

EUROPEAN UNION ROADMAP FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA 2021-2027



GENERAL INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

This document represents the third generation of the **European Union Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2021-2027** (Roadmap), developed within the framework of the European Union (hereinafter EU) communication [*Roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations*](#) in order to have an enhanced and more strategic approach in engaging civil society organisations (CSOs)¹. The EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Moldova (hereinafter Roadmap) has three priorities: **(1)** Promote a conducive environment for CSOs, good governance and strengthening democratic institutions - CSO participation in developing and monitoring the implementation of public policies, increasing the transparency and accountability of central and local administrations; **(2)** Strengthen CSOs participation in the reform process in the various sectors foreseen in the EU Moldova Association Agenda and Moldova's effective use of EU assistance; **(3)** Enhance the role of Civil Society as a community development actor and service provider to the citizens.

The Roadmap is based on a comprehensive, coherent and shared analysis of the EU and EU Member States of the civil society landscape, its policy context, the challenges and opportunities faced by CSOs in Moldova². The document also identifies common EU priorities and concrete steps for engaging with and supporting CSOs in the Republic of Moldova (hereinafter Moldova).

This updated third generation Roadmap, covering the period 2021-2027, is aligned to the priorities of the [*Joint Staff Working Document - Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities; EU Gender Action Plan III – an ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external Action*](#) and the Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP (Republic of Moldova).

For both Moldova and the EU, a comprehensive and long-lasting involvement of civil society in policy-making, reform, governance and service delivery is critical for achieving the development objectives, including the

¹ 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. At EU level, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) encompass membership-based, cause-based and service-oriented CSOs. Among them, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, foundations, research institutions, Gender and LGBT rights organisations, cooperatives, professional and business associations, and not-for-profit media. Trade unions and employers' organisations and so-called social partners constitute a specific category of CSOs. Their common feature lies in their independence from the State and the voluntary basis upon which they have come together to act and promote common interests.

² CSOs were consulted during the update process. An initial consultation meeting was organised on 24 March 2021 in order to gauge perspectives and priorities of the CSOs, additional informal consultations. Written consultations were organised in October-November 2021 with the representatives of the National EaP Civil Society Platform in Moldova. The concluding consultation meeting took place on 19 November 2021.

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implementation of the Association Agenda (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). For this objective to take shape, the Roadmap emphasises inclusive participation of a wide range of actors including local CSOs, business associations, trade unions and chambers of commerce, and possibly other socio-economic stakeholders such as cooperatives that will facilitate the implementation of the national reform agenda.

The EU understands the key role that civil society plays in promoting gender equality. With the adoption of the Gender Action Plan III: an ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action and the subsequent Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) Republic of Moldova 2021-2025, the principle of gender equality and women's empowerment will be reinforced within the support, the dialogue and cooperation with Moldovan civil society. The overall objectives of the EU action for gender equality and women's empowerment in Moldova is to promote gender equality in the green and digital transformation, strengthening women's participation in the economy and advancing equal participation and leadership. As such, it is envisaged that CSOs, including women's organisations, will play an important role in the implementation of these objectives. Women's CSOs are also known for two different, but often interrelated, types of activity: the delivery of services to women in need, and the organisation of policy advocacy and public campaigns in pursuit of the social transformation required to achieve gender equality.

The EU recognises that environmental ambition of the European Green Deal will not be achieved by the EU acting alone. Therefore, a joint focus towards environmental and climate resilience is one of the long-term Eastern Partnership policy objectives beyond 2020. To this end, the role of civil society is crucial. CSOs can mobilise, empower and encourage citizens to seek information, participate in decision-making and demand climate justice. CSOs can make sure that the green transition of Moldova is ambitious, just and unrelenting. The EU will increase its support to CSOs in order to strengthen their capacity and participation as a key stakeholder in the context of the green transition.

Civil society plays a key role in bridging the information and exchange gap between the population and policy level. CSOs can support information collection and dissemination, policy development and implementation, advocacy, assessment and monitoring, ensure that concerns of those affected by environmental challenges and policies are considered. CSOs also promote engaging of different stakeholders to address issues in a collaborative manner and help developing the skills and mindset necessary for sustainable management and green transition. CSOs can also take on a more direct role in environmental management and governance.³ Participation of women's CSOs and gender expert in these processes will ensure that women and men, boys and girls will benefit equally from green economy and sustainable development.

CSOs can effectively participate in social entrepreneurship programs, including support for rural and women's small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs), encouraging women and girls to participate in green economy, providing them with capacity building services, creating opportunities for networking and experience exchange, building professional communities and coalitions for advocacy.

The COVID-19 pandemic *affected CSOs in multiple ways*. The CSOs providing services to vulnerable people (especially to women, for which there is a loss of access to income and intensified economic insecurity, increased burden of domestic and care work) were highly impacted, as the number and the needs of potential beneficiaries increased. The safety protocols led to an increase in the cost of service provision. The level of transparency, access to information and participation of CSOs in decision-making, has been limited during the pandemic, due to the state of emergency. The pandemic restricted the right to peaceful assembly and the capacity of CSOs to mobilise and interact freely with the constituents and with their members. The financial dependency on external donors increased, as fewer companies were capable to support CSO initiatives. Public funds available to CSOs have been limited, due to limited fiscal space caused by the pandemic.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/international_issues/pdf/EU_NGOs_publication_20161219.pdf

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PART I – BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT AND PAST EU ENGAGEMENT

THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY: BRIEF UPDATE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

General situation

In general, the CSO environment in the Republic of Moldova shows a slight improvement, but without significant changes outside the adoption of the Law on Non-Commercial Organisations.⁴ According to the 2021 Freedom House [Nations in Transit Score](#), Moldova had an overall “democracy” score of 3.11 (7 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest), compared to a score for “civil society” of 4.75. The score for “civil society” was the highest among all “democracy” score components. According to the [2020 USAID CSO sustainability Index](#), Moldova scored 3.7 out of 7 points, a lower score, which represents an improvement, compared to the last four years.

As of September 2021, there were 14,748 non-profit organisations. Of these, 10,668 were public associations, 200 private institutions and 470 foundations. In 2020, there were 550 CSOs registered in the Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia (ATU Gagauzia). At the national level, over the last years, the annual rate of CSO creation has been averaging 6%. Approximately 27% of the registered CSOs submitted a report to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) declaring revenues for the previous fiscal year. Over the period of 2015-2019, [on average 71% of organisations](#) submitted financial reports to the National Fiscal Service (NFS).

A 2019 study (Expert Grup/Konrad Adenauer Stiftung) estimated that 72% of all active CSOs implement activities at local level, 57% at regional level and 51% are active at national level. Close to 41% of CSOs in Chisinau are considered active, 28.8% in Cahul and 24% in Ungheni. In Cantemir, Șoldănești, Leova, Criuleni and Dubăsari the share of active CSOs is below 20%. Nationwide, about 41% of active CSOs implement activities in the fields of social protection and education. Consequently, the main target groups and beneficiaries are youth, children and citizens as a whole. In addition, people with disabilities, women, children and elderly people are among the most important groups targeted by the Moldovan CSOs. Approximately 24% of CSOs are working with youth, 22% are working to promote and protect human rights, 15% of CSOs are doing environment related work and 12% of active CSOs are involved in advocacy and policy work.

The situation of civil society is entirely different in the **Transnistrian region**⁵. The legislative framework for CSOs is very different to the one established by the authorities on the right bank of Nistru. CSO activities are tolerated in some fields (environment, education, health, sport, culture) and even encouraged in others (social affairs, vulnerable people), but they remain difficult in fields related to human rights, media freedom, and others.

There is a mechanism of registering projects with the *de facto* Committee for Humanitarian Assistance and there are obstacles while registering the projects. However, this procedure is not obligatory. So-called “Government Organised Non- Governmental Organisations” (GONGOs) are a reality. In February 2018, the *de facto* Supreme Soviet adopted the new so-called ‘law on NGOs’, in force starting from 19/05/2018. The law forbids NGOs to conduct political activities and to receive external funding. At the same time, the definition of ‘political activities’ is very broad and, for example includes ‘law enforcement activity’. The development of civic initiatives from the left bank is in progress. In terms of funding, most of NGOs are acting

⁴ <https://csometer.info/sites/default/files/2021-01/Moldova%20Report%20CSO%20Meter%202020%20EN%20final.pdf>

⁵ A self-proclaimed Transnistrian Moldavian Republic (PMR), not internationally recognised, but acting as *de facto* independent state with its own police/armed forces, and with units of the Russian army stationed on the territory strengthening the local authorities’ control over the separatist republic in the areas situated on the left bank of the Nistrur river (including large urban centres like Tiraspol and Ribnița) and certain territories lying on the right bank (including the city of Bender and few small villages) controlled by Moldova.

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based on external funding from donors. According to the Register of Public Associations and Political Parties of the Transnistrian region, as of December 2020 there were [631 registered CSOs](#), of which ten were political parties. Of the total number of currently registered CSOs, only about 100 are active. Transnistrian CSOs have the possibility to register at the Ministry of Justice of Moldova. The strongest organisations have this double registration on both banks, which significantly increases their access to donor funding and eligibility for grants. Enhanced flexibility by the donor community, such as cash transfers or funding through partnerships with non-state organisations from the right bank of the Nistru river are also common practice used to respond to the funding challenges. CSOs from the Transnistria region claim that cross-river partnerships with CSOs from the right bank for common project funding and project implementation are often not established on an equal basis and do not allow them to fully benefit from donor support.

In the **Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia**⁶, there were [550 CSOs registered](#) as of 2020. Close to 28.1% of CSOs are considered active, one of the highest percentage compared to other regions in Moldova. This result has been achieved due to increased support to civil society development in the region over the last five years. The majority of active CSOs are based in urban areas and act at community/regional level. Their main challenges are financial sustainability and maintaining the human resources within the organisations. The level of knowledge of Romanian and English languages is relatively low, which impedes the capacities of the local organisations to apply for donor funding and to participate in social dialogue.

Religious organisations play an important role in Moldova. There are 1,716 religious organisations registered in the country. An overwhelming majority of 90% of Moldovan citizens associate with one of the Orthodox Churches, 90% of them belonging to the Moldovan Orthodox Church, which is subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church. The Moldovan Orthodox Church has 1,281 parishes, monasteries, seminaries, and other entities. The Bessarabian Orthodox Church, subordinated to the Romanian Orthodox Church, has 312 entities⁷. Although the Moldovan Orthodox Church is officially treated like any other church, in practice it continues to enjoy privileges. The Orthodox Church is actively involved in promoting traditional, conservative values and fights with the influence of other religions on the territory of Moldova. It also opposes the rights of sexual minorities⁸.

The role of **social dialogue** has been declining despite existing legal and institutional framework. The National Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining, the national social dialogue institutional framework did not have a meeting since [March 2018](#). The influence of the Labour Unions over the policy process [is limited as well](#). Although National Trade Union Confederation has a formal membership of 350,000 workers, the overall trust in labour unions at the national level has been hovering at [20%](#).

Enabling environment

Legal framework

The legal environment governing CSOs has improved since the adoption of the Law on Non-Commercial Organisations (11 June 2020) after public pressure from civil society and development partners. The law was developed with civil society representatives and safeguards the rights of CSOs to receive funding from internal and external sources and perform income-generating activities. The law provides for the right of CSOs to be part of the public policy process and express views on socio-economic issues including on political and electoral issues.

⁶ A southern region of 23 communes containing 32 localities, with a population of 161,676 inhabitants.

⁷ MOLDOVA - US Department of State <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171710.pdf>

⁸ Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2018 Country Report Moldova

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Despite these improvements, the legal framework does not sufficiently address the areas of philanthropy, public procurement of services, with legal amendments proposed by CSOs pending for several years.

In April 2021, the Law on Local Action Groups (LAGs) was adopted. This represents a significant development to allow LAGs to register legal entities and receive funding from the National Fund for agriculture and rural development. The law entered into force in June 2021 and LAGs are taking concrete steps for their registration. The national funding provision under the rural development measure of the Agency for Intervention and Payments for Agriculture is expected to start in 2022.

Practices and attitudes – civil society engagement in the policy process

According to the 2021 Public Opinion Barometer, 73% of Moldovan citizens do not believe that Moldova is being governed taking into account the will of the people, an improvement from 84% in 2018 and yet a very high percentage. Only 18% of citizens trusted the justice system in 2021. A significant part of the citizens are reluctant to engage in civic actions and initiatives, only 30% of all citizens consider that they can improve things at the national level and 40% at the local level. The level of trust in CSOs increased from 19% in 2018 to 30% in 2021.

Public institutions are required to publish on their websites information about new policies, legislation, strategic documents and monitoring reports. Access to public information is free of charge. The website of each ministry has a sub-page where drafts are published for consultation, which *de jure* ensures a certain level of transparency of the decision-making process. Among other things, the applicable law requires the publication of detailed annual state budgets and expenditure statements for central and local government. Citizens and CSOs have the right to give opinions on drafts elaborated by the government or individual ministries (10 working days for comments). Following the consultation process, institutions have to accept or explain the reasons for not accepting an opinion. In addition, the legislative initiatives of the government are consulted with civil society through an online platform, at www.particip.gov.md.

The impact of CSOs on shaping public policy remains limited, although Moldovan civil society remains active when it comes to monitoring of the government activities and reforms⁹. While the legal framework for **transparency of decision-making** and consultation with civil society is quite progressive, the limited institutional capacities of the Government are rendering the process ineffective. The decision-making process at parliamentary level is also a subject to criticism due to non-transparent legislative processes that include sporadic public hearings and consultations, limited access to information, changes in the legislative agenda without notification (or with last-minute notification) of civil society experts and other relevant stakeholders. The Parliament's rules of procedures regarding transparency and CSOs/citizen consultation has to be improved in this respect. In this context, CSOs face difficulties in following and consistently shaping decision-making process. Similarly, there are no precise procedures to ensure enforcement of transparency by local authorities and there is no monitoring mechanism in place.

At the **level of central government**, the consultation is done mainly through the web portal www.particip.gov.md. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the level of transparency and participation decreased. In [2019](#), there were 625 recommendations provided by CSOs, 241 by Labour Unions and 533 by the business community. In [2020](#), the number of recommendations provided by the CSOs was 257, 60 recommendations were provided by the Labour Unions and 163 by the business community.

At **local level**, the overall level of transparency in decision-making remains low. [An annual evaluation](#) done in 2020 estimated that the level of transparency at local level represented 38%, a slight improvement compared

⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2018 – Moldova report

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to 2016 (30%). The slow progress is explained by lack of capacities, awareness, public demand, as well as technical factors – such as internet access, limited number of functional web pages of local authorities.

Participation mechanisms and their effectiveness

Fora for dialogue of national authorities with civil society at national level

The **NGO Council**, a dialogue partner for Parliament, was elected in 2018 by a gathering of CSOs and CSO alliances, although not providing a fully representative platform for small and medium sized CSOs. It is part of the committee monitoring the implementation of the National Civil Society Development Strategy, based on the cooperation agreement between both bodies of December 2005. The mandate of the Council was not renewed.

The **Economic Council to the Prime Minister** was established as an advisory body in 2011. The Council was assigned the mission to facilitate the dialogue between the representatives of the business community, donors' community and policy makers to develop a favourable socio-economic climate and non-discriminatory, transparent business environment, which would be attractive for investment. The Council is also assigned the functions of the National Committee for Trade Facilitation¹⁰. It is authorised to discuss and develop solutions for external trade related problems of national importance (including DCFTA related matters), which refer simultaneously to a number of public authorities and needs a systematic approach. On an annual basis, a joint civil society dialogue forum is to be held to present an update of the Trade and Sustainable Development Chapter of the Association Agreement (Article 377).

According to the law, the government should apply a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) to all draft laws and acts bearing on business activity to enhance transparency in the drafting of laws and regulatory acts through a **State Commission for Regulation of Entrepreneurial Activity**. It is composed of central government and business association representatives, working as a filter to eliminate excessive business regulations. However, there have been many cases in which laws were approved without RIA, especially for those in fast track adoption procedure.

Networks and platforms

Two national platforms are currently active in the field of EU-Moldova relations: **the Eastern Partnership National Platform** (established in 2011) and the **EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform**, established in 2016 as consultative body under the EU-Moldova Association Agreement¹¹. The latter is equally composed of representatives of employees, of employers and of other interests. Its counterpart in the EU is the European Economic and Social Committee. Despite some overlaps in their activity, the scope of the platforms is rather different. Platform member organisations are mainly from Chisinau and there is criticism concerning the lack of consultative and delegation systems to/from smaller grassroots organisations and citizens.

Civil Society Development National Strategy and Action Plan

The Civil Society Development Strategy 2018-2020 had three main objectives broadly in line with the Commission's view on improving the enabling environment: (i) consolidation of the participation framework of CSOs in drafting and monitoring the implementation of public policies; (ii) promotion and strengthening of the financial sustainability of CSOs; (iii) development of an active civic engagement and volunteering. The implementation of the Civil Society Development Strategy was concluded in 2020, with a 72,2%

¹⁰ For the purpose of implementing the commitments undertaken by the country in the Protocol Amending the Marrakech Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (Agreement on Trade Facilitation) approved by Law No. 729 of 09/06/2016

¹¹ Article 442, Title VII, of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement

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implementation rate, according to the [State Chancellery estimations](#). According to the same analysis, the lowest implementation rate referred to the second objective.

According to the study “Grassroots Civil Society Development Facility in the Republic of Moldova”, despite all initial efforts to draft a good Civil Society Development Strategy and obtain a deep cooperation between the civil society and governmental bodies in the implementation process, the subsequent results fell short of the stated goals. The process of Strategy implementation was rather slow and many actions were implemented not by governmental bodies, but by different CSOs. As a result of such distancing of the Government from ownership of the Strategy the overall implementation of the Action Plan is low, by the end of 2020 not being initiated 30% of envisaged actions¹².

There are no plans to develop a new strategic document focused on civil society, despite multiple recommendations. The Government Action Plan for 2021-2022 does not have a state priority related to civil society development, nor does it specify the intention to develop a new strategic document. Civil society development is approached as a crosscutting issue within most of the strategic areas (improving policy-making process, increasing the participation of diaspora, improving the institutional dialogue with the Local Public Administration, the development of a new Programme to Support Social Entrepreneurship).

Capacity and financial sustainability

Between 2017 and 2019, the Moldovan CSOs reported a total income of approximately EUR [490 million](#). Despite a high donor dependency, there are good developments on ensuring the financial sustainability of CSOs thanks to the 2% designation mechanism. The adopted designation mechanism allows taxpayers to allocate 2% of their paid income tax to CSOs and religious organisations. According to the [figures from the State Tax Service of the Republic of Moldova](#)¹³, in 2021, the total income of CSOs from the 2% designation mechanism amounted to over EUR 440,000. Compared to the previous year, the allocated amount has increased by 48.35%. This represents the highest annual value since the mechanism was introduced in 2017, along with a record number of contributors: 36,600 (compared to 28,500 in 2020).

Although provided by law, the philanthropic activity is complicated given the imperfect provisions that do not encourage donations from the business and private sectors. Despite the fact that in 2018 a joint working group was created to produce legal amendments on philanthropic activity, the Government did not produce a draft law and did not improve the legal framework. Currently the Platform for Development and Promotion of Philanthropy (a network of 36 CSOs) is the main driving force that supports capacity building of CSOs in this field and promotes changes in the legal framework for philanthropic activity and sponsorship. Philanthropic activities were negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2018, a Governmental decision to establish the National Commission on Social Entrepreneurship was adopted. The National Commission was active in 2019, but less active over the pandemic period (2020-2021). The first four social enterprises were officially accredited in Moldova in [June 2020](#).

Public funding is channelled via direct action grants from certain Ministries (in such areas as culture, youth, economy or environment) or via contracting of social service delivery. Thanks to the Law on Local Action Groups (LAGs) adopted in April 2021, LAGs can benefit from funding from the state budget. In February 2020, the government decided to allocate up to 5 % from the National Agricultural and Rural Development Fund to finance LAGs. These funds will be allocated based on LAGs proposals.

¹² <https://www.dezvolt.md/media/civil-society-development-strategy-2018-2020-an-intermediary-assessment>

¹³ <https://csometer.info/updates/moldova-csos-income-tax-percentage-mechanism-increased-48-2021>

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Local Authorities (LA) could represent a source of funding, especially for small CSOs, but given the low level of fiscal decentralisation, LA resources remain limited. LAs – such as villages, communes, cities and municipalities councils – can potentially offer privileged spaces for engaging CSOs in local governance and policy making; and this role would be relevant both as a way to launch initiatives aimed at reducing social exclusion at local level as well as a way to foster decentralisation. A more sustainable local governance would further increase the capacities and financial sustainability of CSOs. Despite recent progress, including increased funding from the EU, grassroots organisations from the regions but also from Chisinau remain financially vulnerable and have limited access to funding and relatively weak institutional capacity. Grassroots organisations rarely have access to grants and if they do, projects may lack sustainability. Well-established CSOs have been experiencing capacity problems mainly due to emigration of skilled staff abroad and/or general lack of skilled staff. More efforts are needed in supporting innovative organisations, both at local and national level.

EU and other donors’ engagement

The overall objective of the EU and the EU Member States towards civil society in Moldova is to contribute to its development in becoming a stronger actor, actively participating in decision and policy-making and in implementing the EU-Moldova Association Agreement (AA). The EU strongly believes in promoting the role of civil society as an essential domestic actor in the implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, on facilitating CSOs oversight role and building its capacity, and enhancing the role of civil society to be an active and independent development actor.

At the EU level, support towards civil society is streamlined in the [Joint Staff Working Document - Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities](#), which envisions the following results:

- An enabling environment for civil society will be promoted through favourable regulatory frameworks in line with international standards;
- Award at least 200 civil society fellowships to strengthen civic activists’ capacity to engage constructively with communities and authorities;
- EU outreach to grassroots organisations will double to reach over 2,500 of CSOs, including those operating outside capitals or in conflict affected regions, and in local languages, and women’s organisations;
- Support in new areas, such as social innovation and creating a more favourable ecosystem for social economy and social entrepreneurship will help to broaden the scope of reform and reach out to new actors;
- The EU will further develop strategic partnership with CSOs, enhance re-granting to local organisations and engage with social partners (trade unions and employers’ organisations).

The **European Union** is the largest donor to civil society in Moldova. The support is channelled through regional, thematic programmes and on a bilateral basis. As of November 2021, 22 EU funded projects implemented by CSOs are under implementation, with a total amount of EUR 22 million (mainstreamed and targeted support to CSOs).

Overview of EU bilateral funding for civil society in Moldova

Year	2020	2021	2022 (forecast)	2023 (forecast)
EUR	11,120,000	7,120,000	5,120,000	8,920,000

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The EU meets regularly with CSOs. There are bi-annual meetings prior to the Human Rights dialogue and the Association Councils. CSOs are also consulted before and during new EU programme identification. CSOs, including grassroots organisations, are as well consulted on strategic documents such as the Association Agenda and implementation report as well as the Democracy Action Plan, Country Level Implementation Plan, the Multi-annual Indicative Programme and the Annual Action Programmes.

Other European donors presently active in this area include: Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden (in alphabetic order) and Switzerland (the list is not exhaustive).

Austria through the means of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation, is primarily engaged to support development interventions targeting sustainable rural development with a particular focus on water management, environmental protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as equal opportunity in labour market inclusion. For more than a decade, ADA assists and finances CSOs projects to support the Vocational Education and Training (VET) reform by focusing on digitalization of the educational process, enhancing the capacities of teachers and improving career guidance opportunities of young people.

OeAD - Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation as well focuses on supporting the VET sector through a variety of projects in inclusive education, school management and networking. Through the cooperation with local NGOs civil society actors are encouraged in implementing life-long learning, inclusive education and cooperation networks in the field of education.

Achieving gender equality is, an essential approach for the promotion of development and therefore plays a particular role in ADC interventions. All interventions are based on CSO's own initiatives and directed at specific requirements and demands of vulnerable groups (children, victims of domestic violence, people with special needs). Various financial envelopes such as NGO Cooperation, Small Grants Program, Business Partnership are available for local civil society organization from both banks.

The Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior has given its support for years to the sector specific CSOs (Women in Police NGO) throughout various capacity building programs (e.g. study visits, regular exchange of best practise) while the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection is a long-standing and reliable partner of local CSOs engaged in social protection, social entrepreneurship, long-term care, and health system development.

Czech Republic supports and cooperates with civil society organizations through different projects that focus on inclusive social development, good democratic governance, agricultural and rural development. The role of civil society organizations in all these fields is irreplaceable and strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations is crosscutting issue for the Czech Development Cooperation.

Finland provides support to CSOs via the [Fund for Local Cooperation](#) focusing on local civil society actors and independent media. The priority areas of the support are the rights of women and girls as well as freedom of expression and media literacy.

Through its [Matra program](#), **the Netherlands** supports initiatives of the local organizations focusing on reducing corruption and crime, reforming the judiciary, improving the position on minorities, promoting freedom of the press, strengthening democratic party system.

Lithuanian Development Cooperation focuses on areas in line with Lithuanian foreign policy priorities listed in the [Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines of the Republic of Lithuania](#), support for civil society in Moldova is mostly provided in the form of grants for small-scale projects through annual open call for proposals. Areas of cooperation include strengthening of democracy and human rights, promotion of gender equality, enhancement of social and economic activity of women and youth, and public awareness raising on European integration.

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Based on the [Estonian Development Cooperation Country Strategy for Moldova](#), **Estonia** prioritises the involvement of the civil society in governance and the shaping of reform process along with media independence and empowerment of young people and women in entrepreneurship.

Guided by the Results [Strategy for Reform Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020](#), **Sweden** supports civil society in Moldova to become strong and pluralistic by building democratic, transparent and resilient organizations, to better engage in policy-dialogue, as well as in service delivery at national and local levels (including Transnistria and Gagauzia). Core-support programme targets institutional development of CSOs active in fields like gender equality, environment, human rights, economic development, justice and media.

The **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** supports the participation of women and men, including the excluded ones, in decision-making processes in all its projects (social accountability component - patients' organisations in health, hometown associations for the diaspora, etc.). It supports a media and CSOs project - CSOs representing vulnerable groups (youth, elderly, Roman and people with disabilities), their networks, constituents and communities to build coalitions, claim their rights and demand better services. SDC also has a fund for culture and grass roots organisations accessible through a call for proposal.

USAID is a significant donor to civil society in Moldova. USAID provides funding to national and international CSOs in order to increase democratic and civic accountability, free and fair elections, community participation, free and independent media. Through its [Country Development Cooperation Strategy \(CDCS\) - Moldova, 2020-2025](#) through one of its two development objectives: Strengthened Participatory Democracy. USAID will transition from emphasising direct assistance to public institutions to catalysing citizen engagement in their communities to drive demand for accountable governance and stronger democratic institutions.

The **OSCE** concentrates on building capacity of NGOs and civic initiatives from Transnistria as well as promotes partnerships and cooperation between NGOs on both banks of the Nistru River.

The **United Nations** made up of the UN itself and many affiliated programmes, funds, and specialised agencies support civil society (including CSOs from Transnistria) in different domains mainly through external financial resources as implementing body.

Political foundations are active, with strong and active presence of the German political foundations (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Hans Seidel Foundation, etc.). US political foundations are also present (e.g. American Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute) and provide support to political parties and supporting civic leadership, as well as think tanks related to political parties.

The main **international private foundations**, e.g. Open Society Foundations (Soros Foundation Moldova) and East-Europe Foundation, are also active in Moldova supporting civil society development, civic engagement and participatory democracy.



LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE EU ENGAGEMENT SO FAR

(i.e. dialogue, operational support, EU coordination and division of labour, negotiation of partnership priorities)

1. More attention should be given on outreach and providing timely information to local audiences and thus ensure predictability and visibility for CSOs of the EU's and EU's Member States' assistance and adequate engagement of local stakeholders, as well as their wider access to it. This could be achieved by working with well-established CSO resource centres and/or networks, federations/umbrella organisations. A social accountability aspect should be introduced in all the projects implemented by the CSOs.
2. More coordination is necessary between issues raised by CSOs during policy dialogue and the operational support and on strengthening the working modalities.
3. Participation in policy dialogues should be broadened to include the whole range of CSOs – e.g. trade unions, associations of entrepreneurs, environmental CSOs, youth, women's and farmer's organisations, cooperatives, etc. - and, wherever possible, have a multi-actor approach, coordinated with national authorities, emphasising their multi-stakeholder dimension.
4. While CSO engagement has been 'mainstreamed' and targeted for CSOs in instruments and programmes in all sectors of cooperation, the approach needs strengthening and sustainability.
5. CSOs role in promoting and communicating, disseminating information on European values and reform processes related to the AA was limited by the lack of resources for such activities - some of the EU assistance in the future should focus on this aspect as well.
6. Some of the areas supported for many years such as the Confidence Building Measures require renewed approaches such as focus on cultural heritage and multiculturalism, use of conflict sensitivity in sectoral policies, ensuring gender equality and promoting Women, Peace and Security agenda
7. The financial sustainability of CSOs, especially of those working at community level on service delivery, needs to be improved by legal changes and resources to be allocated so that, for example, local authorities can contract out social services to be provided via CSOs.
8. Gender mainstreaming is still a challenge for CSOs, whose mission is not directly aimed at promoting gender equality and women's rights. Therefore, it is important to provide constant capacity building support and mentoring on gender analysis and gender mainstreaming for CSOs, including support for building, monitoring and evaluation of the logical framework, using sex-disaggregated data. Gender-sensitive management and administration should be promoted.
9. More attention is needed to vulnerable groups, including women, youth, elderly people, rural population, national minorities etc. While people from vulnerable groups have not had direct input into EU actions design or activities, CSOs can ensure that these groups have been consulted. Several actors (SE, USAID) are now promoting core-support funding for established CSOs with a well-known track record. This should be further developed and adopted by other donors, including by the EU.
10. CSOs still require capacity building on working together, conducting outreach and engage constituents and more assertive and effective advocacy and improve coalition building. Funding should have flexibility to support medium to long-term programmes of networks/resource centres and granting of core-funding for CSOs who have proven record of influence in policymaking.
11. Flexible sub-granting schemes targeting CSOs from rural communities has increased their relevance and reversed their institutional decline. Along with additional and continued financial support, these CSOs need capacity building in order to build and expand on these results.
12. Support via EaP increases communication and partnerships among different CSOs in EaP countries.
13. Moldovan CSOs need further support to better engage with EU decision makers.

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PART II – EU STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN TO ENGAGE WITH CSOs

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	PRIORITIES FOR EU ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY	TARGETS OF EU ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY	ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES (analysis, policy dialogue, financial or non-financial support)	INDICATIVE MEANS (programmes/instruments, etc.) – list not exhaustive
General EU engagement with civil society				
<p>Challenges to democratic governance, accountability and transparency of public authorities</p> <p>Challenges to ensure that citizens' interests are at the centre of policy making</p> <p>Challenges to engage citizens</p>	<p>1. Promote a conducive environment for CSOs, good governance, strengthening democratic institutions - CSO participation in developing and monitoring the implementation of public policies, increasing the transparency and accountability of central and local administrations</p>	<p>Strengthened participatory and inclusive democratic governance at central and local levels</p> <p>Participatory mechanisms that promote improved democratic governance, accountability and transparency of public authorities, essential in combatting corruption and in ensuring that public authorities are not only held accountable for their actions, but strive to ensure that citizens' interests are at the centre of policy making</p> <p>Empowering civil society and citizens to</p>	<p>Continue to support CSOs action in the area of good governance, accountability and rule of law – monitoring public institutions - transparency of decision making of policy implementation;</p> <p>More structured and efficient regular, multi-stakeholder dialogue, involving CSOs, local governments in every sector and in every policy/programming cycle;</p> <p>Strengthening the internal capacities of CSOs, including gender-sensitive management and administration, through possible core support including for national networks and regional organisations/platforms;</p> <p>Strengthening the capacities of CSOs to react to restrictive</p>	<p>Civil Society Facility 2020</p> <p>Civil Society Facility 2021</p> <p>Civil Society Facility 2022</p> <p>CSO component - Strengthen the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms in the Republic of Moldova under AAP 2018, EU funded project</p> <p>Local Communities Development Leader Programme, EU funded project</p> <p>Sub-grant component in the programme “Strengthened Gender Action in Cahul and Ungheni districts” EU funded project</p>

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		<p>engage, ensuring a system that promotes the free flow of information by public authorities to its citizens</p> <p>Empowering civil society to answer to attacks and to restrictive legislation</p> <p>Strengthened local, regional and CSO-coalitions and cooperation platforms with central and local public authorities, media, business environmental, youth, women and farmers associations</p> <p>CSOs institutional and financial sustainability supported</p>	<p>legislation and to restrictive environment;</p> <p>Broadening the base of CSOs engagement outside of the capital</p> <p>Dialogue at the regional and local levels;</p> <p>Dialogue with civil society linked with EU budget support programmes, Macro Financial Assistance programme;</p> <p>Social dialogue – improve dialogue with social partners trade unions, farmers, employers Moldova;</p> <p>Empower local level CSOs with appropriate knowledge, tools and frameworks to take a more active role in consultations, contribution and oversight of the local public policies and budgets;</p> <p>Increase participation of the population and civil society in the budgetary processes, as well as monitoring of public spending, including public</p>	<p>Funded or co-funded by Switzerland -inclusiveness project Eastern Foundation, Swiss red cross social accountability in the health sector, etc...</p> <p>Partnerships 4 Women Leadership and Good Governance EU funded project</p> <p>European Union Confidence Building Measures Programme V (2019-2023)</p>
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			<p>procurements and gender responsive budgeting;</p> <p>Increase CSOs institutional and financial sustainability by supporting initiatives and mechanisms for CSOs health-check, advice and guidance for CSOs capacity building in management of funds and fundraising activities.</p> <p>Assessments undertaken on existing participatory and advocacy approaches, capacity building needs and communication campaigns</p> <p>Capacity building for CSOs on mechanisms and tools for transparency in the decision-making process, mobilisation, social responsibility, policy advocacy.</p> <p>Capacity building for CSOs on gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, including support for building monitoring and evaluation framework using sex-disaggregated data.</p>	
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			Creating national gender expert's roster and promoting EaP and EU gender expert's rosters to ensure availability of capacity building services on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for CSOs.	
In view of new roles and responsibilities of civil society in the framework of the implementation of the Association Agreement, the lack of representativeness of the civil society sector, their lack of capacity in advocacy, lobbying and engaging in high level policy dialogue and their lack of organisational skills present a clear issue.	2. Strengthen CSO participation in the reform process in the various sectors foreseen in EU Moldova Association Agenda and Moldova's effective use of EU assistance	<p>Meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of Moldova, in the EU/MS programming cycle and in international processes</p> <p>Strengthened CSOs capacities and expertise in monitoring the implementation of AA and use of EU assistance</p> <p>Improved / increased engagement of CSOs and think-tanks in raising awareness on AA issues, promoting the AA implementation and the European values more broadly</p>	<p>Regular participation of CSOs in policy dialogue of EU on Moldova through formal and informal frameworks;</p> <p>Involvement of CSOs in the annual EU Association Agreement implementation report, as well as other reports and assessments;</p> <p>Create opportunities for CSOs in monitoring all types of EU assistance;</p> <p>Enhanced policy dialog between authorities – CSOs – EU in main thematic fields (ministerial level);</p> <p>Support the EaP Moldova Platform and the AA Platform through a Secretariat; clarify the legal status of the Platforms;</p>	<p>Swedish core-support programme for CSOs in fields as: human rights, justice, environment, economic development, gender and free media.</p> <p>Swedish support to the Economic Council secretariat through the project Business Investment Climate Reform II implemented by IFC.</p> <p>Inform, Empower, Act. Civil Society for good budgetary governance in Moldova project, EU funded project</p>

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		<p>Strengthened capacities of local and grass-roots CSOs to apply monitoring tools and fulfil watchdog functions on the local and national level</p>	<p>Strengthen the advocacy, communication and coordination capacities of the established CSOs platforms and its members (NP of the EaP CSF and EU-MD CSP);</p> <p>Support CSOs activities of public policies monitoring, including of the AA and EU assistance;</p> <p>Enhance capacities of CSOs on monitoring EU financial assistance (MFA, budget support, projects);</p> <p>In order to support strategic communication on EU affairs/assistance: to develop the network of communicators in state institutions (role, capacities, and instruments), as well as of CSOs and mass-media on how to reflect effectively EU assistance and AA implementation;</p> <p>Support CSOs programmes and initiatives aiming at strengthening the policy and advocacy bridging of the established CSOs platforms and</p>	
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			<p>its members with similar organisations from the EU and EaP countries;</p> <p>Support of initiatives, such as "Europe for You" to develop and coordinate joint messages, as well as for bringing together beneficiaries of different EU projects and using the possibilities of message multiplication at local level (initiative groups, local youth councils, grass roots organisations).</p> <p>Promote the empowerment of women's status as communities and CSOs leaders at the national and local level. Ensure meaningful participation of women in advocacy campaign and decision making process.</p>	
<p>Self-sustainability in the sector remains an issue, despite the so-called "2% law" and social entrepreneurship legislation in place. CSOs also have the option to earn income from service and goods provision as long as this is stipulated in their statute.</p>	<p>3. Enhance the role of civil society as a community development actor and service provider to the citizens</p>	<p>CSOs become active players in the economic realm, with initiatives having an impact on local economy and complement local and national government provision of services</p>	<p>Capacity building for civil society actors with a socio-economic role such as cooperatives, social finance institutions, social enterprises, women, Trade Unions, farmers and SME organisations</p> <p>Build capacities of CSOs to develop and implement 2%</p>	<p>EU Civil Society Facility 2020</p> <p>Swiss funded migration and development program.</p> <p>Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Acting for Better Social Service, EU funded project</p>

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<p>CSOs have increasingly become active players in the economic realm, with initiatives having impact on local economy or by monitoring repercussions of national and international economic policies.</p> <p>New social entrepreneurship law adopted</p>			<p>communication and promotion campaigns;</p> <p>Supporting "social economy" which focuses on achieving social impact rather than profit only: associations, cooperatives, foundations and NGOs active in promoting gender equality, entrepreneurship and job creations by mobilising grassroots communities, delivering services and stimulating income generating activities for the poor and marginalised, job creation and entrepreneurship responsive to community needs, stimulating local economic growth in an inclusive and sustainable manner as active players for an inclusive green economy, putting emphasis on the importance of including both social and environmental factors in stimulating economic growth;</p> <p>Supporting CSO initiatives and partnerships which combine social and economic ambitions, in sectors such as rural development, women human rights, tourism and culture,</p>	<p>Local Civil Society Contributes to Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Development in Moldova, EU funded project</p> <p>Better opportunities for Young Women and Men Not in Education, Employment and Training in Moldova (NEET Inclusion Initiative, EU funded project</p> <p>Joboteca – a pilot programme for youth employment in Moldova, EU funded project</p> <p>Civil society engagement in improving the rural development processes and promotion of efficient models for sustainable local development, EU funded project</p> <p>EU Confidence Building Measures (CBM) “ Improvement of medico-social care services for people with long-term care needs on both</p>
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			<p>environment and energy, access to financial services through micro-finance among others; Supporting CSOs' efforts to engage women and girls in green transition and digital transformation as community leaders, professional and decision makers; Supporting CSO's efforts to empower women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Supporting CSOs' efforts to facilitate multistakeholders' cooperation in climate change/green economy related sectors, ensuring that women and men will benefit equally from green transition. Promoting the decent work agenda through trade unions, farmers organisations, etc.</p> <p>Supporting CSOs that provide vulnerable groups, including women, with services that enhance their skills in labor market and increase their economic independence.</p> <p>Supporting CSOs that work to ensure freedom from all forms of</p>	<p>sides of the Nistru River” project</p> <p>Swedish Core-support programme for CSOs in fighting domestic violence on both banks of the river Nistru.</p> <p>Swedish support to grassroots organizations via East Europe Foundation.</p> <p>Sub-grant component in the Human Rights Programme in the Transnistrian Region supported by Sweden and implemented by UN Agencies (domestic violence, rights of people with disabilities, prevention and treatment of HIV/TB).</p> <p>Contribution to ‘Engaging citizens, empowering communities’ Program in Moldova (EC-EC Program), implemented by East Europe Foundation (2017-2021) co-financed by Switzerland (SDC)</p>
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			gender-based violence and discrimination, providing services for survivors of GBV and other relevant activities.	
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PART III – FOLLOW-UP ON THE PROCESS AND STRATEGY

Process indicators		
INDICATOR	TARGET	BASE LINE INFORMATION AND FURTHER COMMENTS
Involvement of EU Member States in the Roadmap.	EU Member States present in the country are actively involved in the RM process.	Several meetings and exchanges of information through the network of development counsellors took place during 2021; Online consultation meetings with EU MS and CSOs' participation in March and November 2021. HoMs' endorsement of the roadmap in December 2021.
Number and quality of consultations held. Number and diversity (in terms of location, sector, capacities) of CSOs consulted regarding the RM.	The Roadmap entails consultations with a broad range of local CSOs. Ultimately it leads to more permanent and structured dialogue.	Roadmap shared several times with former and current EU and MS CSOs grantees, EaP National Platform, networks of local grass roots organisations. Comments requested and received in written form. Online consultations with EU MS and CSOs' participation in March and November 2021. Information on roadmap shared through different public events, including at HoD level.
Complementarity of the Roadmap vis-à-vis related EU and other donor partners' processes.	The Roadmap is complementary to related processes including human rights and democracy country strategies, the rights-based approach to development, gender action plans, etc.	Roadmap is annexed to the European Joint Development Strategy and EU Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy. Roadmap developed based on existing evaluations, CSO mapping, including HRDCS and GAP reports.

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Outcome indicators				
PRIORITIES	TARGET	INDICATORS	BASELINE INFORMATION (if available)	SOURCES OF INFORMATION & MEANS OF VERIFICATION
<p>1. Promote a conducive environment for CSOs, good governance, strengthening democratic institutions - CSO participation in developing and monitoring the implementation of public policies, increasing the transparency and accountability of central and local administrations</p>	<p>Strengthened participatory and inclusive democratic governance at central and local levels.</p>	<p>1. Number of public initiatives promoting social accountability and civil society participation in public policy oversight, including in the area of gender equality</p> <p>2. Evidence of enhanced CSO's capacities for participatory, transparent and accountable service provision (to define what constitute a sound participatory, transparent and accountable service provision)</p> <p>3. Number of legislative amendments to improve</p>	<p>In <u>2020</u>, the number of recommendations provided by the CSOs was 257, by the Labour Unions 60 and by Business community 163.</p> <p>According to CSO monitoring, the regulatory framework for effective civil society participation at legislative level (Parliament) has to be improved.</p>	<p>CSO mapping</p> <p>State Chancellery and Parliament annual reports on transparency in decision-making</p> <p>Internal EU/MS reports</p>

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		transparency in decision making		
2. Strengthen a CSOs participation in the reform process in the various sectors foreseen in EU-Moldova Association Agenda and Moldova's effective use of EU assistance	Meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of Moldova, in the EU/MS programming cycle and in international processes	<p>1. Quality (nature and scope) of CSO's involvement in dialogue processes related to the EU-national strategic partnership, Free Trade Agreements, programming of EU assistance, etc.</p> <p>2. Evidence of more systematic engagements/structured dialogue spaces between supported CSO's and EU/other donors</p> <p>3. Extent to which EUDs/other donors report improved relations with CSO's</p>	<p>CSOs are invited as observers/contributors to EU-Moldova Human Rights Dialogue;</p> <p>Reports and policy papers prepared by the EU-Moldova CSO platform in preparation of AA Committee</p> <p>CSOs policy papers and dialogue to inform ENP reporting, assistance programming and policy review</p> <p>Regular meetings between HoD and EaP CSOs National Platform</p>	<p>Meeting reports</p> <p>Policy papers</p> <p>EU monitoring documents</p>
3. Enhance the role of civil society as a community development actor and	CSOs become active players in the economic realm, with initiatives having impact on local	1. Existence/quality of partnerships between public authorities and non-state actors partners (CSO, private	Especially for small CSOs, local authorities represent a source of support but given the low level of fiscal decentralisation their resources remain limited.	<p>CSO mapping</p> <p>Sub-granting scheme</p>

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<p>service provider to the citizens</p>	<p>economy and complement local and national government provision of services.</p>	<p>sector, etc.) aiming at better service delivery</p> <p>2. Number/quality of outputs produced (e.g. structures, plans, systems, proposals, reports etc.) for improved service provision, including in the area of gender equality</p>	<p>Number/quality of outputs at the moment, but sub-granting scheme would be available starting with mid-November 2021.</p>	
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