



EU AND SERBIA AT WORK

FACT SHEET

EU SUPPORT TO THE OFFICE FOR COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Office for Cooperation with Civil Society is a young governmental institution whose mandate is to strengthen the dialogue between the Serbian government and civil society organizations. In order to help its mandate, the EU provides support to the Office in the creation of an environment that will boost civil society and in building capacities of the Office staff.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are **key promoters of democratic values in Serbia**. Thus they are important for social, economic and political life of the country. Despite a long history of the CSO movement in Serbia, the relationship between the government and CSOs is still marked by fragmented cooperation and a selective approach towards individual CSOs. Positive trends are visible, also as a result of the work of the Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society. This institution, established 4 years ago, provides an institutional framework for more structured cooperation arrangements. The Office stimulates the creation of an environment conducive to the development of civil society and a stronger partnership between the Government and CSOs.

To strengthen the important work of the Office (OCCS) for the Serbian society, the EU provides **€1.2 million support** for **institutional building, more effective dialogue** between civil society and the government, and more effective **civic participation** in policy processes.

As a key part of this, the EU supports the work on the first **national “Strategy for enabling environment for development of CSOs in Serbia 2015 – 2018”**. This document is a stepping stone for creating better national legal and financial frameworks for sustainable development of civil society, and its fruitful cooperation with state institutions. The Strategy aims at giving citizens a stronger voice in influencing public sector reform processes in the context of accession to the EU.

This highly participatory process involves both CSOs and the government which have been working together on defining needs and priorities, improving the legal framework regulating the work of CSOs, developing tools and guidelines for effective work of the governmental institutions, building capacities of all actors involved etc. The consultations took place all over the country. More than 500 CSOs participated in the Strategy formulation from its beginning in February 2014. Most of them showed strong interest in having a better structured involvement in the provision of social services and social economy, and commitment to making Serbia a society of solidarity and equal opportunities.

At the moment, the creation of the Strategy and its supporting documents has reached its final stage. More information on how to contribute to the creation of the Strategy and a successful cooperation between the Government and Civil Society in Serbia can be found at <http://civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/>.

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