey was to collect relevant information from a broad range of stakeholders. The Survey was implemented in a 2 week period from 1st to 15th March 2013. The gathered responses were analysed and the synthesis of findings was presented and discussed at the stakeholder meeting. The main criteria for selection of the target group for this survey was that the representatives of CSOs and related institutions were or are actively involved in EU accession processes, regardless of their registered main field of activity. This included CSOs that were or are lead partners, partners, or associates in projects funded from the IPA programme. Also,

CSOs and related institutions that were or are involved in EU programming processes, IPA and structural funds-SF, were included¹². (*Survey questions, see Annex 1*)

- *Semi-structured interviews* - The interviews complement the findings of the literature review and survey. The research questions listed under chapter 2.1 in this research proposal were the basis for the interviews to be conducted with identified key stakeholders. The fine-tuning of interview questions was done in parallel with the responses from the survey. Targeted were representatives of key institutions and most active Croatian CSOs experienced in EU accession related issues.
- *Stakeholder workshop* - The stakeholder workshop was organised by TACSO and facilitated by the experts. In the workshop preliminary findings and survey results were presented by the experts. Through group work in accordance with thematic areas, key issues were discussed, and additional comments and inputs collected and joint conclusions drafted.
- *International conference* - The International conference *Civil Society Transformation on the way to the European Union*, held in April 2013, in Zagreb was organized by TACSO. The experts presented a summary of the draft research study at the conference and actively participated in the conference throughout its entire duration. Respective issues and findings from the conference are also included in this study.
- *Research study* – The experts draft the final synthesis report of all findings, formulation of conclusions and recommendations

¹²An interesting example for further analysis are Local Action Groups (LAGs) commonly established for the purpose of rural development actions within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). LAGs will become also an important vehicle for supporting local development through Cohesion policy 2014-2020. However, they are not included in this study, as tender opportunities for their involvement have just recently opened and they have not still had a chance to get actively involved.

Annex 2 - Survey questions

This survey is anonymous and part of the research on **“The role of Croatian CSOs in the EU accession process”** in the framework of Technical assistance project to civil society (TACSO). Research is EU funded. The main purpose of the survey is to collect relevant information from a broad range of stakeholders active in the Croatian CSO scene. Survey concentrates on lessons learned in the process of EU accession during 2007 – 2013, which includes experience with the IPA programme and other available EU programmes (e.g. FP7, YOUTH, Europe for citizens, Media, Culture Programme, etc.) during 2007 – 2013.

The survey will be implemented in the period **from 1st March till 15th March 2013**. The survey is structured into three thematic groups consisting of 27 questions. For any survey related questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Irena Đokić (idojic@yahoo.com) or Dr. Marijana Sumpor (marisumpor@yahoo.com). Thank you in advance for time that you will dedicate to answer survey questions (approximately 10-15 minutes) and we appreciate your support in this research.

I. BASIC INFORMATION

Please provide the basic information on the organisation or institution you represent (questions 1-9).

1. Primary field of activity, based on CIVICUS categorisation:

- a) Children, youth and students
- b) Civil society development
- c) Consumers organisations
- d) Culture
- e) Democracy, human rights and rule of law
- f) Disabled people
- g) Economic development
- h) Education and science
- i) Elderly
- j) Environment protection and nature
- k) Ethnic communities
- l) Health and health protection
- m) Information and IT
- n) Non-violence and tolerance
- o) Professional association
- p) Rural development
- q) Social care and humanitarian
- r) Sports, hobby and recreation
- s) Women and gender issues
- t) Other

- 2. Number of years of operation of your organisation/institution**
- 3. Location of registration**
- 4. Number of permanently employed persons**
- 5. Number of members of your organisation/institution**
 - 5.1. Total number of members
 - 5.2. Average number of active members involved in the implementation of EU projects
- 6. Average annual revenues**
 - 6.1. Year 2010
 - 6.2. Year 2011
 - 6.3. Year 2012
- 7. Involvement in EU projects from 2007 to 2013**
 - 7.1. Total number of projects contracted
 - 7.2. Number of projects implemented
 - 7.3. Number of projects from total number of projects (under a) in which your organisation/institution is lead partner
 - 7.4. None of the above
- 8. Average value of project and grant received in the period from 2007 to 2013 (in EUR)**
 - 8.1. Average value of overall project
 - 8.2. Average value of EU grant
- 9. Pre-dominant location of project operations/implementation of activities**
 - a) Local level
 - b) County or more counties
 - c) National level
 - d) IPA countries
 - e) EU countries
 - f) Other countries

II. PARTICIPATION, NETWORKING/PARTNERSHIP CAPACITIES

The following questions refer to participation in the accession process during 2007-2013, which denotes any mode of activity related to EU accession process.

- 1. How did your organization/institution participate in the EU accession process 2007-2013? (*continuously, occasionally, rarely, never, none of the above*)**
 - a) Active engagement in PREPARATION OF EU FUNDED PROJECTS
 - b) Active engagement in IMPLEMENTATION OF EU FUNDED PROJECTS
 - c) Direct involvement in programming processes on national level in Croatia (e.g. as a member of working group, monitoring committee, evaluation committee, partnership council etc.)
 - d) Indirect involvement in programming processes on national level in Croatia (e.g. participation in public consultation processes, at consultation meetings, commenting documents, public hearings, information sharing etc.)

- e) Other activist approaches e.g. advocacy, lobbying, media campaigns
 - f) Our organization/institution tried to participate, but an attempt(s) was/were not successful
 - g) In case you participated in some other mode of participation, please, specify.
- 2. How did the accession process influence networking/partnership opportunities of your organization/institution?** Please, tick the box if answer is YES (*in Croatia, in IPA countries, in EU countries, in other countries outside EU, none of the above*).
- a) New partnership(s) was/were created during PREPARATION OF THE EU FUNDED PROJECT
 - b) New partnership(s) was/were created during IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU FUNDED PROJECT
 - c) Opportunities for new partnership(s) were created AFTER FINALISATION OF THE EU FUNDED PROJECT
 - d) Existing partnership(s) still exist
 - e) Existing partnership(s) ended
 - f) No influence on networking/partnership opportunities of our organization/institution
 - g) If existing partnerships ended, please provide reasons.
- 3. Were there any other influences of the accession process on networking/partnership opportunities?**
- 4. How did the accession process influence the quality of partnership(s) of your organization/institution with other organizations/institutions in general?**
- a) The quality of partnership(s) significantly improved
 - b) The quality of partnership(s) slightly improved
 - c) The accession process did not influence the quality of partnership(s)
 - d) The quality of partnership got worsened.
 - e) None of the above
 - f) In case the quality of partnership got worsened or has had some other characteristic from those indicated above, please specify.
- 5. How did the accession process influence the sustainability of partnership(s) of your organization/institution with other organizations/institutions?**
- a) Partnership(s) established only for implementation of a particular EU related activity/project, thereafter no continuation of activities/projects
 - b) Cooperation within partnership(s) established in EU related activity/project has often continued
 - c) Cooperation within partnership(s) established in EU related activity/project has rarely continued
 - d) The accession process did not influence the sustainability of partnership(s)
 - e) None of the above
 - f) Other. Please indicate.

6. How did the accession process influence the relationship of your organization/institution and the State/public sector?

- a) Relationship has significantly improved
- b) Relationship has slightly improved
- c) Relationship has remained unchanged
- d) Relationship has worsened
- e) Other influence of the accession process on relationship
- f) None of the above
- g) In case the relationship got worsened or has had some other characteristic from those indicated above, please specify.

III. CAPACITIES

1. In what ways did participation in the accession process influence organizational changes in your organization/institution?

- a) A new level of organizational hierarchy has been introduced
- b) One or more existing levels of organizational hierarchy have been eliminated
- c) A new department/unit/service has been established
- d) Existing departments/units/services have merged
- e) Participation in the accession process did not influence any organizational change(s)
- f) None of the above
- g) Other. Please, specify.

2. In what ways did participation in the accession process influence employment changes in your organization/institution?

- a) Number of employed persons increased
- b) Number of employed persons decreased
- c) Number of employed persons remained unchanged
- d) None of the above

3. Did participation in the accession process influence change of employment policy in your organization/institution?

- a) Employing of unemployed women is taken more into consideration (gender balancing issues)
- b) Employing of socially disadvantaged persons is taken more into consideration
- c) Employing of persons with special needs is taken more into consideration
- d) Knowledge of English language (and preferably one more foreign language) as a prerequisite for employment
- e) Obligatory basic computer skills as a prerequisite for employment
- f) Employment of persons with competences in management of EU projects
- g) Participation in the accession process did not influence change of employment policy
- h) None of the above

- i) Other. Please, specify.
- 4. **In what ways did participation in the accession process influence knowledge and skills of your organization/institution?**
 - a) It required additional formal education
 - b) It required additional education through seminars/trainings/courses related to EU accession issues
 - c) Organization built competence and capacities to transfer knowledge and skills to other
 - d) There was no influence of participation in the accession process on knowledge and skills
 - e) None of the above
 - f) Other. Please, specify.
- 5. **In what ways did participation in the accession process influence procedural requirements regarding administration of your organization/institution?**
 - a) Changes in administrative procedures led to increased costs
 - b) Changes in administrative procedures led to decreased costs
 - c) Administrative procedures became more complex
 - d) Administrative procedures became more transparent
 - e) Administrative procedures became more time consuming
 - f) There was no significant change in administrative procedures
 - g) None of the above
 - h) Other. Please, specify.
- 6. **In what ways did participation in the accession process influence procedural requirements regarding finance of your organization/institution?**
 - a) Changes in finance related procedures led to increased costs
 - b) Changes in finance related procedures led to decreased costs
 - c) Finance related procedures became more complex
 - d) Finance related procedures became more transparent
 - e) Finance related procedures became more time consuming
 - f) There was no significant change in finance related procedures
 - g) None of the above
 - h) Other. Please, specify.
- 7. **In what way did your organization/institution deal with co-financing required in EU funded projects?**
 - a) Organization covered co-financing part with savings from past revenues
 - b) Organization had to take loan to co-finance the project implementation
 - c) Organization covered costs of co-financing through engagement of own staff
 - d) Project partner(s) covered co-financing share
 - e) None of the above
 - f) Other. Please, specify.

- 8. From which sources are your projects funded mostly in the period 2007-2013?**
- a) EU sources
 - b) Public sources (national, regional, local)
 - c) Other sources
 - d) Other. Please, specify.
- 9. In what ways did participation in the accession process influence change of scope of activities towards EU funding opportunities of your organization/institution?**
- a) Scope of activities towards EU funding opportunities has widened
 - b) Implementation of some previously implemented activities has ended during the period 2007 – 2013
 - c) Scope of activities remained the same
 - d) None of the above
 - e) Other. Please, specify.
- 10. Did participation in the accession process influence capacity of your organization/institution, in other ways than those mentioned above? Please, specify.**
- 11. Do you consider your organization/institution relevant for the accession process of Croatia?**
- a) Our organisation PLAYED an active role in the accession process, with significant influence on the accession process
 - b) Our organisation still PLAYS an active role in the accession process, with significant influence on the accession process
 - c) Our organisation WAS INVOLVED in the accession process occasionally upon request from relevant authorities, with some influence on the accession process
 - d) Our organisation IS still INVOLVED in the accession process occasionally upon request from relevant authorities, with some influence on the accession process
 - e) Role of our organisation/institution WAS PASSIVE, with no significant influence on the accession process
 - f) Role of our organisation/institution IS still PASSIVE, with no significant influence on the accession process
 - g) None of the above
 - h) Other. Please, specify.
- 12. Do you think that the role of CSOs will change after accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU?**
- a) The role of CSOs will not change
 - b) The role of CSOs will slightly change
 - c) The role of CSOs will considerably change
 - d) None of the above
 - e) If you are of opinion that the role of CSOs will PARTIALLY or CONSIDERABLY change, please explain.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS/COMMENTS

Annex 3 – List of participants in stakeholder meeting and interviewed representatives

Name	Organisation	Participation
Željka Raguž	Association Healthy City Udruga Zdravi grad	Stakeholder meeting
Sandra Benčić	Center for Peace Studies Centar za mirovne studije	Stakeholder meeting
Sandra Prlenda	Center for Women's Studies Centar za ženske studije	Stakeholder meeting
Marina Dimić-Vugec	CERANEO - Centre for Development of Nonprofit organizations CERANEO - Centar za razvoj neprofitnih organizacija	Stakeholder meeting
Jany Hansal	DEŠA – Dubrovnik	Stakeholder meeting
Sanja Galeković	GONG	Stakeholder meeting
Daniela Jovanova Ivanković	Green action/Friends of the Earth Croatia Zelena akcija	Stakeholder meeting
Lidija Pavić Rogošić	ODRAZ - Sustainable Community Development ODRAZ - Udruga za održivi razvoj zajednice	Stakeholder meeting
Slađana Novota	SMART - Association for Civil Society Development Udruga za razvoj civilnog društva - SMART	Stakeholder meeting
Aida Bagić	TACSO Croatia Office TACSO ured u Hrvatskoj	Stakeholder meeting
Ivana Kordić	Volunteers' Centre Zagreb Volonterski centar Zagreb	Stakeholder meeting
Mirela Travar	Croatian Youth Network Hrvatska mreža mladih	Interview
Lidija Đukes	Croatian Youth Network Hrvatska mreža mladih	Interview
Denis Matas	Central Finance and Contracting Agency Središnja agencija za financiranje i ugovaranje	Interview
Vesna Lendić Kasalo	Republic of Croatia, Government office for cooperation with NGOs Vlada Republike Hrvatske, Ured za udruge	Interview
Ljiljana Mavračić Tišma	Croatian employment service, Zagreb office Hrvatski zavod za zapošljavanje, Područni ured Zagreb	Interview
Ines Kos	Regional development agency of the Republic of Croatia Agencija za regionalni razvoj Republike Hrvatske	Interview