OUT OF THE BOX:

Providing Oxygen to Civil Society

MID TERM EVALUATION OF THE NGO PROGRAMMES UNDER THE EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS (2009-2014)

PART THREE: ATTACHMENTS

Sofia, December 2014

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Attachment 1. Recommendations from the Warsaw Meeting of the Operators of the EEA Grants Programmes, June 2014

STRENGHTS AND CONCERNS REGARDING THE NGO PROGRAMMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD

In preparation for the new programming period of the EEA and Norway Grants, the Operators[1] present their view of the strengths and weaknesses of the NGO Programmes 2009-14.

STRENGHTS (recommended for continuation in the next programming period)

1. Areas of support compatible with the NGO sector

The current areas of support are tailored to the specifics of the NGO sector. Importantly, they avoid duplicating the competencies and priorities of government programmes. They are also broad enough to allow for adaptation to the specific needs and condition of the civil society sectors in the different countries.

The Operators nevertheless propose to improve the formulation of the core areas as currently some of them are very general (for example "Democracy", which covers almost everything) while others are much more specific (for example "Gender-based violence"). The Operators suggest to streamline them in more focused thematic priorities (see below) to achieve greater clarity and consistency of content and facilitate achievement of tangible outcomes:

- **Participatory democracy** – engagement of citizens in dialogue with authorities, participation in decision making processes, policy oriented activities, etc.
- **Good governance and transparency** – civil scrutiny over institutions of public interest (watchdog activities), disclosure of reprehensible practices / irregularities, endorsement of corrective and remedial measures, etc.
- **Human rights and anti-discrimination** – protection of human rights, including the rights of women, children and minorities: ethnic, religious, sexual, etc., counteracting discrimination and prejudices, combating racism, xenophobia, hate speech, hate crime, extremisms, etc.
- **Social justice / inclusion** – preventing economic, social, political and cultural inequalities and exclusion (because of age, disabilities, place of living - rural areas, poverty), provision of welfare and basic services, etc.
- **Environmental protection and sustainable development** – NGO involvement in actions related to biodiversity and climate change, protection of nature, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, educating and mobilising citizens to protect the environment, etc.
- **Youth empowerment** – opening up space for young people to articulate their needs and interests, to involve them in shaping public policies, especially those concerning access to education, the labour market and social welfare. creating opportunities for upgrading their skills and gaining knowledge, supporting employability, etc.

[1] The NGO Programmes are managed by Programme Operators or Fund Operators, depending on whether they are contracted by the Focal Point or directly through the FMO. For ease of reading, they are referred to in the text as Operators, regardless of this distinction.

- **Civil society growth** – self-organization of citizens to take actions in defence of the public good, mobilizing citizens to respond to the different needs in their communities, introducing social innovation, developing volunteerism, etc.
- **NGO sector development** – strengthening capacity of NGOs, developing the enabling environment for the growth of the civil society sector, enhancing networking, coalition building and cross-sectoral cooperation, etc.

2. Country specifics respected

The framework of the programme area allows the Operators to design their activities in accordance with the specific social context, priority issues, role and potential of the NGO sector in the individual countries. This approach is crucial for the promotion of democratic values across Europe.

3. NGO Programmes entrusted to local NGOs

Local Operators with relevant knowledge of the potential and needs of the civil society sectors help to increase the efficiency and impact of the NGO Programmes in each of the countries. They have a genuine interest to operate the NGO Programmes in a timely, effective and accountable way.

Entrusting the Grants funding to local NGOs – as it is the case in most of the beneficiary countries in the current programming period – provides added value by strengthening the sector's role in ensuring economic and social cohesion in Europe and by highlighting the need to build a supportive and competent NGO sector in Europe. These Operators are frequently greatly experienced grant makers and promoters of social change.

However, **non-NGO entities** with relevant knowledge of civil society sectors **shall be eligible to operate NGO Programme**.

4. Option for contracting Operators directly by the FMO

There are important advantages of contractual relations between Operators and the National Focal Points: joint effort to develop the sector and achieve the objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants; nurture feeling of joint ownership of the programme; establish relations between the government and NGOs that can be useful in other settings; matching contribution from national budget which enlarges the pool of funds available for projects; no need for a bank guarantee from the Operator. However, in the previous programming period these advantages were in some cases overshadowed by excessive red-tape, over-concentration on compliance with administrative requirements and financial reporting, little attention paid to the projects' content and programme non-financial objectives. Not all of the Focal Points kept the administrative requirements at a reasonable level securing smooth programme implementation.

Against this background, direct contracting of the Operators by the FMO has many advantages: it entails serious reduction of administrative burden and completely eliminates payments delays; provides more flexibility in programme's operation and allows for concentration on projects content and results.

The case of Hungary shows an additional safeguarding effect of direct contracting. Government pressure on the Operator would have been much worse if it had not been directly contracted by FMO. Such a situation might be repeated in other countries of Europe threatened with the rise of nationalistic and isolationistic tendencies.

5. Networking and exchange of information encouraged

Creating opportunities for networking, information and experience sharing contribute to effective solving of emerging issues, as well as mutual inspiration in addressing various social issues and the development of the capacities of the Operators as well as the Grantees.

ISSUES OF CONCERN AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Lack of continuity between programming periods

In the majority of countries where the EEA and Norway Grants are present, the NGO Programmes provide strategic resources of relevant volumes for the civil societies. They strategically address burning social issues important for sustaining democratic systems and supporting social innovation. One shortage of this funding is that it comes in 'waves': the NGO Programme allows for the development of certain capacities within the civil society sectors that are difficult to sustain during periods when no comparable funding from other sources is available.

The impact of such 'waves' for the functioning of the NGO sector is disruption and uncertainty. The EEA Grants correctly expect the NGO Programmes to tackle complex social challenges (addressing poverty and social exclusion, facing up to intolerance, changing processes and behaviour), but this is feasible only if a longer-term perspective can be assumed.

The lack of continuity also affects the Operators themselves: they develop professional structures and capacities of relevant quality for management of grant making with internationally accepted standards, but in the absence of funding 'in between' they have to build up relevant capacities from scratch with each new programming period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure funding for the next programming period overlaps with the current period or create a "bridge fund" from the current Programme to ensure minimum funding for the in-between period (e.g. from the remaining funds not disbursed until the end of the current Programme). Depending on the available resources, this "bridge fund" may support capacity building activities for NGOs and/or small grant scheme(s) to address emerging issues.
2. Simplify the process leading to the establishment of the NGO Programmes in next programming period. Assuming that the MoU negotiations lead to the establishment of an NGO Programme in the new programming period, and that this will be directly contracted through the FMO, start consultations on the programme's contract before the MoU is signed.
3. With the exception of improvements and suggestions listed below, maintain the current regulatory structure of the NGO Programme to avoid wastage of resources invested in understanding, implementing and explaining new rules.
4. Launch the Operator selection procedure as early as possible, so that by the time the MoU is signed the implementation agreement with potential Operators could be signed too. The sustainability of the support is strengthened in this way.

7. Short time for programme implementation

Implementation of projects under the Grants in both the 2004-09 and 2009-14 funding periods started two to three years into the funding period, leaving little time for implementation. Given the extended processes of negotiations (Donors States & EU, Donors States & Beneficiary States, FMO & selected Operators), the time for the actual programme implementation and distribution of grants (organization of call of proposals, projects selection, payments, monitoring, reports, capacity building activities, etc.) is significantly contracted. This puts a lot of pressure on the Operators and Grantees to achieve meaningful results agreed at the level of the Programme. A

longer period for projects implementation creates opportunities for increased capacity and sustainability of Grantees, consolidated relationships with stakeholders, etc.

The short implementation period also has a significant effect on achieving the bilateral objective – both at the level of interest on the side of the grantees and their partners, as well as the durability of any such partnership.

Having the same amount of funding available for a longer time (and without the breaks between 'waves' of funding mentioned above) would allow for strategic use of the funds and lead to significantly more being achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide the longest possible time for programme implementation (at least five years from the programme's launch) through appropriate forward planning. Delays in negotiation processes should not affect the time available for implementation.
2. Make sure that all requirements regarding the programme implementation are contained in the call for proposals (or Terms of Reference) for the selection of the Operators so that the interested applicants know them before they apply. This will allow the potential Operators to include them in the programme proposal (together with the time, financial and human resources necessary for the programme's proper implementation).
3. Consider the experience and expertise of successful Operators under the current NGO Programmes when defining the selection procedures of the Operators of the future programmes (a simplified procedure will significantly reduce the time for the choice of the Operator to the benefit of an extended period available for Programme implementation).

8. Areas of support versus outcomes

The conceptual framework of the NGO Programme is neither clear nor coherent. It is a complicated mix of outcomes and areas of support, with additional complexity through issues such as bilateral cooperation, cross-border cooperation, complementary action, capacity building, cross-cutting issues and horizontal concerns. There is a lack of correspondence between these different elements and there is no hierarchy among them.

In particular the Operators and the NGOs find **the double system of outcomes and areas of support** confusing. While the NGO Programmes are usually organized according to areas of support, budgeting is required according to outcomes. Taking into account that areas and outcomes do not correspond to each other, it is hard to understand where each project should fit in this matrix. This double system does not contribute to the quality of programmes and can lead to some artificial outcomes and outputs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The programme from the beginning should be well structured according to either outcomes or areas of support (also allocations of funds for projects should be made either by areas or by outcomes).
2. Outcomes and areas of support should correspond and be well defined, clearly worded and coherent.
3. Outcomes, outputs, indicators and areas of support should be streamlined and simplified to avoid overlapping and disproportionality.
4. Any additional specific or horizontal concerns should be agreed in advance and integrated into the whole programme structure.

9. Project selection procedure

The Operators are contractually obliged to achieve some definite outcomes and some specific outputs. The standard (compulsory) project selection procedure they have to follow, however,

gives the Operators very limited impact (or no impact at all) on what sort of projects are awarded funding. The selection procedure does not give enough space for the Operator to use institutional knowledge and experience in order to select projects for funding that will best contribute to achieving the outcomes and outputs.

The mandatory selection procedure is based on: a) two external assessors who evaluate and independently score each project, leading to a mechanically produced ranking list; and b) a selection committee which is not able to re-evaluate all projects and has to rely on the ranking list. Such a "blind" procedure, attractive as it may be in theory (by reducing subjectivity and increasing transparency) is inadequate in terms of ensuring the quality of the programme and contributing fully to its outcomes.

The very short period provided for programme implementation requires the involvement of a significant number of evaluators. The greater the number of evaluators involved, the less harmonized (calibrated) the evaluations and the risk of less fair the final outcome. Although measures can be taken to minimize the negative effects of this method, it is clear that the associated disadvantages cannot be eliminated.

While both the Selection Committee and the Operator may modify ranking lists submitted to them (automatically built on scores produced by the experts), the constraints set by the procedure (informing the affected applicants of the change if it results in rejection of a project) significantly restrict the room for manoeuvre of both entities, notably if they want to avoid conflicts with NGOs / applicants and/or reputational risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Allow for different project selection procedures that both ensure clarity and transparency and fit the local civil society environment. Given the conscious use by the FMO of established and renowned Operators, they should be encouraged to use their expertise and have a greater impact on the selection of projects.
2. Consider introducing options for the project assessment procedure, for example: a two-stage process of submission and selection of applications; assessment of applications by one external and one internal expert (as an alternative to two external experts); exchange of opinion between experts assessing the same application (as an alternative to separate assessment); discussion on projects among experts in order to build the assessments on a consensual basis (as an alternative to mechanically produced ranking lists).
3. Consider empowering the Selection Committee and the Operator with the instruments for making decisions on awarded grants, for example: allow establishment of additional criteria which take into account programme priorities and contribution to the outcomes, adding to the scores provided by the experts in a justified process.

10. Bilateral cooperation fund

The Operators welcome the opportunity to work with NGOs in the Donor States, and as mentioned above, are very much in support of the opportunities provided for networking. The significant barrier created by lack of time for implementation and its impact on reaching the bilateral objective has already been addressed above. Another concern relates to the number of organisations from the Beneficiary States willing to undertake bilateral cooperation which appears to be much bigger than number of entities from Donor States ready for such cooperation.

Even though it concerns a very limited proportion of the funding, the current concept of the bilateral cooperation fund is too complex, which appears to be unclear for the NGOs. It is also difficult for the Operators to fully implement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More flexibility needs to be given to the Operators in order to shape the incentives and schemes of grants for bilateral cooperation according to their needs and experience of what works in their country.
2. Allow for establishment of one scheme of grants supporting bilateral cooperation both for the development of projects with entities from Donor States (currently it is 'seed money' scheme) and for their involvement in the projects implemented from grants (currently it is 'micro grants' scheme).

11. Co-financing requirements

The requirement that NGOs provide co-financing in the amount of 10% of eligible expenditures of the project is unrealistic for the majority of NGOs in the Beneficiary States, even if half of it can be in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work. The requirement poses a barrier to effective project management as well as the achievement of planned results, since time and resources are dedicated to fund raising by the NGOs.

Insisting on co-financing principle leads to cross-financing projects from various grants by the NGO Programme Grantees. As a result the ownership of the projects as well as the identity of the Donor become opaque. Also documenting voluntary work to satisfy the requirement for in-kind contribution happens to be artificial and is not an effective incentive for civic engagement. Therefore it does not guarantee project ownership as well.

It is the experience of the Operators that Grantees remain full owners of their projects, even if the grant covers 100% of projects' budget. This is ensured principally by maintaining a clear relationship of grant-maker / grantee, and not acting in a way that could lead to the grantees feeling as though they have been contracted to implement projects they have not designed. As long as this distinction is maintained, ownership by the Grantees is ensured.

The Operators further note that while the EEA and Norway Grants for the funding period 2004-09 set the lowest co-financing requirement for NGOs (10%), as opposed to other types of applicants (15% - 40%), the NGOs are in a current programming period the sole grantees for whom provision of co-financing is an absolute requirement.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Abolish or reduce the level of the mandatory co-financing requirement currently established at 10% allowing the Operators to formulate their own proposition regarding co-financing adjusted to the financial potential of NGOs in each country.

12. Consistency of provisions in governing documents and practice

The *Guideline for NGO Programmes* states: „The aim is to provide flexible and accessible funding to eligible NGOs" and also: „In the case of Programmes entrusted to the FMO, who will contract a fund operator, the *Regulation* shall not apply. In such cases only sector-specific issues referred to in this *Guideline* shall apply and will be reflected in the fund operator terms of reference and in the implementation agreement with the selected operator."

The Donor States made it clear in their description of the Programme Area as well as in the MoU negotiations that it expected the NGO Funds to be operated by organisations with close ties to the civil society sector and well-experienced with grant-making.

The Fund Operators selected by the FMO are among the most knowledgeable organisations on what is happening in the NGO funding arena in their countries, especially as regards funding gaps. They are also seasoned grantmakers with extensive expertise on effective systems of grants distributions and for this reason they have been selected to operate the NGO Programme. However, their expertise and knowledge is sometimes overshadowed by the requirement to stick to the procedures and provisions described in the standard programme implementation agreement,

allowing very limited space to adjust and undertake decisions based on experience and reality check.

In spite of the statements in the *Guidelines* which allowed for deviation from *the Regulations* in case of direct contracting of Fund Operator and the clear encouragement to propose innovative approaches, at the stage of negotiating the programme agreement the Fund Operators were confronted with the need to replace their original concept by standard procedures. The compromise solutions reached in effect of the negotiations were unsatisfactory as they often affected the logic of the original concept of the programme proposed by the Operator causing some of the main activities lose in substance.

Additionally, in some cases, once the program implementation agreements were signed and the programmes launched, new activities / requirements were added to the Programmes. These new activities / requirements (such as horizontal concerns, capacity building matrix or audit of projects by external auditors) were introduced without consulting with the Operators and without taking into account whether they had enough time, human and financial resources to cope with them.

The spirit of the *Guidelines for NGO Programme* is somehow lost in the program implementation agreement where the *Regulation* articles are primarily used as a basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The input of Operators on the NGO-related EEA funding in the next programming period should be considered by the Donor States both as regards substantive issues and the mechanisms of programme implementation.
2. The *Guidelines for NGO Programme* should clearly state what regulations, procedures, requirements etc. are obligatory, and which of these elements may be subject to changes and modifications. The optimal solution would be to put all regulations, requirements, procedures in one governing document - *The Guidelines* which would not refer to other documents.
3. The Programme implementation agreement should follow and reflect the approved programme proposal and country specific issues.
4. All additional activities and requirements should be consulted with Operators before they are introduced.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

1. Provisions of programme documents affecting NGOs

a. Economic benefit (*Regulations, section 5.4.2*)

The *Guidelines for NGO Programmes* define the non-profit character required of grantees, while allowing for justified revenue-generating activities. The development of the civil society sector in Europe is dependent on raising its sustainability, also through the diversification of funding sources. A number of the Operators struggle, however, with interpreting what actually constitutes economic activity and economic benefit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. NGOs should be encouraged to engage in fundraising and income-generating activities (such as provision of paid services and/or production of goods) the revenue of which must be used as a source of funding for fulfilling the mission of the NGO, including the purposes beyond the limits of the project activities implemented under the NGO Programme. This will serve to increase sustainability and financial independence of NGOs through diversification of their funding sources.

b. Purchase of equipment (*Regulations, section 7.3.1.c*)

Cost of new or second hand equipment is considered as eligible expenditure "provided that it is depreciated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the project promoter and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be taken into account by the Operator. By way of exception the entire purchase price of new and second hand equipment may be eligible if the equipment is an integral and necessary component for the implementation of the project and is essential for achieving the goals of the project".

The rule that only depreciation cost for equipment can be covered by a grant (which was not applied in the previous funding period) poses a serious problem for organisations wishing to purchase equipment. The NGOs face also practical problems with exceptions to the stated above rule. Organisations are obliged to put aside funds for insurance for 5 years after the project's completion. In some cases Focal Point does not want to take the responsibility of enforcing the 5 year rule of the equipment insurance and does not allow for the exception.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Remove limited eligibility of costs for purchase of equipment under the NGO Programmes.

c. Public Procurements

The EEA requirements related to public procurement are sometimes stricter than the national legislation. In some beneficiary countries the threshold for direct procurement is 30 000 Euro, yet NGO Programme imposes a threshold of 5 000 Euro.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Eliminate any financial and legal requirements which are stricter than the national regulations thus creating additional burden to the Grantees.

2. Provisions of programme documents affecting Operators

a. Management cost – lack of proportionality (*Regulation, section 7.10.2*)

Calculation of management cost is not adequate for NGO Programmes. Currently the fixed percentage (10%) of management cost is set for programmes up to EUR 10 million. In the case of small programmes (and most of NGO programmes are much smaller than EUR 10 million) this presents both challenges in assembling adequately sized team with fair pay (considered qualifications, responsibility and workload) guarantees, and in implementing intense capacity building activities. Capacity building of the NGO sector is and should be regarded as a critical component of success of the NGO Programmes, however not allocating adequate resources for these activities impairs the result.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Management fee shouldn't be calculated exclusively as a percentage of the programme volume but should take into account the workload connected with expected number of projects, capacity-building activities, audit costs, networking etc.

b. Calls for proposals (*Program Implementation Agreement, section 5.3.4*)

The requirement to get FMO's approval of the text of each call for proposals launched by the Operator and based on the approved programme is excessive micro-management.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Prior approval of the texts of the call of proposal should be required only if the Operator introduced changes to what had been presented agreed in the Programme Implementation Agreement and published in the first text of the call of proposals. Notification of FMO should be limited to provision of the call text and the date of its publication.

c. Audit of the management and control system (*Program Implementation Agreement, section 2.1.a*)

The FMO requires that an auditor submits an opinion according to the description of the management and control system established by the Operator for its Programme. Given the lack of guidance in terms of expectations, the certified auditors contracted by the Operators often from among renowned international companies find it impossible to provide such an opinion, especially in respect of the "assessment of the proportionality of the management and control systems' requirements in relation to the effectiveness of achieving the objectives of the programmes". Also, in some beneficiary states the only certified auditors which the national law allows to perform the audit are the financial auditors registered at the national chamber of auditors. They cannot perform and authorise system audits required by Program Implementation Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Provide adequate guidance to the auditors to allow them to issue an opinion, in particular as regards the 'assessment of the proportionality of the management and control systems' requirements in relation to the effectiveness of achieving the objectives of the programmes'. Do not invoke additional conditions not embedded in the Program Implementation Agreement which force the Operator to exert undue pressure on the auditors to formulate their opinion in a specific way without basing it on the concrete standard procedure.

d. Verification of expenditures (*Program Implementation Agreement, section 7.3*)

There is a significant problem caused by the requirement that the Operator shall 'certify' costs. The Operator can check or verify costs, whereas the certification is an action reserved for authorised auditors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adapt the wording of the Agreement to reflect the fact that the Operators of the NGO Programmes are neither state entities nor auditors and are not entitled to 'certify'.

e. DORIS

The Operators are obliged to feed DORIS system with dozens of data and information without clear explanation as to why so much detailed information is needed, or what and whom it serves.

The Operators did not know in advance what kind of data would be required, so they were not able to introduce suitable questions in the grant application form. This forces them to spend additional time and resources to gather data while implementing the programme. There is a serious risk that, with too many detailed data and information required, a large part of it might prove to be false. This is particularly the case considering the complicated structure of the programmes (areas of support versus outcomes).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The type and format of information and data that will be needed to report to DORIS should be known in advance to allow Operators to ensure their availability.
2. The number, format and content of required data and information should be reconsidered, streamlined and improved. Certain types of categories need to be added to the menu in DORIS, e.g. 'association' as an eligible entity and 'citizens' in the list of target groups (given that associations are the main eligible applicant, and 'Active citizenship fostered'" is one of the outcomes).

3. The optimal solution will be to develop application which would allow to automatically transfer data from Operators databases into DORIS would be more than welcome to reduce the workload of the Operators.

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Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Hungary
Society Integration Foundation, Latvia
Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania
Solidarity Overseas Service, Malta
Stefan Batory Foundation, Poland
Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal
Civil Society Development Foundation, Romania
Open Society Foundation, Slovakia
Ekopolis Foundation, Slovakia
Regional Environmental Center, Slovenia NGO Platform of Social Action, Spain

Attachment 2. Mid term evaluation NGO Funds Methodology Map

Data Collection Method	Source/Target Audience (respondents groups)	Priority evaluation area	Information to be Collected	Action	
				Dates	Frequency
Document review and analyses	Key strategic and policy, documents, research and publications on civil society in the different countries	Strategic relevance to priority needs • Of the respective country • Of the CS sector • Of particular target group	Information on Contextual challenges and opportunities; State of civil society – infrastructure, strengths, weaknesses, tendencies, needs, opportunities	5-30 May	# of documents as identified
	NGO funds programme documents; EEA/N Program documents; Prior evaluations;	Relevance of outcomes and strategies to achieve them Relevance to donors objectives/political concern	Information on objectives, approaches, strategies in different priority areas, anticipated outcomes		# of documents as provided by the FMO (or published)
	Documents of supported projects (applications, reports if completed)	Effectiveness/ expected achievements towards programme objectives speicified outcomes and outputs	Information on • the substantive focus of the support (what has been supported) and • on the profile of the supported organizations and initiatives		Summary all supported projects; Full proposals sample of projects to be visited
In-depth interviews with EEA Grants Program stakeholders	FMO staff Civil society Team, Evaluation unit	Relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, percieved outcomes and impacts	Information on strategic framework, donors political concern, anticipation on desired changes, observations on efficiency and effectiveness	May-August	Entry group interview with CS team Individual interviews/briefing on each country – relevant officers with CREDA national experts ; Interviews with evaluation unit on M@E system On-going communication
	Representatives of donors countries Ministry for Foreign Affairs/Norway	Strategic relevance to donors policy concern in support to civil society;	Information on strategic framework, anticipated changes – outcomes and impacts, priority areas of learning		Phone einterview
	Norwegian Embassies	Relevance, visibility	Information on performance of the		Direct interviews in 8 countries

			country, how it links with priority concerns of the donors countries, perception on effectivness		
	NGO funds operators in 15 countries	Strategic Relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability prospects; recommendations	In-depth information about the programs' activities and outcomes; effective practices and lessons learned; planned interventions in the new period and vision for outcomes and impacts that they will bring for; Suggestions for good practices/most promising projects, developing sample of projects to be visited; advise on focus groups and other stakeholders; Success factors at the level of Operators of the Funds	June-July	Direct interviews and meetings in 8 countries : • Entry interviews – with leadership and operational teams • On-going communication Direct interviews with 2 countries CREDA field visit) Phone or direct interviews with the rest 5 countries
Interviews with partners from donors countries	Norwegiean Helsinki Committee Icelandic Human Rights center Selected NGOs in donors countries with bilateral projects, as applicable	Strategic relevance Effectiveness of bilateral relations funds, recommendations	Information on structure and process of bilateral funds, success factors, bottlenecks, potential new approaches	June	Phone interviews with each (Creda senior team) Tentative phone interviews with selected NGOs in donors countries with bilateral projects
Semi-structured interviews with other EEA Grants programmes	National Focal Points in 8 countries PO of other EEA Grants thematic programmes	Added value of support to civil society in the context of the overall EEA Grants support in other programme areas	Information on effectiveness of support to civil society in other theamtic areas; extent to which good governance crosscutting priotiy also involves cooperation, involvement of civil society	June-July	Number of Programmes will be defined after consultation with the FMO and NFP
Written surveys **1. Written Survey with Grantees**	All supported projects in 15 beneficiary countries	Relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, outcomes, capacity needs, sustainability, recommendations	Information on capacity of supported organizations; expected achievements towards planned outcomes; effectiveness of approaching capacity building, and of addressing horizontal concerns; feedback on efficiency of grants systems processes and procedures, unaddressed areas requiring support	30 May-20 June	Sent to all projects (>800) Anticipated return rate 10-20%

Interviews with selected projects in the 8 in-depth countries	Supported ogranizations; representatives of project stakeholders where applicable	Effectiveness, outcomes	Information on good approaches and emerging practices in different areas of the programmes; identifying lessons and success factors at project level	June-July	10 to 30 projects per country in the 8 in-depth countries (directly visited, and/ or reached by phone)
Focus groups	Focus groups with grantees	Relevance to needs of CS, efficiency procedures, effectiveness, impact and sustainability prospects, recommendations	Deeper insights from the perspective of grantees on their experience with the grants-making process, factors influencing their intended project outcomes, contribution to the organizations' strategic capacity building; needs of civil society	June July	2-4 FG with 10-15 grantees in each of the 8 countries
	Focus groups with project evaluators within the NGO funds	Relevance, efficiency of procedures (outreach and selection) effectiveness, impact and sustainability prospects, recommendations	Information on efficiency and effectiveness of selection process and , capacity of the sector – effectiveness of response to calls of proposals – what type of ideas were generated, what is missing; level of innovation; Relevance of outcomes, impact and sustainability prospects,	June-July	1 focus group with 8-10 participants in each of the 8 countries
	Focus group/strategic visioning session with key stakeholders (NGO fund operator, key civil society organizations/or experts, government?,	Relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, strategic recommendations	will provide insights related to strategic relevance, needs of the sector, and other practices in approaching these needs	July	1 session in each of the 8 in-depth countries with 15-20 participants
Semi-structured interviews with key informants outside the NGO funds	Other civil society organizations, and networks, researchers/ political analysts; Previous evaluators of projects/programs other donors	Relevance, effectiveness, potential impact and sustainability, recommendations	Information on adequacy of programmes in regard to needs of civil society; coordination with other efforts; comparative advantage and potential value added of EEA/N funding; potential for sustainability.	June-July	At least 30 across all countries (in country and/or working internationally)

Attachment 3. Midterm evaluation: general questions guide

(Priority questions as of the TOR)	***Extended Evaluative Questions***
I. Explore the strategic relevance of the NGO Funds	
➢ *Relevance to the donors objectives – to the key political concern of supporting the NGO sectors in the different countries* ➢ *Relevance to the strategic priorities, needs and level of development of civil society in the different countries;* ➢ *Relevance of specified outcomes and chosen strategies to achieve them.*	***A. Context:*** 1. *What have been the key contextual developments that affect the development of civil society in the country in the past 5 years?* 2. *What in your view are the main needs, challenges and opportunities related to the development of the NGO sector as a catalyst of civil society?* 3. *What are the trends, and any major developments, with regards to the horizontal concerns?* ***B. NGO Funds Strategy:*** 1. What is different and new in the strategy of the EEA Grants support to civil society as compared to the previous funding period? 2. How was the strategy designed? Did it involve consultations with different stakeholders? Who participated? 3. What is the strategy framework of the NGO Fund program in the country? What are the changes that you want to see as a result of the programme? 2. What in the design and approach of the programme is most relevant response to a) the general context (trends, challenges, opportunities), and b) needs and priorities of NGOs for the development of civil society in the country? 3. What makes this program unique as compared to other funding? What are the main challenges? 4. How support to civil society is coordinated with other donors? Are there planned or potential partnerships, synergies that can foster the success of the programme
II. Assess the efficiency of management set up, grant systems and processes:	
➢ *Review the management set up of the Programmes: at the level of the FMO and at the national levels in all 15 beneficiary countries* ➢ *Identify the strengths and weaknesses of different set-ups*	***A. Management set up*** 1. What is the management structure of the Program? (capacities, processes, human resources) 2. What are the main strengths and potential challenges of the different management set-ups a/ one organization, b/ a consortium? 3. What are the advantages and disadvantages to be an operator of the NGO fund contracted directly by the FMO, or contracted through the National Focal Point? 4. What is the view on the clarity and efficiency of communication with the FMO?
➢ *Review grant system and processes: promotion and outreach, clarity and*	**B. Grant systems and processes:** 1. How was the programme promoted? What communication strategy, channels and approaches were used?

transparency of selection, efficiency and comprehensiveness of procedures	2. How effective was the outreach of the programme? What is the extent of reach out to diverse actors of civil society (big, and small NGOs and groups from different parts of the country)? 3. What were the key factors considered when developing the guidelines for applicants? 4. What were the selection criteria and how they translated the desired outcomes? 5. To what extent innovation was among the criteria for supporting initiatives? What is the vision for innovation of the programme operator? 5. How was the selection process organized? Stages of evaluation and structure (experts, committees), communication with applicants. 6. To what extent the developed procedures were clear, transparent and efficient? 6.1. What share of the procedures is coming from the donors requirements and what – from the procedures of the fund operator? 6.2. What was the room for creativity for adapting the procedures to the local contexts? 6.3. What worked well and what needs to be changed or improved?
➢ *Learning systems*	C. Monitoring and evaluation 1. What are the strengths and shortages of the overall results based framework for learning within the EEA Grants civil society programme? 2. What monitoring and evaluation systems are in place in each country to track progress towards outcomes? To what extent the NGO fund used the donors standard indicators, or it also included customized indicators developed by the operator? 3. How the indicators at the different levels of programme implementation are correlated (project level, fund level, donors level) 4. How is information gathered at the different levels and how is it used? 5. What in the learning system works well and what needs change and improvement?
III. Assess the effectiveness of the programmes:	
➢ *Expected achievements related to the programme objectives, specified outcomes and outputs*	***A. Overall effectiveness*** 1. To what extent the results from the calls for proposals will ensure progress towards the programme objectives and planned outcomes? 2. What are the main bottlenecks and challenges in the implementation of the programmes and how they were met/overcome? 3. Which of the supported projects are most likely to have significant and visible contribution to the planned outcomes and why? Examples? 4. In which areas the calls for proposals did not generate adequate or enough good proposals? 5. In what ways was innovation approached and supported, and to what degree does this contribute to overall effectiveness? 6. What is the emerging effects from the measures in the strategy targeting systemic changes of the NGO sector? (Pre-defined projects, other programme componenets) 7. Are there any unplanned results emerging during the implementation

	of the programme? 8. Which are the key success factors for achievement of planned outcomes: a/ at the level of the operator; b/ at the level of supported projects?
➢ *Effectiveness in addressing the horizontal concerns*	***B. Addressing horizontal concerns*** 1. How were horizontal concerns framed within the Calls for Proposals and how did they figure in the assessment of proposals? Were they accorded any additional weight/points? 2. Which of the initiatives that were selected in the calls for proposals will have most significant contribution in approaching the horizontal concerns? 3. Based on the results from the first rounds of selection, where are the gaps, what is missing? 4. To what extent the capacity development tools/approach of the Funds will stimulate needed capacity for effective response to the horizontal concerns? 5. How complementarily with other thematic Programmes of the EEA Grants is ensured in approaching horizontal concerns (for ex. children and youth, health, gender etc.)
➢ *Effectiveness of use of capacity building tools*	***C. Use of capacity building*** 1. How was capacity building organized – as separate tools/components, or as a part of the project support? 2. How the capacity building elements will contribute to achieving of selected outcomes? 3. To what extent NGOs consider capacity building support as a priority? How are they fully utilizing this support? 4. What type of capacity building approaches and tools work best? 5. What type of capacity support you would not do again, or you would do differently next time?
➢ *Extent of addressing the bilateral relations*	***D. Bilateral relations*** 1. What is the interest to the bilateral relations fund in the donors and in the beneficiary countries? 2. How was it promoted in the donors and in the beneficiary countries? 3. How many applications were received and how many were approved for funding? 4. How would you assess the proposed partnerships between the NGOs from your country and organizations from the donor countries? In what way they will contribute to the development of the NGO sector in your country? 5. What type of future bilateral cooperation can bring for increased impacts in the area of civil society in the beneficiary countries?
➢ *Visibility of the activities and contribution at national /local levels*	***C. Visibility*** 1. How visibility of the programme and supported initiatives is ensured at the national and at local levels where the initiatives are implemented? 1. To what extent communication and visibility are also part of the work towards outcomes (not just promotion of the donors contribution as funds?)
IV. Forecast impact and added value of the programmes' contribution to the development of the	

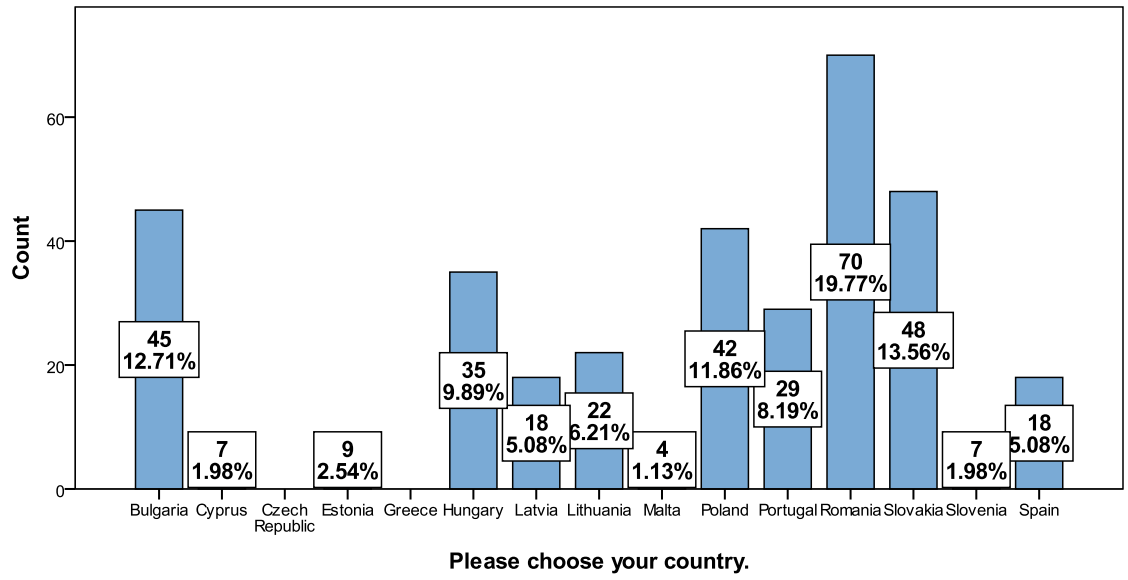
NGO sectors in the different countries:	
➢ *Influence on the Operators of the funds* ➢ *Impact on supported NGOs and the NGO community.* ➢ *Impact on local communities and society*	***A. Levels of potential impacts:*** 2. What is the influence of the programmes on the capacities, role and the strategic positioning of the Fund Operators in the country a/ within civil society and b/ in relation to government. 3. What will be the impact and value added of the Programme on the organizational/institutional development of the NGOs with supported projects? 4. What do you consider will be the main contributions of the programme to the development of the NGO sector? 5. How programmes will be impacting more effective interaction of NGOs with government at different levels? To what extent this will increase the legitimacy and recognition of NGOs? 6. What will be the main impacts of supported initiatives – on local communities and society? 6. What is the programme contribution to developing effective civic responses and actions in the priority areas? Has the programme stimulated innovation in civic action/approaches?
➢ *The added value of the support to civil society:* *a/ in the context of the overall Grants support in all programme areas in the different countries* *b/ as a multi-country mechanism countries*	***B. Added Value**:* 1. What is the added value of the support to civil society in the context of the overall EEA Grants support in all programme areas in the different countries: 1.1. To what extent NGOs have received support from other thematic EEA Grants programs in the different countries? 1.2. How this support differs from the NGO funds support? 1.3. What is the synergy and complementarities among the different EEA programmes in regard to support to civil society? 2. What's the added value of the EEA Grants support to civil society as a multi-country mechanism? 2.1. What are the main advantages as a multi-country mechanism? How they are used to optimize learning and sharing of good practice, develop joint action etc.? 3. 2.2. What are some initiatives that are implemented across borders? How they were developed? What is their value added to the development of civil society in the different
➢ *Sustainability*	***C. Sustainability*** 1. How is sustainability defined by the different Fund operators? 2. What are the key factors that help or hamper sustainability of civil society and how these are considered by the programmes in the different countries? 3. Is there a strategy for sustainability of provided support, especially in terms of: financial diversity, including private funding, individual contributions etc.; How to ensure institutional strengthening (leadership, governance, management) 4. What kind of capacities are critical for sustainability of the NGOs and how the programme is approaching this in the different countries?
V. Recommendations:	
A. For improvement of the current	1. What needs to be improved in current operation of the programmes to increase their efficiency?

programmes:	2. What are the main lessons coming from the first calls of the funds? 3. What adjustments need to be done in the remaining calls in order to optimize the prospects for achieving the planned outcomes?
B. For the next financial period	4. What main needs and opportunities for the development of the NGO sector have to be considered in the next financial period? 5. What are the main lessons coming from strategy design and applied approaches of the NGO funds? What needs to continue in the next period, and what can be dropped? 6. How predefined projects can contribute to systemic change in developing the NGO sector? 7. What type of calls for proposals is most instrumental in contributing to systemic change? 8. How to approach *capacity development* in the next period? 9. What are better ways to structure and develop the *bilateral relations* component so that it has more visible contribution to the objectives of the programme? 10. What are the main lessons coming from supported projects addressing *horizontal concerns*? How addressing of these concerns needs to be approached in the next period? 11. What are the main lessons from applied management set up and procedures in grantmaking? What needs to continue, and what can be changed and improved in the next financial period?

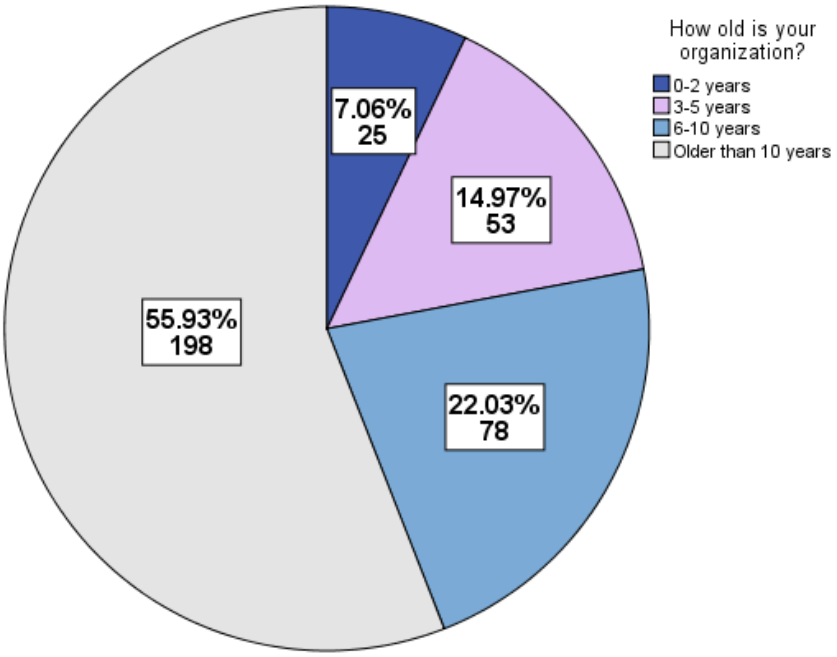
Attachment 4. Midterm evaluation NGO Funds:Online survey, cumulative results for all countries

ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

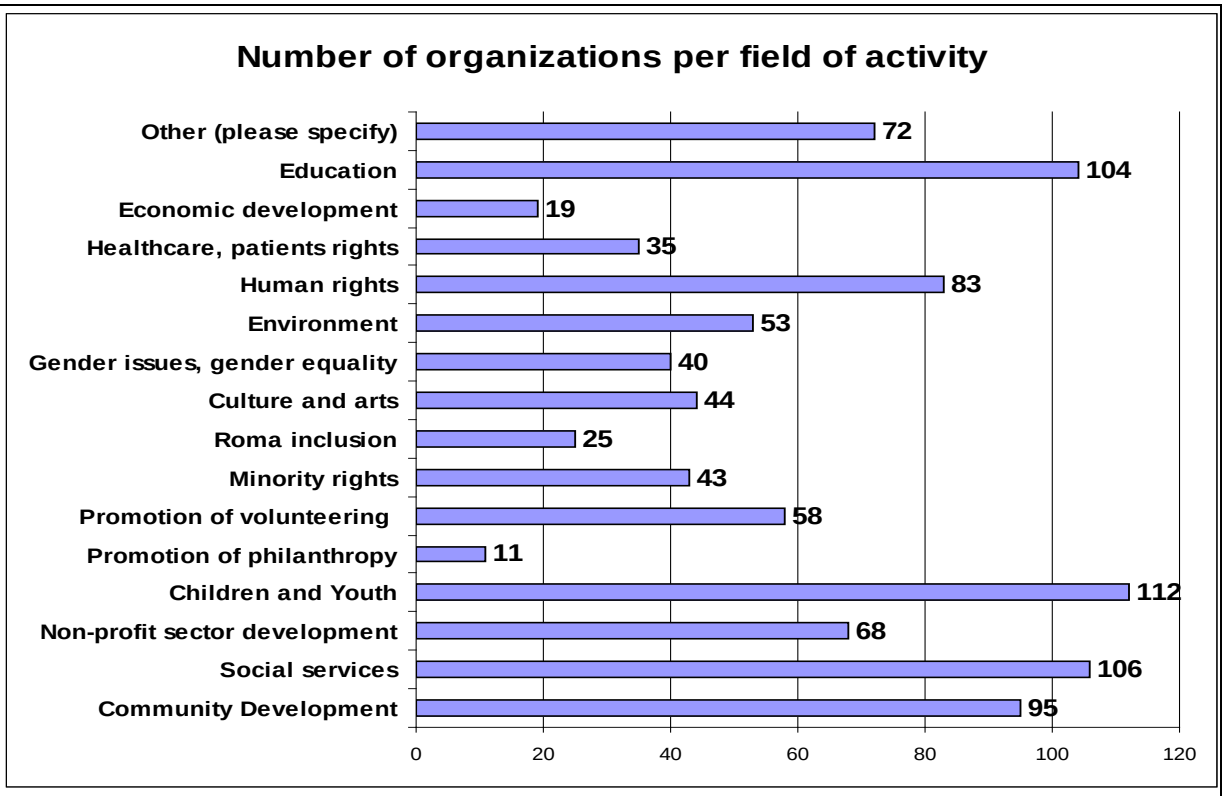
Country



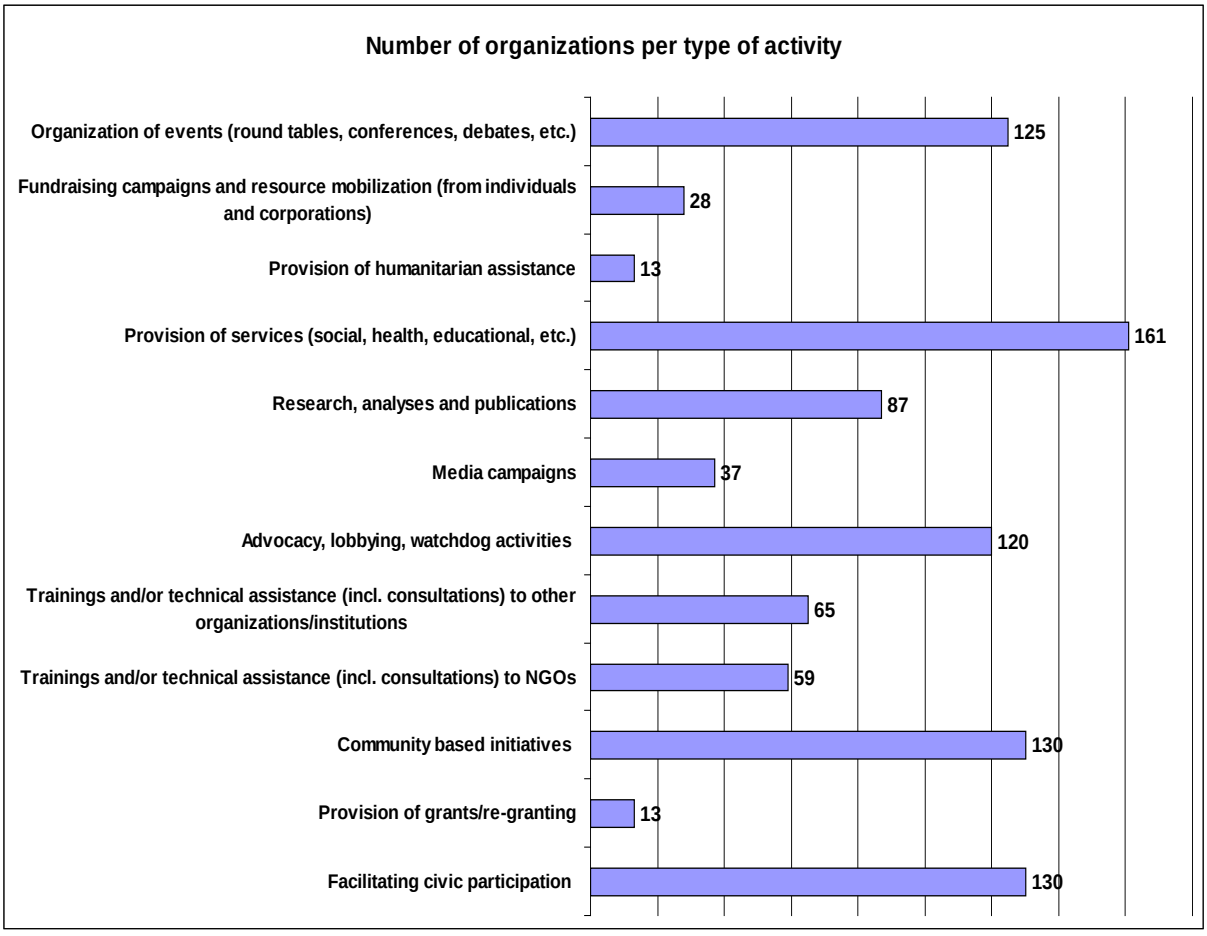
How old is your organization?



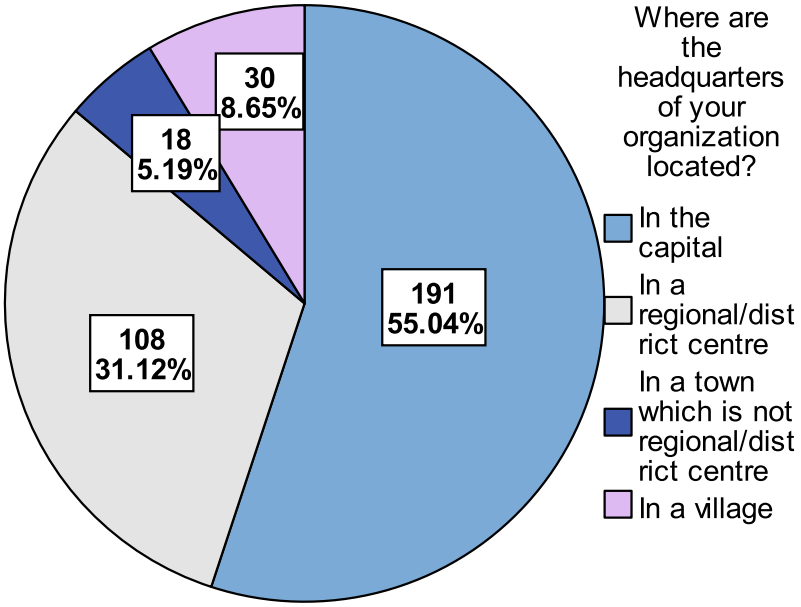
What are the main fields of activity of your organization? *(select up to three main fields)*



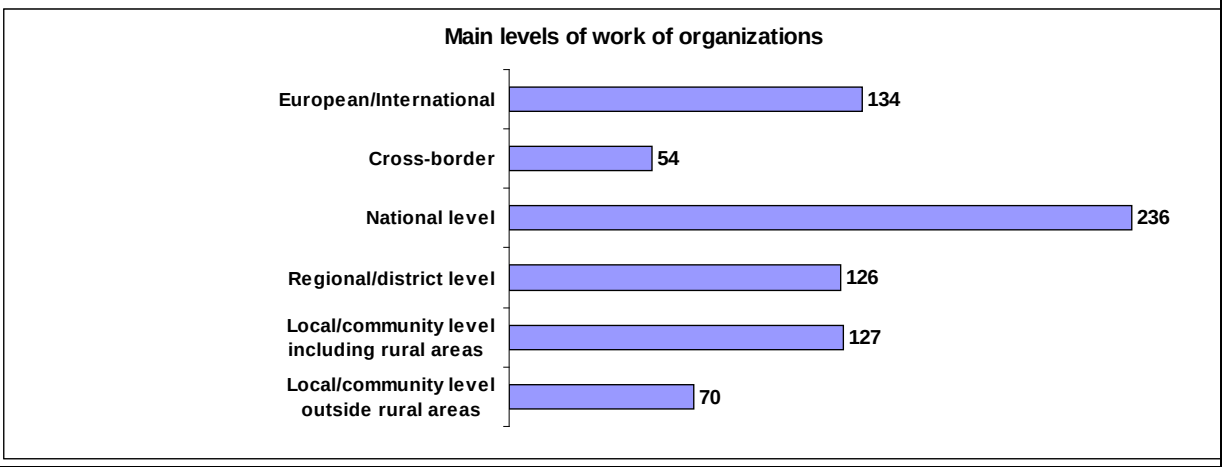
What are the main types of activities of your organization? *(select up to three)*



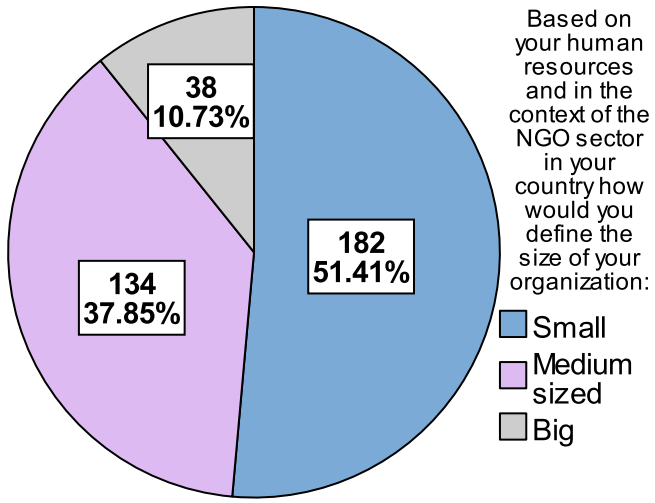
Where are the headquarters (central office) of your organization located?



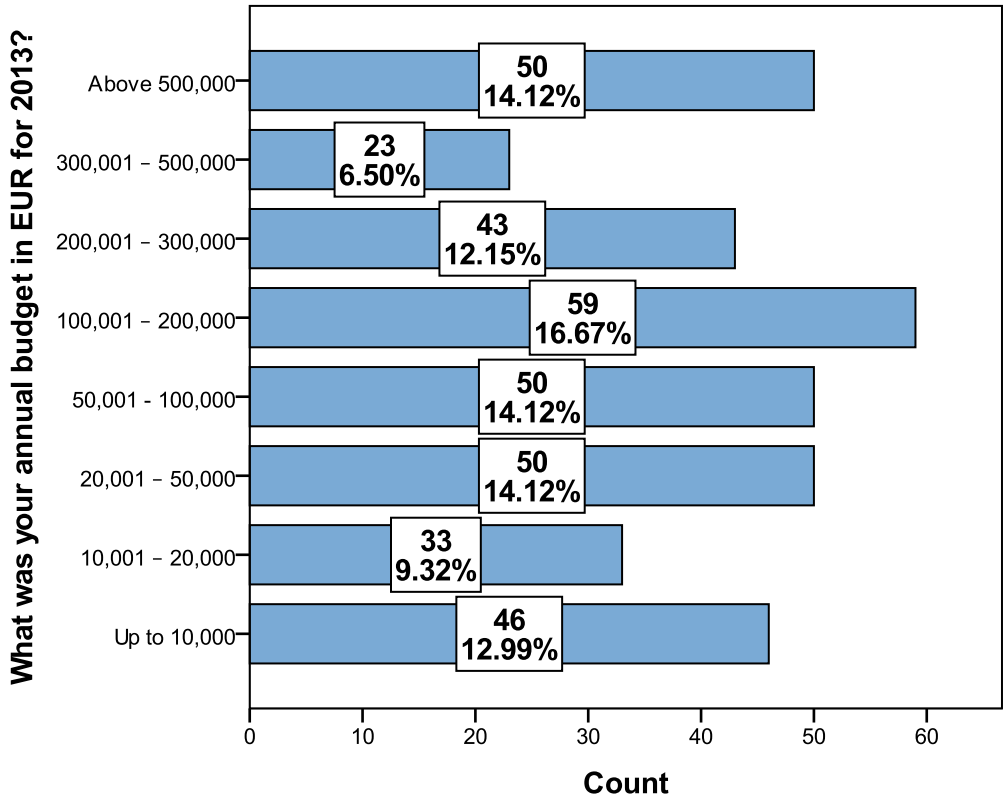
What are the main levels of work of your organization? *(select up to three levels)*



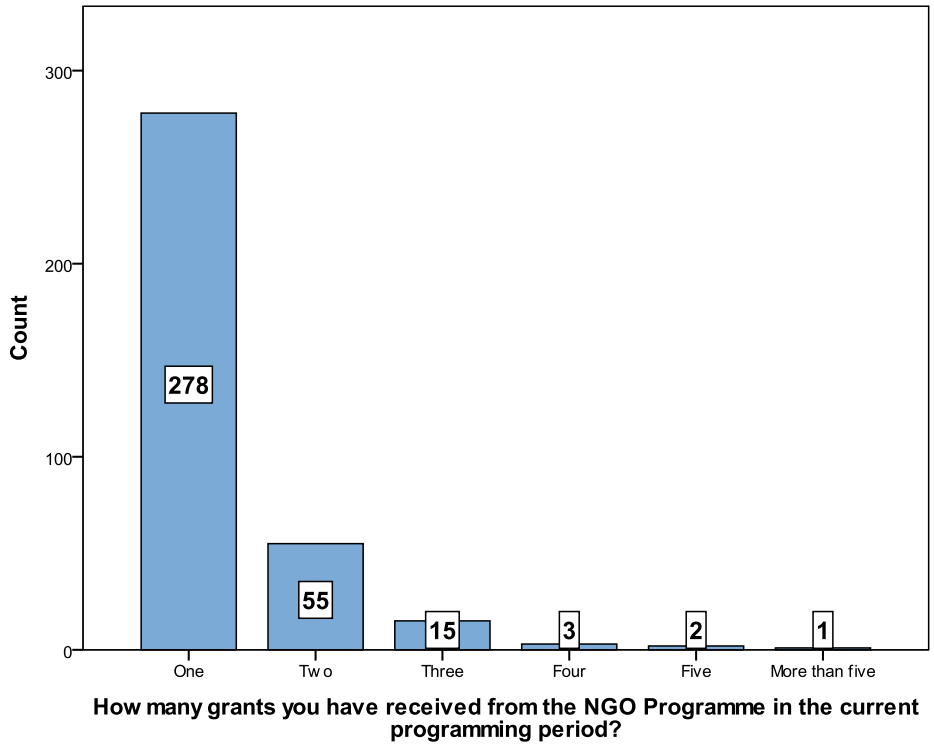
Based on your human resources (number of staff, volunteers, members, etc.) and in the context of the NGO sector in your country how would you define the size of your organization:



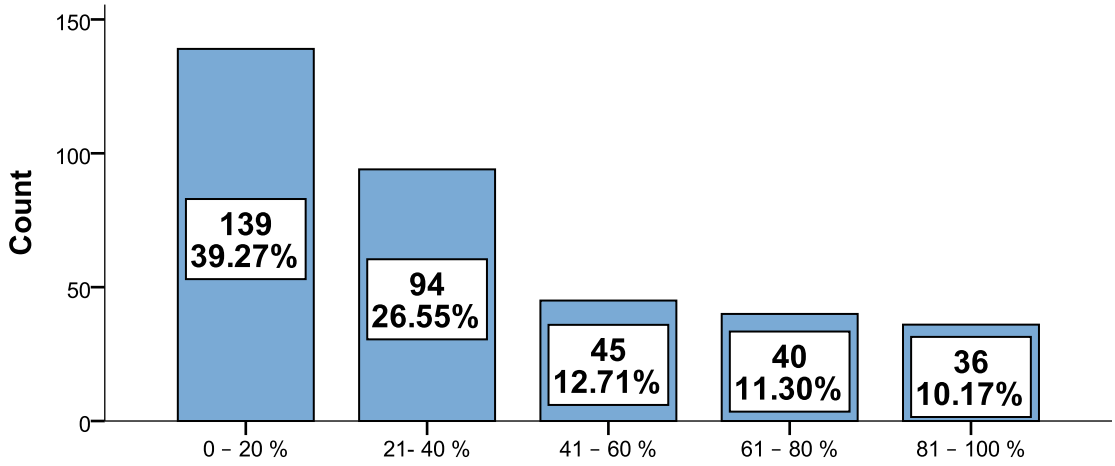
What was your annual budget in EUR for 2013



How many grants you have received from the NGO Programme in the current programming period?



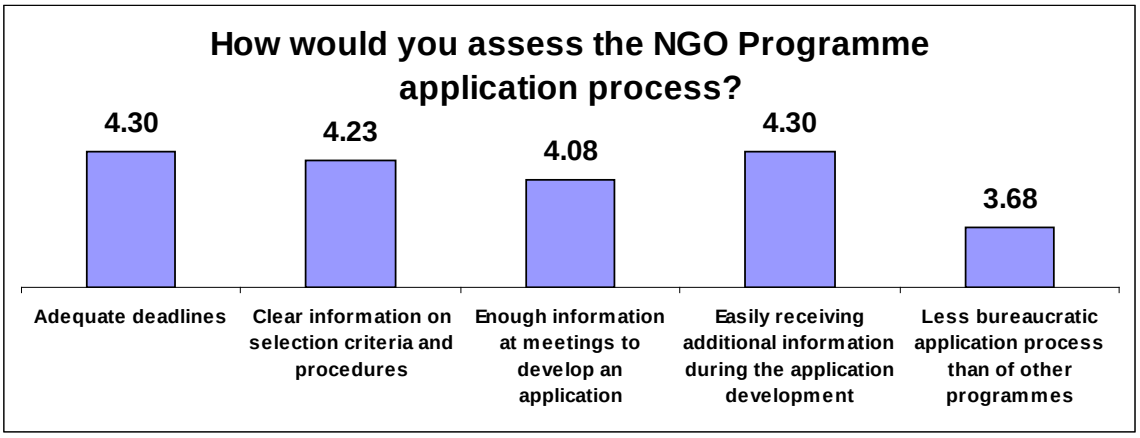
What is (will be) the share of all grants you have received from the NGO Programme in the total budget of your NGO for the period of their implementation?



Efficiency of the grants processes of the NGO Programme in your country

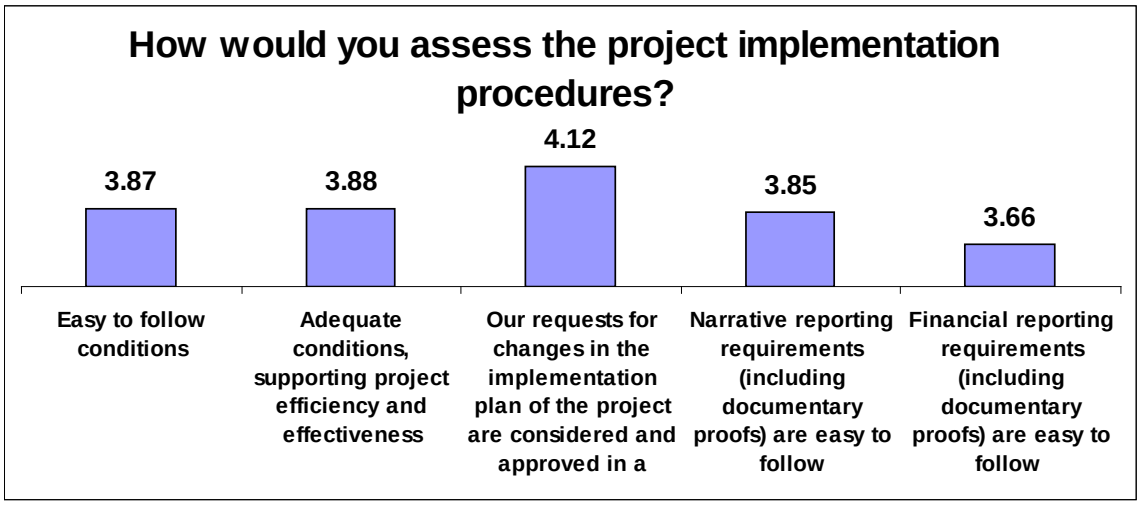
How would you assess the NGO Programme application process? *Please chose an option for each of the following statements (strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree, strongly disagree)*

The deadlines for submitting applications were adequate
There was clear information on the selection criteria and procedures
The information meetings organized by the operators provided enough information which helped us to develop the application
We could easily access and receive additional clarification from the operator's staff in the process of developing the application
The application process as a whole was less bureaucratic and more user friendly than other programmes that we have experience with



How would you assess the project implementation procedures? *Please chose an option for each of the following statements (strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree, strongly disagree)*

The conditions of the grant contract put by the Operator of the Programme are easy to follow
The conditions of the grant put by the Operator of the programme are adequate and will support the efficiency and effectiveness of our project
Our requests for changes in the implementation plan of the project are considered and approved in a timely and efficient manner
Narrative reporting requirements (including documentary proofs) are easy to follow
Financial reporting requirements (including documentary proofs) are easy to follow

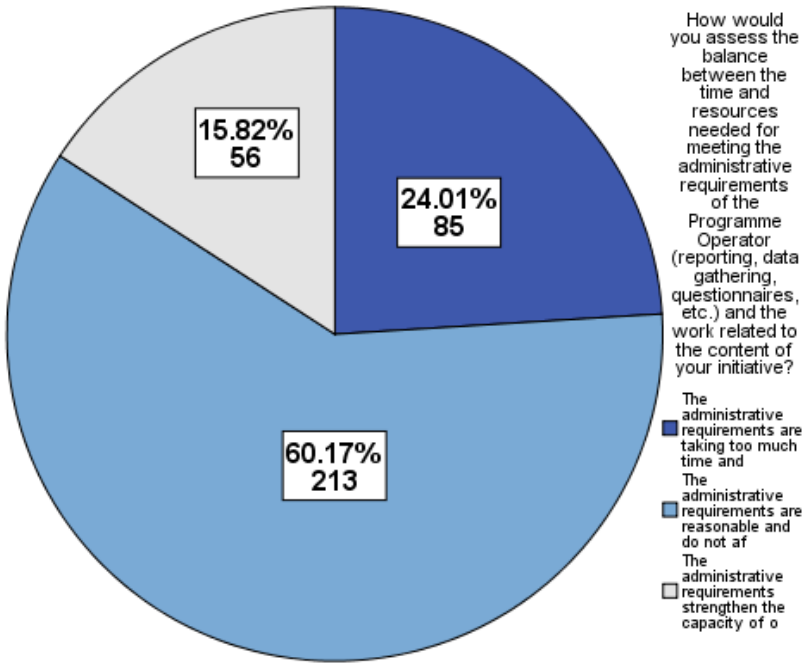


How would you assess the balance between the time and resources needed for meeting the administrative requirements of the Programme Operator (reporting, data gathering, questionnaires, etc.) and the work related to the content of your initiative

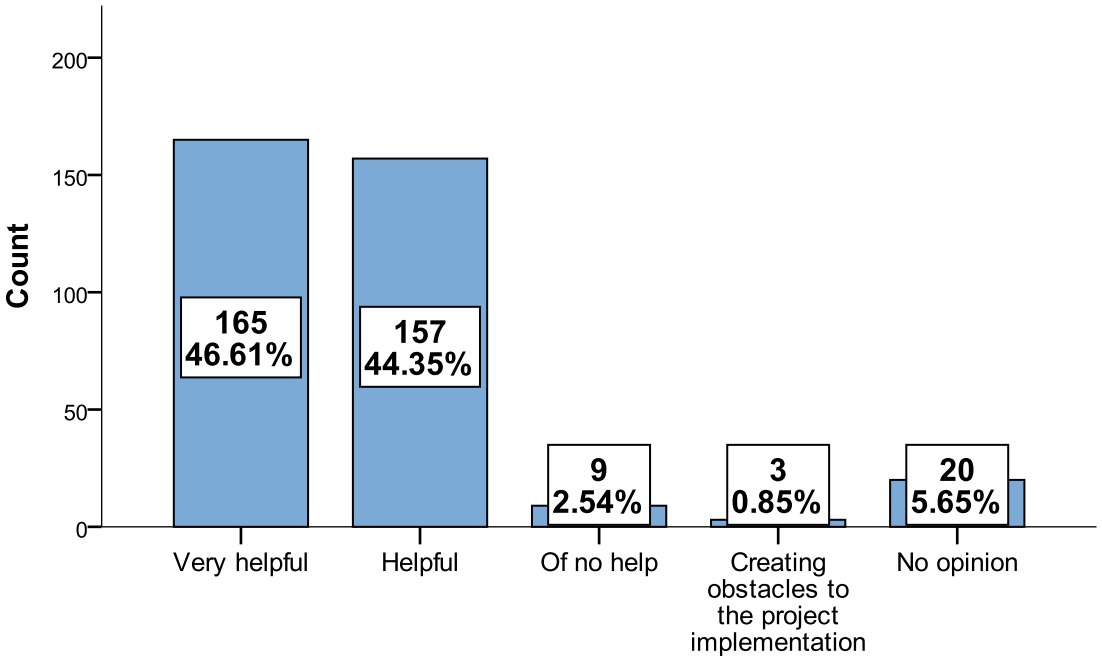
The administrative requirements are taking too much time and resources and negatively affect our work on content

The administrative requirements are reasonable and do not affect our work on the content of the initiative

The administrative requirements strengthen the capacity of our organisation and thus support the work on the content of the initiative

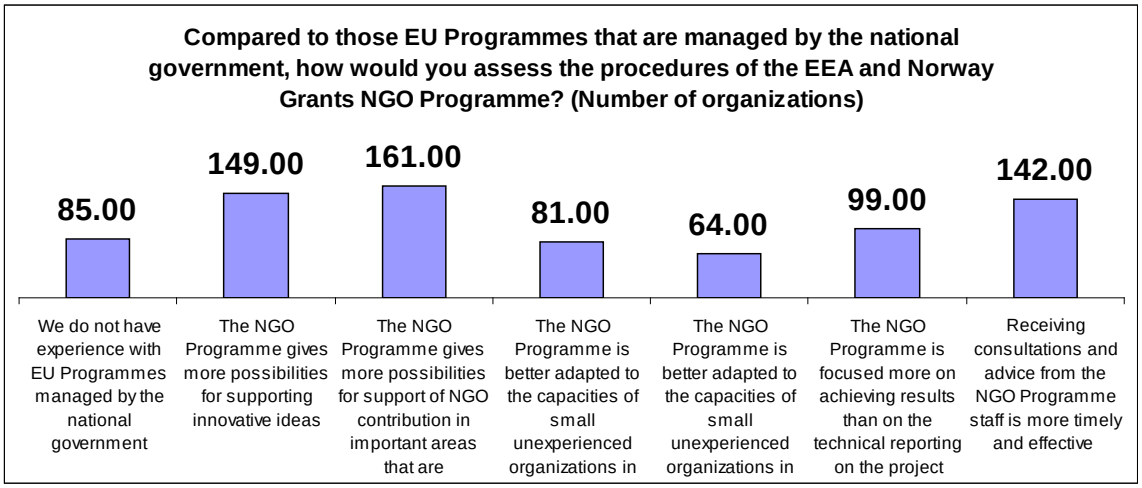


How would you assess the support of the NGO Programme operator (incl. monitoring visits, conference calls, meetings and other communication) in the implementation of your project?

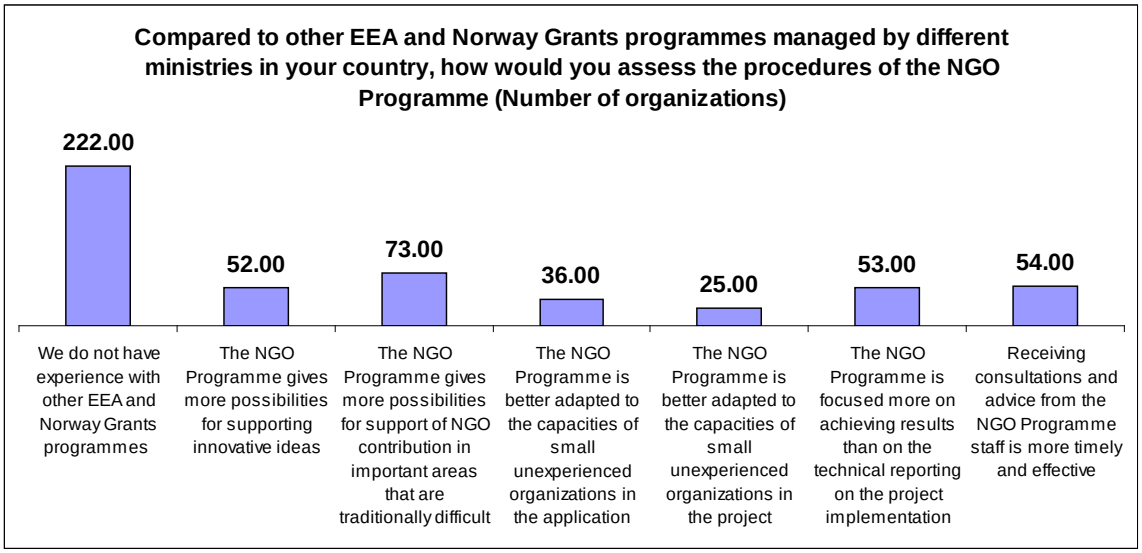


How would you assess the support of the NGO Programme operator (incl. monitoring visits, conference calls, meetings and other communication) in the implementation of your project?

Compared to those <u>EU Programmes that are managed by the national government</u>, how would you assess the procedures of the EEA and Norway Grants NGO Programme? *(mark all relevant options)*



Compared to <u>other EEA and Norway Grants programmes managed by different ministries</u> in your country, how would you assess the procedures of the NGO Programme: *(mark all relevant options)*

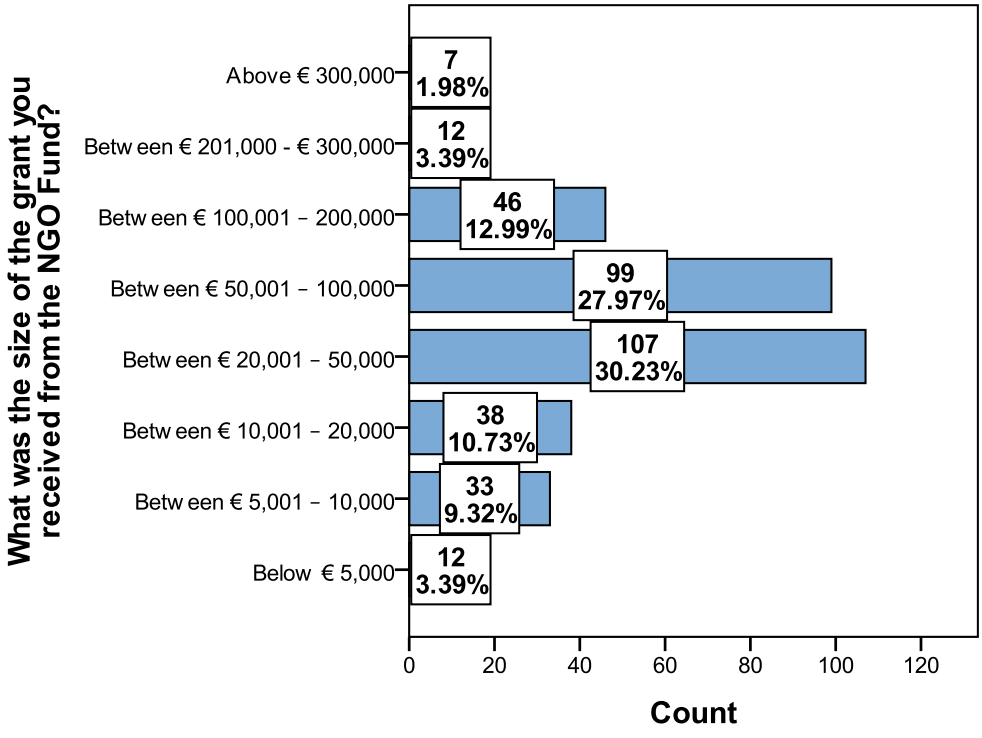


Do you have recommendations for improvement of the efficiency of the grants procedures of the NGO Programme? If yes, please specify

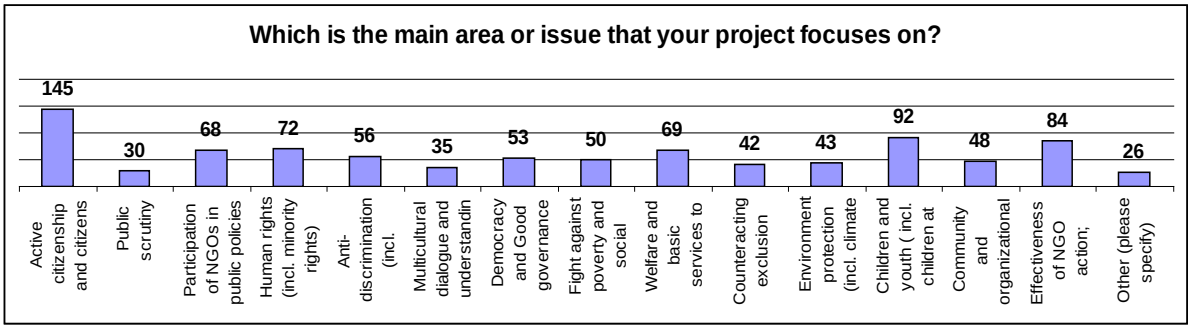
Your project(s) funded by the EEA and Norway NGO Programme

In this section please provide information about the project in which your organization is the leading partner. In case you have more than one such project, please provide information about the one which is more advanced or completed. Don't include projects for capacity building, they will be covered in the next section.

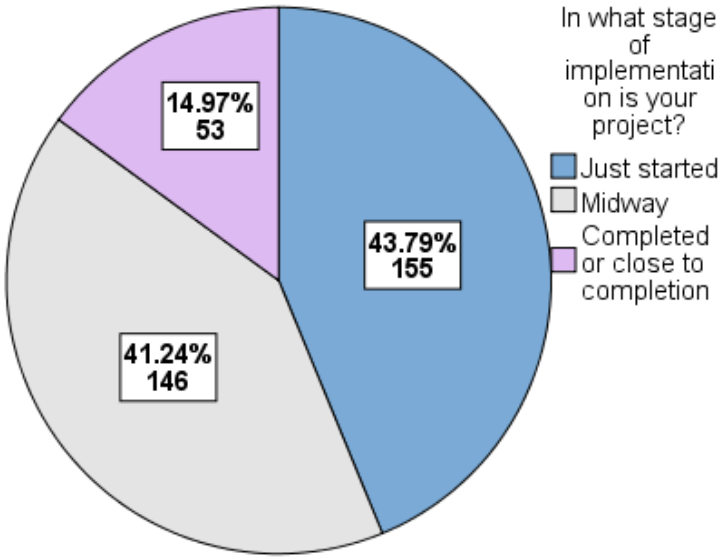
What was the size of the grant you received from the NGO Fund?



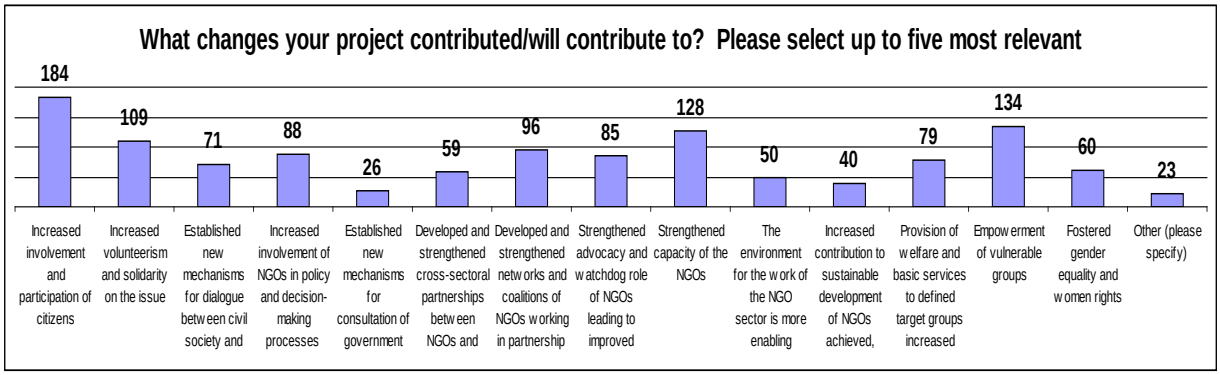
Which is the main area or issue that your project focuses on? *Please select those options that are relevant*



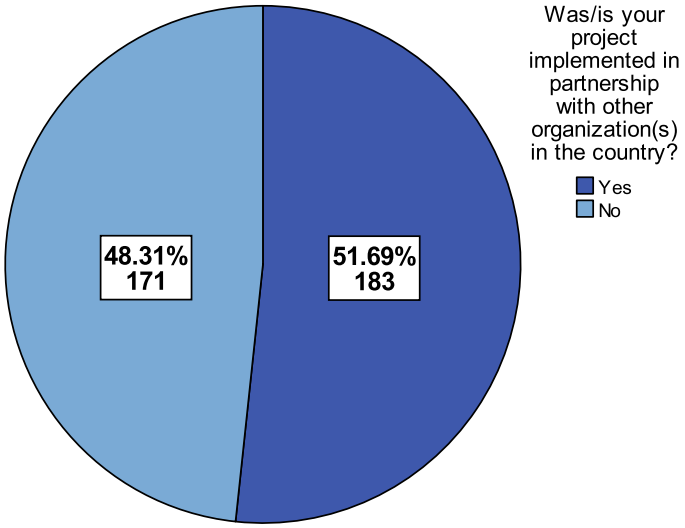
In what stage of implementation is your project?



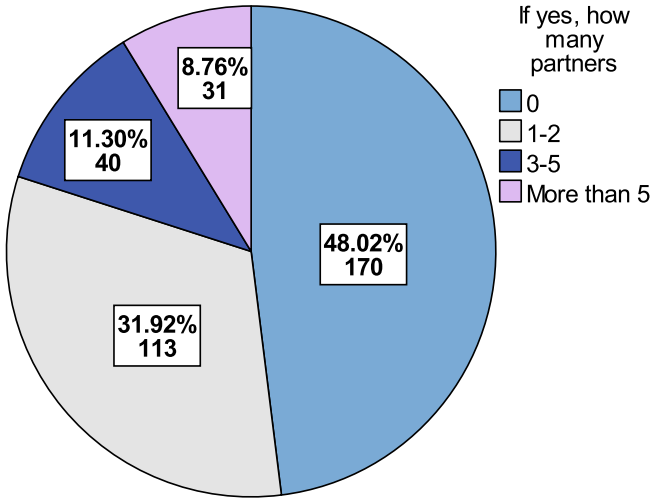
What changes your project contributed/will contribute to? *Please select up to five most relevant*



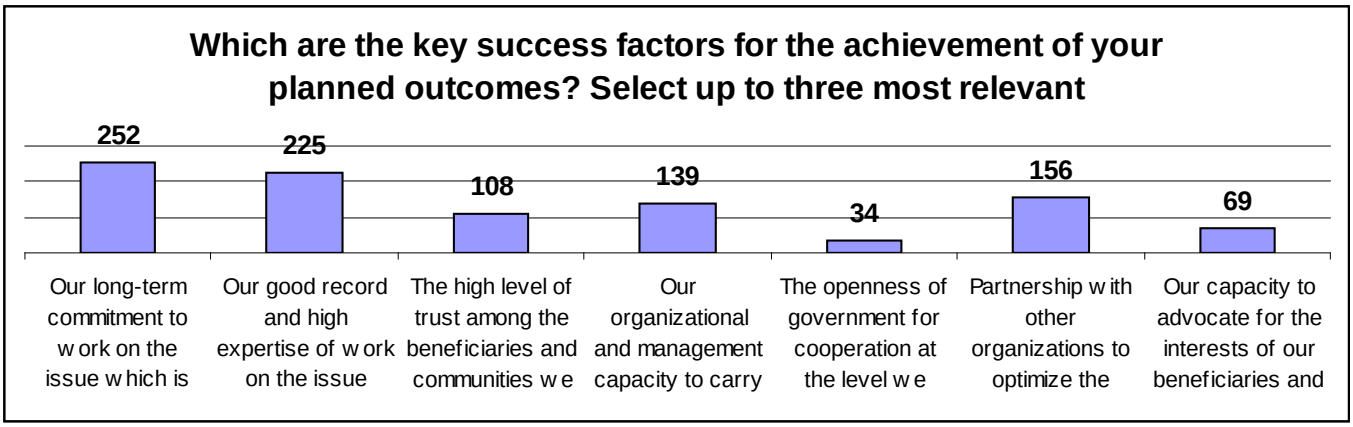
Was/is your project implemented in partnership with other organization(s) in the country?



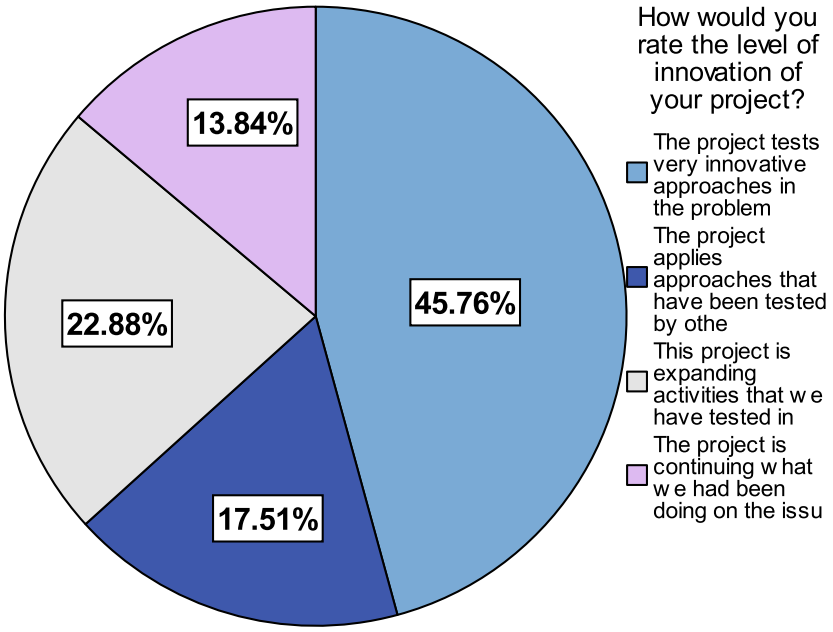
If yes, how many partners



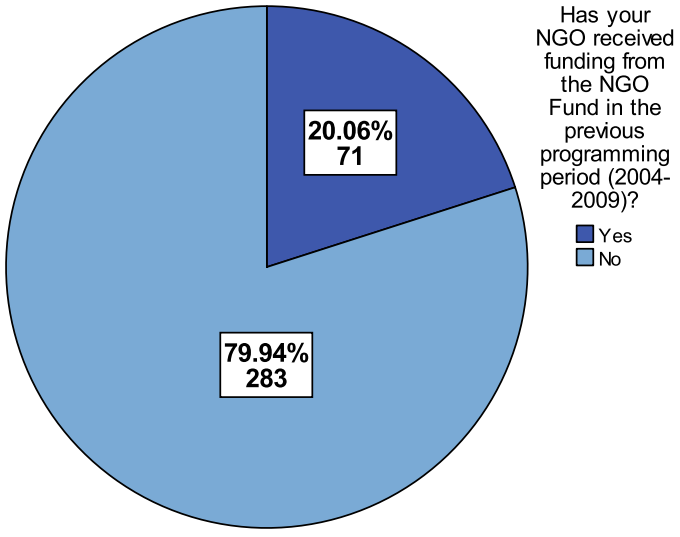
Which are the key success factors for the achievement of your planned outcomes? ***Select up to three most relevant***



How would you rate the level of innovation of your project?

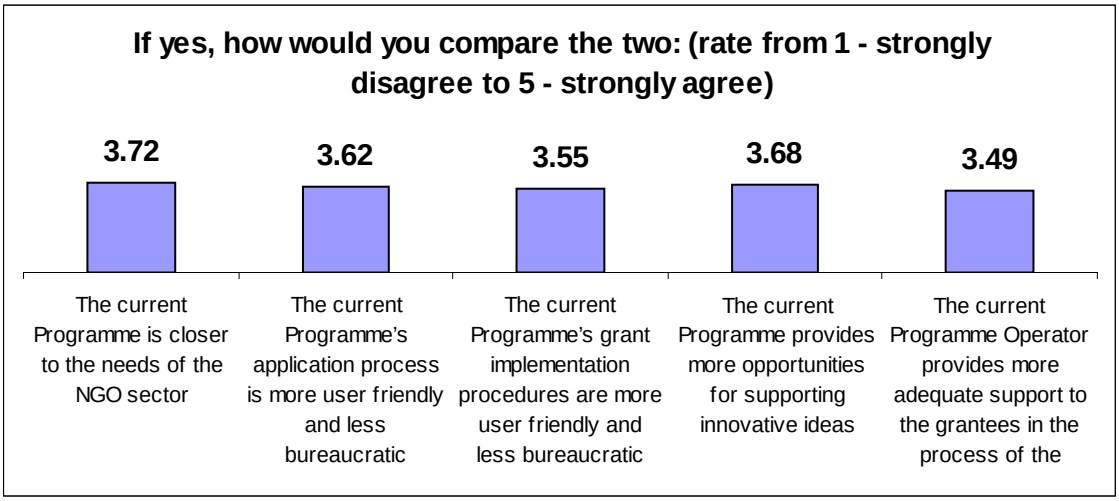


Has your NGO received funding from the EEA and Norway NGO Fund in the previous programming period (2004-2009)



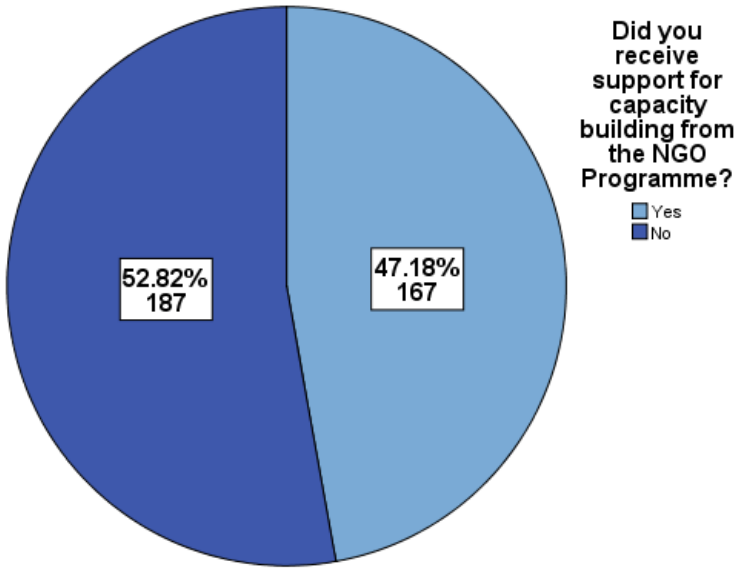
If yes, how would you compare the two: *(strongly agree; agree; not sure; disagree, strongly disagree)*

The current Programme is closer to the needs of the NGO sector
The current Programme's application process is more user friendly and less bureaucratic
The current Programme's grant implementation procedures are more user friendly and less bureaucratic
The current Programme provides more opportunities for supporting innovative ideas
The current Programme Operator provides more adequate support to the grantees in the process of the project implementation

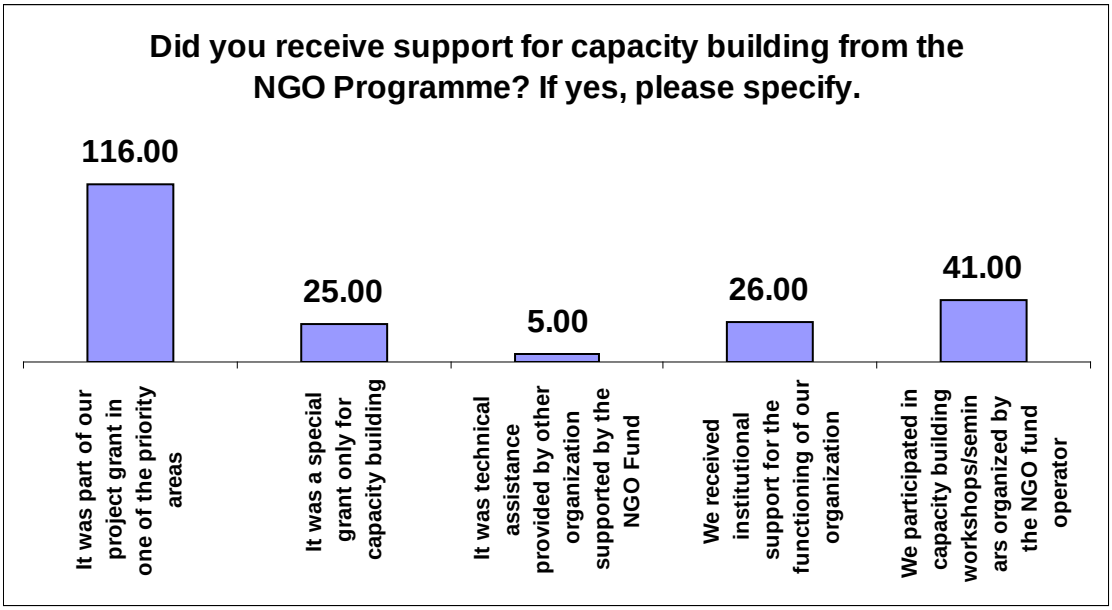


Effectiveness of capacity building support

Did you receive support for capacity building from the NGO Programme?

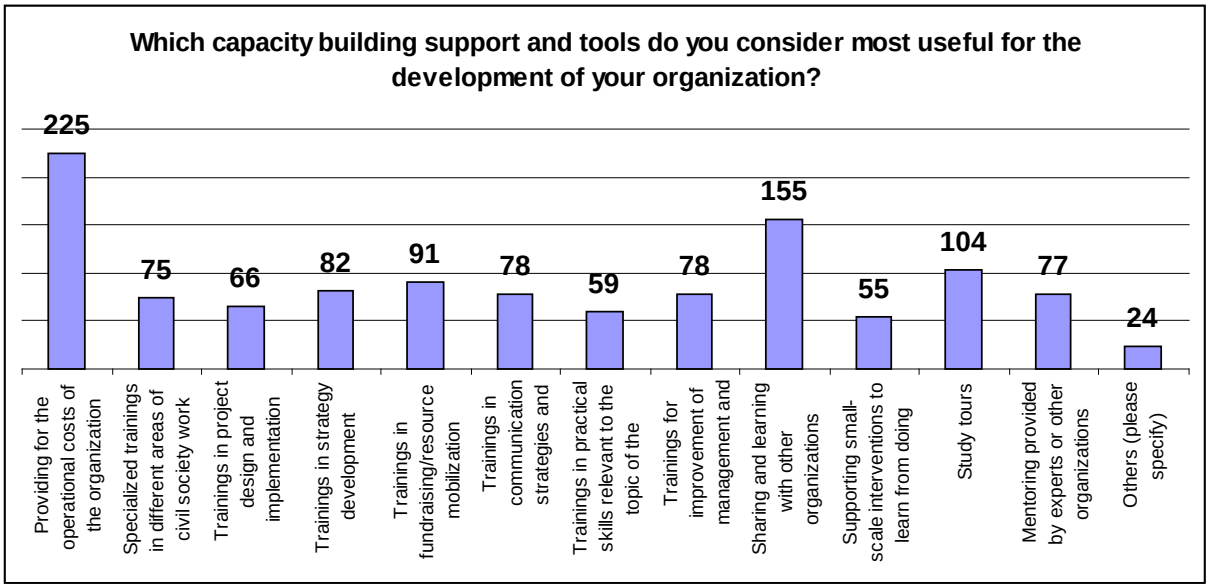


If yes, please specify. *Choose the most relevant options*



Which capacity building support and tools do you consider most useful for the development of your organization? *Chose up to 5 most relevant.*

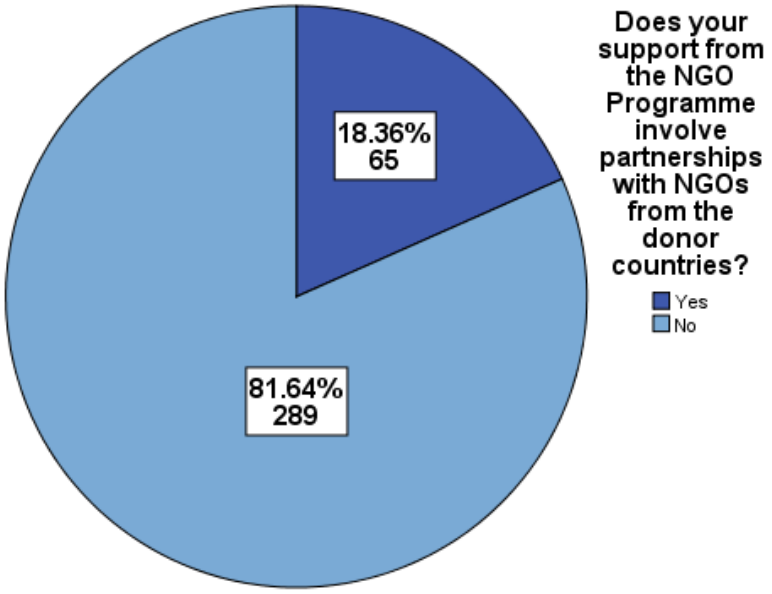
Providing for the operational costs of the organization
Specialized trainings/technical assistance in different areas of civil society work
Trainings/technical assistance in project design and implementation
Trainings/technical assistance in strategy development
Trainings/technical assistance in fundraising/resource mobilization
Trainings/technical assistance in communication strategies and advocacy
Trainings/technical assistance in practical skills relevant to the topic of the intervention
Trainings/technical assistance for improvement of management and governance systems
Sharing and learning with other organizations
Supporting small-scale interventions to learn from doing
Study tours
Mentoring provided by experts or other organizations
Others (please specify)



Do you have recommendations for improvement of the approach and practice of the provision of capacity building support by the NGO Programme. If yes, please specify.

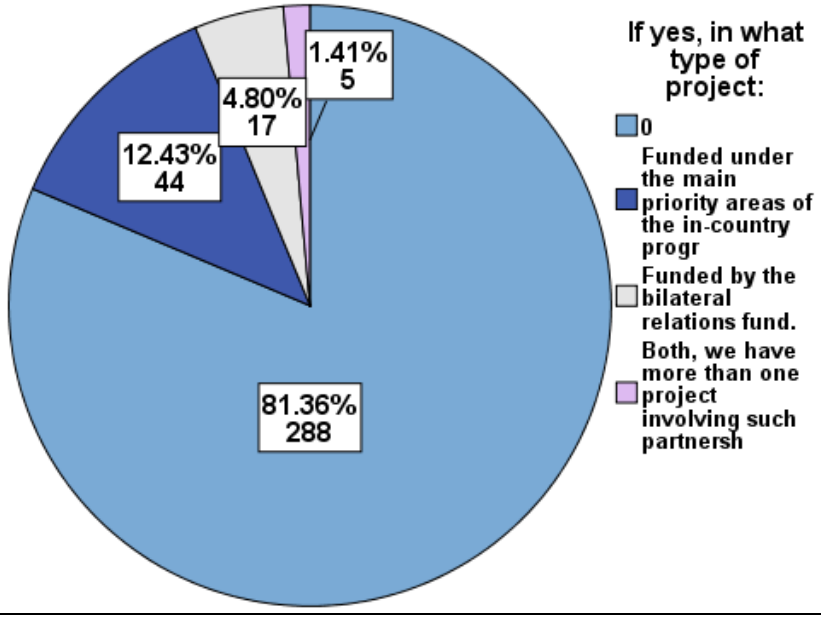
Bilateral relations

Does your support from the NGO Programme involve partnerships with NGOs from the donor countries?

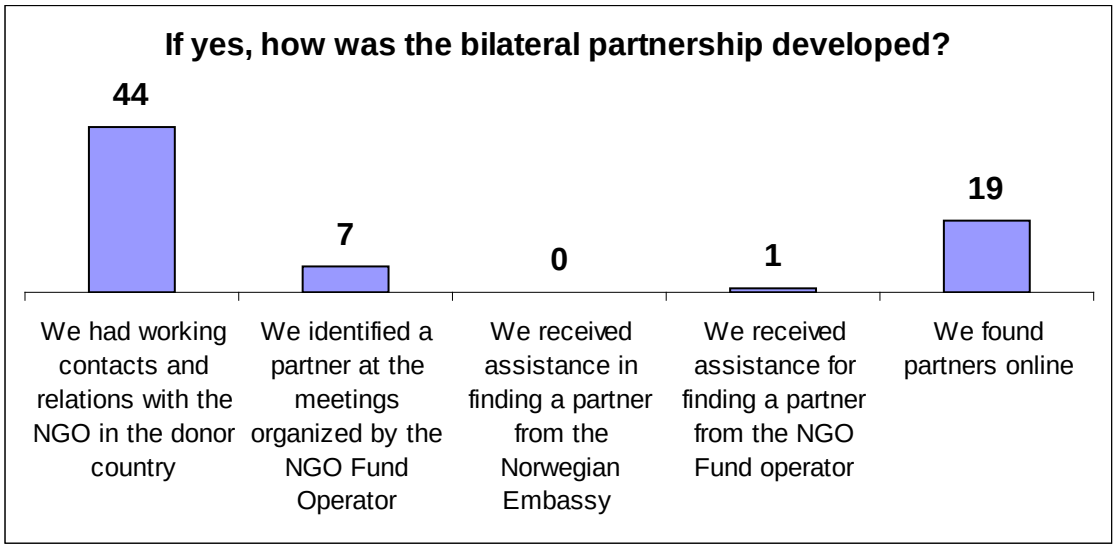


If yes, in what type of project:

Funded under the main priority areas of the in-country programme
Funded by the bilateral relations fund
Both, we have more than one project involving such partnership



If yes, how was the bilateral partnership developed? *Select all relevant options*

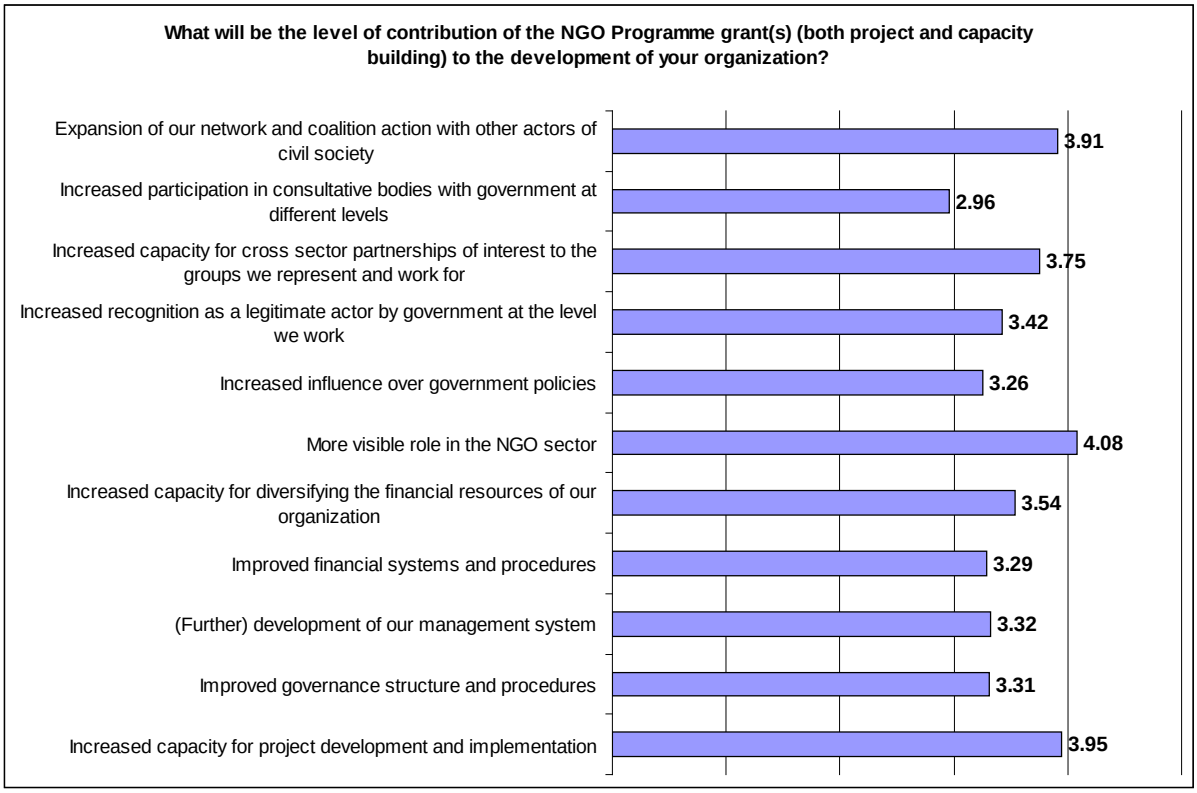


What is/will be the main contribution of this partnership to your organization and your work?

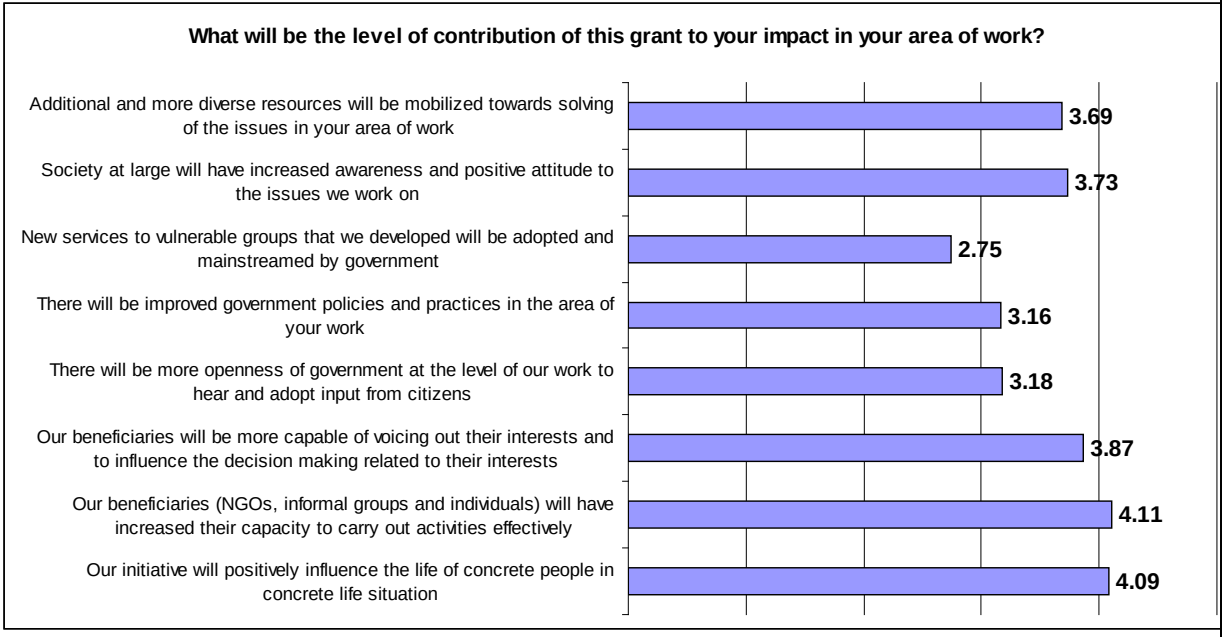
Do you have recommendations for increasing the usefulness of the bilateral relations fund? If yes, please specify.

Impact and sustainability prospects

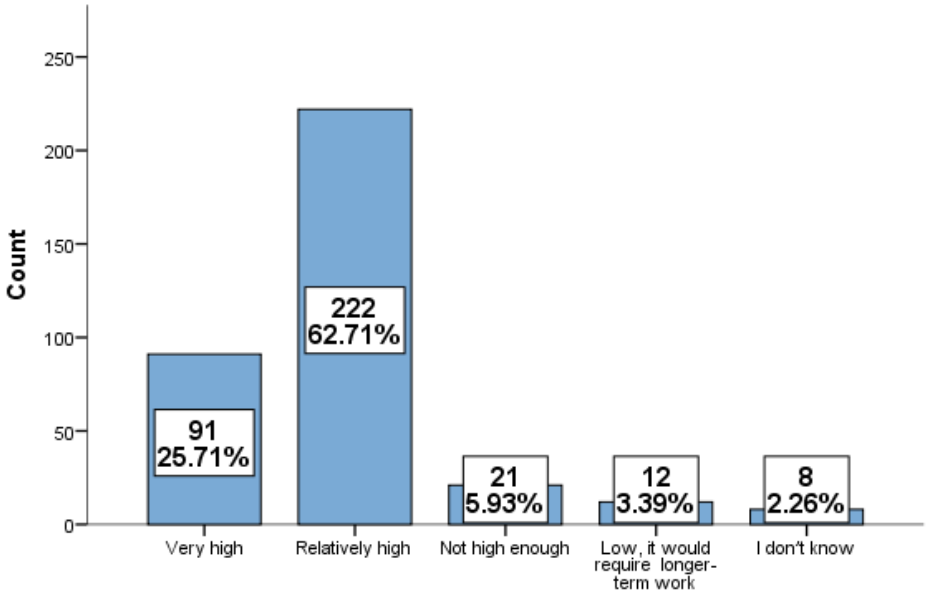
What will be the level of contribution of the NGO Programme grant(s) (both project and capacity building) to the development of your organization? *Please rate from 1-5 where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest*



What will be the level of contribution of this grant to your impact in your area of work? *Please rate from 1-5 where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest*



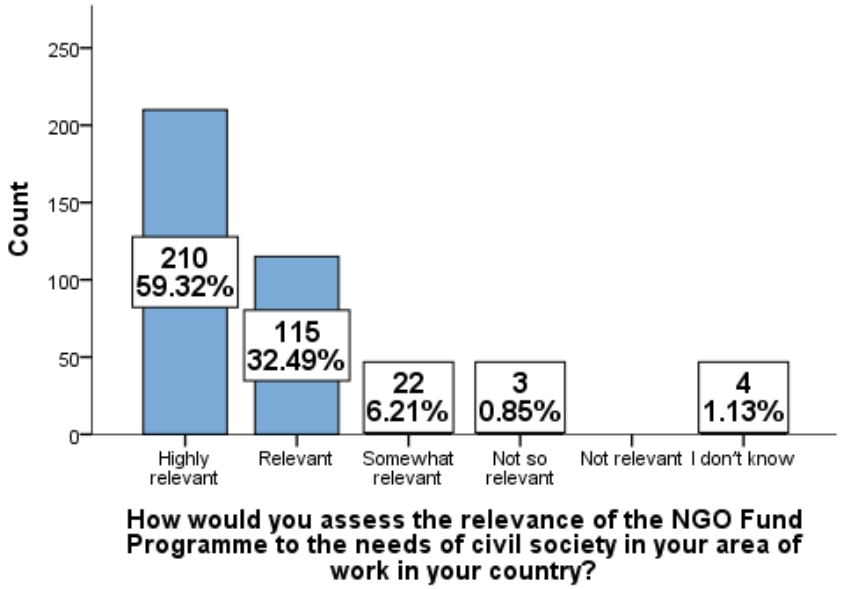
How would you describe the (anticipated) level of sustainability of the achievements resulting from your project supported by the EEA and Norway Grants NGO Programme?



Do you have recommendations for improving the approaches of the NGO Programme in your country towards increasing the impact and sustainability prospects of the supported initiatives and organisations? If yes, please specify

Relevance of the NGO Fund programme and its outcomes

How would you assess the relevance of the NGO Fund Programme to the needs of civil society in your area of work in your country?



Do you think there are important needs of the civil society sector that are not covered by the NGO Programme and need to be considered by the EEA Grants in the future? If yes, please specify.

Do you have recommendations for the improvement of the NGO Programme in the next programming period? If yes, please specify.

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