

Diagnosis and Programme strategy

Challenges and needs to be addressed

In 2013, NGOs represented 1.5% of national GVA and 3.5% of total employment. 28.4% of all 28 000 NGOs address social services (traditional strong weight in the provision of social services, generating 62% of the sector's total GVA). 37.8% of all NGOs are located in the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto.¹

The Portuguese civil society sector is very fragmented and lacks strong and representative umbrella organisations to make its voice heard, and also, there is a need to bolster technical, financial and organisational capacities, and capacity building and sustainability of the sector has been of paramount concern for the FO for several years. A Survey on the NGO sector in Portugal commissioned in 2014 to a Portuguese University identified the main weaknesses: funding and allocation of resources; governance and management practices; and advocacy skills. In 2016, the independent Evaluation Study on the NGO Fund 2009-14 implementation in Portugal identified two areas deserving further support in the future (which had already been priorities in the 2009-14 NGO Fund): democratic values, citizenship and citizens' participation; and human rights and equal treatment.

In light of the recent economic and social context, the following three areas were analysed as a basis for the preparation of the new NGO programme/Active Citizens Fund:

- *Democratic values, citizenship and citizens' participation:*
 - Portugal ranks 36th out of 38 countries where civic engagement is concerned², the lowest of all Beneficiary countries; in 2012, under 12% of the Portuguese population over 15 participated in at least one voluntary work activity while the overall EU average was 24%³.
 - Low civic engagement is also tangible where elections are concerned. In the 2014 European Elections, overall abstention rate was 57% whereas in Portugal it was 66%; all over Europe, 43% of the surveyed citizens expressed their trust in the institutions whereas in Portugal the figure was 34%; and 54% of EU citizens said they are 'not interested in politics' whereas lack of interest in politics stood at 71% in Portugal, second only to Croatia.⁴
- *Human rights and equal treatment:*
 - Discrimination against LGBTI endures, as 47% of EU survey respondents felt discriminated against or harassed in the last 12 months on the grounds of sexual orientation, while the figure in Portugal was 51%⁵; 33% of respondents say enough is being done to promote tolerance on the issues of gender identity, compared to 21% in Portugal⁶.
 - Portugal ranked 3rd from the bottom among the European countries where perceptions on immigrants are the most negative⁷; there were 119 complaints to official bodies in 2015 concerning racial discrimination (compared to 60 in 2014)⁸.

¹ Portuguese National Statistics Institute, June 2017

² OECD's Better Life Index 2016

³ Portuguese National Statistics Institute; Eurobarometer Special Survey for 2011

⁴ European Parliament, Post-election Survey 2014

⁵ Fundamental Rights Agency, European Union Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender Survey, 2013

⁶ Eurobarometer report "Discrimination in the EU in 2015"

⁷ European Social Survey, Yearly Report Round 7, 2014

⁸ As recorded by the Portuguese High Commissariat for Migrations

- Portugal ranked 3rd from the bottom in the EU28 regarding the gender equality index⁹.
- Domestic violence is high, with 32 507 victims in 2016, a 2% increase over 2015¹⁰.
- *Support of vulnerable groups*
 - 26.6% of people in Portugal are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which compares to 23.7% for the EU28 overall; 29.6% of youths (up to 17 years) in Portugal are at risk compared to 26.9% for the EU28; 21.7% of the elderly (over 65 years) in Portugal are at risk, compared to 17.4% for the EU28¹¹.
 - There is also a high rate of severe material deprivation (i.e. the percentage of the population that cannot afford part of a set of items) in Portugal (9.6%), compared to the EU-28 overall (8.1%)¹².
 - Specific challenges constrain the empowerment of certain groups, such as the Roma - 35% of Roma aged over 16 are illiterate and only 37% are aware of Portuguese anti-discrimination laws. This group, estimated at 37 000 people¹³, suffers from discrimination and prejudice, and also face problems related to poverty, access to public services, housing and employment.

Youths are confronted with all the problems and challenges mentioned above but usually in a more severe way, thus deserving a especial priority. For example, youth unemployment remains very high (22.2% in January 2018) compared with the Portuguese unemployment rate (7.8%).

On the other hand, given the specific problems of the Roma minority group, a especial attention will also be paid by the Programme, in line with the objectives of the Portuguese Strategy for Roma Integration.

Civil Society organisations might have a significant role in mobilising citizens, and particularly youth, for a more active and engaged participation in public life, by calling the attention to societal problems and influencing public policies to better address them; by providing new insights and methodologies to foster civic education; by promoting tolerance and a better understanding between communities; and by supporting vulnerable groups through action and services aiming at social inclusion, tackling the most severe situations and thus improving individual and collective self-esteem and autonomy.

Based on this analysis, the following areas of support have been selected:

1. Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency;
2. Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination;
3. Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups.

This selection took also into account the recommendations of the Evaluation Study of the previous Civil Society Programme, the lessons learned over the previous NGO Fund, the Programme area specifics and the country-specific areas and concerns, and also the need to maximise the EEA funds' impact and its capacity to make the difference among other funding instruments existing in Portugal. The fact that funding is available to support NGOs' social services under the State Budget and the EU Structural Funds but missing for active citizenship and human rights, and also that the EEA Grants will be funding gender equality issues and environment and climate change through dedicated programmes in Portugal were key factors for the decision on the selected areas of support and on the allocation breakdown. The ACF shall however complement those EEA Grants funded programmes by supporting capacity building of environment and gender equality NGOs and awareness raising campaigns and initiatives.

⁹ European Institute of Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2015

¹⁰ Portuguese Government, Annual Report on Internal Security 2016

¹¹ Eurostat, online data, 20.06.2017

¹² Eurostat, online data, 20.06.2017

¹³ High Commissioner for Migrations, 2017

One Outcome is thus set for each of the three aforementioned areas, plus an additional capacity building Outcome, reflecting the cross-cutting priority of the whole Programme that is strengthening the Civil Society and its organisations.

The Programme builds on the experience and lessons learned over the previous Fund, focusing on concerns such as collaborative work and networking both within the national context and internationally, promoting capacity building, channelling this effort into the key weaknesses of the sector and emphasising innovative projects with high social impact and demonstrative effects, concentrating its interventions on what is most needed.

It also enhances synergies and complementarities with EU Funds, in particular a major new ESF instrument (“Portugal Social Innovation”) that addresses Third Sector capacity building associated to social innovation and entrepreneurship projects, and the “Operational Programme for Social Inclusion and Employment”, targeting the vulnerable groups. Both institutional capacity building of NGOs and defence of values and rights, which are not supported under those EU-funded programmes, will be eligible under this Programme; the empowerment condition will on the other hand be a distinctive feature of the ACF and shall prevent overlapping with other funds supporting vulnerable groups. Synergy with the new Portuguese Government Citizenship Education Strategy will also be sought.

Expected outputs and outcomes, contribution to the objectives of the EEA Grants

Programme area specifics will be addressed through quantitative and qualitative measures: the budget allocation to outcomes will ensure that 45.9% will be devoted to democracy- and human rights- relevant projects and 27.3% to NGO capacity development and sustainability (via a dedicated Outcome); youth inclusion activities and projects will be awarded a priority not only in Area 3 indicated above but also under the first two areas of support since active citizenship and tolerance are requisites of an inclusive society; protection of environment and gender equality will be addressed under Areas 1 and 2 as specific project types related with civic participation, watchdog and advocacy and also will get a priority under bilateral cooperation and regional initiatives; while the Programme rules will specify that welfare and basic services shall only be supported if they are part of projects aiming at empowering the beneficiary vulnerable groups.

Country specific concerns will be addressed through capacity building measures (a cross-cutting objective of the Programme, involving all supported projects and a dedicated Outcome), through Area of support 3 targeting empowerment of vulnerable groups, particularly Roma, and through specific actions ensuring outreach to under-served regions and target groups.

Indeed, a novelty for the upcoming period will be the new focus on the desired territorial distribution of the support across Portugal – increasing support to NGOs located outside the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto – and on extending support to smaller and weaker NGOs of under-served target groups.

Seminars and workshops on project preparation and implementation will be held in all regions and individual support will be provided (both in the application and implementation stages) to weaker NGOs, either those based outside the Metropolitan Areas (up to a certain turnover ceiling) or those addressing under-served target groups.

The objective of having more active and engaged citizens, with vulnerable groups more aware of their rights and more autonomous, supported by stronger NGOs, should be attained through the expected results for the proposed Outcomes: Outcomes 1 and 2 aim at increasing citizens’ and NGO participation in social and political life, with particular emphasis on monitoring public policies and defending fundamental rights and democratic values; Outcome 3 addresses the empowerment of vulnerable groups; and Outcome 4 improves conditions for NGOs meeting those challenges, as leading forces for citizen mobilisation and change:

- *Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness (Outcome 1)*: this would result from the implementation of NGO projects focused on civic education (namely youth education), information campaigns and civic activities able to mobilise citizens to monitor and intervene in public life and to influence public and private policies (including through the use of greater number of volunteers), and the reinforcement of the NGO watchdog role;
- *Increased support for human rights (Outcome 2)*: through NGO projects focused on support to NGO human rights advocacy and activities like information campaigns, promotion of tolerance and equal opportunities, combating hate speech and discrimination of all types, mobilisation of youths for Human Rights causes and training of professionals dealing with each specific issue, namely Roma-related;
- *Vulnerable groups are empowered (Outcome 3)*: this should be a key requirement of all NGO projects targeting those groups in order to ensure change; participatory approaches will be sought to guarantee ownership and adequacy, economic empowerment to ensure autonomy and the provision of appropriate services, all this with a especial emphasis on youth at risk of social exclusion, Roma, etc.;
- *Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society (Outcome 4)*: this is a pre-condition for the Programme's success and therefore the most lacking areas and key success factors for NGO effectiveness shall be addressed by the supported projects, with particular emphasis on transparent and accountable governance, management, watchdog and advocacy, networking and engagement with NGO platforms, and fund-raising skills; this will entail the training of professional staff, the participation of NGOs in capacity building initiatives funded by the programme and the assessment of NGOs' capacity building needs and preparation of action plans.

Yearly calls for applications will open each year for several or all of these Outcomes, and the outputs (as indicated in the Results Framework) will be explicitly included in the various application forms, with applicants being required to explain what their projects' specific contribution will be.

As in the previous period, Bilateral Cooperation with the Donor Countries will also be a key goal of the Programme, which will facilitate the required contacts and carry out other measures of the Bilateral Cooperation Plan. Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme is expected to induce a significant number of projects under the 4 outcomes involving Donor partners and to promote new initiatives and sustainable relationships contributing to strengthen the Portuguese NGOs and the quality and ambition of their activities.

Expected impact and the sustainability of the Programme

The expected impact of the Programme on the NGO sector and its organisations is the following:

- The sector will be better structured and have a stronger voice to defend its values and principles, influencing policies and mobilising citizens even in less active/engaged communities of the country;
- NGOs will be less dependent on the State resources, allowing them to develop more active watchdog and advocacy work;
- NGOs will be better equipped and skilled to carry out and communicate their activities through effective and transparent governance models and efficient management, monitoring and evaluation tools;
- NGOs will become more aware and active in areas like citizenship, democracy and human rights where they can have an impact, complementary to their traditional role of social service providers;
- Citizens will be more aware and able to take action to defend their rights, to actively participate in the democratic life of the country and scrutinise public policies and to promote the values of solidarity, tolerance and social justice.

This expected impact corresponds to a major change in the Portuguese status quo but its extent is obviously dependent on the size of the Programme in the society; it can pave the way for structural and long-lasting changes through innovative and demonstrative projects, which then replicate and disseminate outside the Programme duration, but on its own has only a limited outreach. The geographical outreach of the Programme – also a condition for impact sustainability – will be a key goal of its result-based management and a number of technical assistance, training and coaching measures are planned under the management fee for that purpose.

All four outcomes contribute directly to the expected impact although outcome 4 (NGO capacity-building) has a major role in improving capacities and effectiveness of the organisations through direct calls for applications and the support to a capacity-building component in all projects approved under the Programme. The mandatory requirements laid down by the Programme regarding the establishment of partnerships for large projects and in the case of vulnerable groups to include in such partnerships an organisation representing the target group are also means of strengthening and empowering weaker organisations by promoting transfer of know-how and experience.

Main target groups of the Programme

The main direct target group shall be NGOs and their umbrella organisations, including those from the Donor Countries, while other key groups working with the end beneficiaries will also be of great relevance. As in the previous period, the priority group of end beneficiaries remains youth, up to 30 year olds. Education and mobilisation of youth to an active citizenship (including volunteers' promotion) and to the defence of human rights, while also addressing the vulnerabilities of those at risk, are Programme goals towards bringing about a better society with more aware and active citizens in the future. Other end beneficiaries include domestic violence survivors, ethnic minorities (such as Roma), migrants, etc.; people living in vulnerable contexts; and of course, NGOs involved in capacity building projects.