

**Road Map for the Government Policy towards a More
Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development
2019-2023**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ASCS	- Agency for the Support for Civil Society
CSO	- Civil Society Organization
EUD	- European Union Delegation
INSTAT	- Albanian Institute of Statistics
IPA	- Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MEFA	- Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
MIS	- Management Information System
NAIS	- National Agency for Information Society
NBC	- National Business Centre
NCCS	- National Council for Civil Society
NCEI	- National Council of European Integration
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organization
PAR	- Public Administration Reform
PMO	- Prime Minister's Office
TA	- Technical Assistance
ToR	- Terms of Reference
VAT	- Value Added Tax

1. Introduction

Background

Between 2001 and 2017, there were 7580 non-profit organizations registered in Albania by the authorities as associations, foundations, or centres¹. The Government of Albania is committed to actively involving civil society in setting the political agenda of the country, as well as in the monitoring policy implementation, notably within the EU integration process. The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015- 2024 as well as the National Action Plan for EU Integration underline the importance of Civil Society participation in the country's EU integration process.

Active and inclusive promotion and participation of citizens and their organisations in social, economic and political life is characteristic to democratic societies. An enabling and efficient legal and fiscal/financial framework for these organizations, guaranteed by the state, is a precondition for the good functioning, sustainability, and further development of the sector.

Thus, the creation of an enabling environment for the civil society organizations is one of the preconditions and measures for stable democracy in a modern nation state. This environment created by the State, has to guarantee favourable fiscal and legal condition for Civil Society and needs to create space for freedom of media, independent institutions, freedom of speech as well as other fundamental human and citizen's rights. One of the fundamental characteristics of democratic governments is the obligation of the state to be at the service of its citizens. Dialogue and cooperation between state authorities and civil society are in the direct interest of, and benefit to the public, and hence a precondition for a well-functioning inclusive society.

In short, good cooperation between a service-minded government and an active, critical thinking and constructive civil society is an essential component for pluralist democracy, which allows citizens to freely organise interest groups and participate in the policy cycle and decision-making processes of their country in a regulated and transparent manner.

The original Road Map for an enabling government policy towards civil society development was published in the Official Gazette in May 2015². The adoption of the Road Map was preceded by a wide consultation with CSO representatives, as well as the donor community. Equally the Parliament of Albania in 2014 issued a *Resolution in recognition and Strengthening of the Role of Civil Society* as an act which strongly supported all other actions undertaken by the Government and Civil society

This revised 2019-2023 Road Map reflects the view of the government, based also on input from:

- Representatives of line Ministries responsible for specific actions in the Road MAap
- Agency for the support of Civil Society
- Civil society via an online survey published on the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS) website
- CSO members of the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) and
- Individual and group consultations with representatives of the civil society sector

The revised version was presented to the wider donor community and its revision was supported by

¹ Data shared by the First Instance Tirana Court in February 2018

² Official Journal No. 94 dated June 9th, 2015

the EUD.

The Road Map describes briefly the current state of affairs in regard to the Road Map actions as well as the prevailing challenges. The overall focus is on defining necessary actions the government will undertake in the coming months and years with regard to improving the civil society operating environment. It equally focuses on the institutionalised dialogue between civil society and government and other stakeholders for policy reforms and EU Integration. Furthermore, it identifies the relevant public institutions of the Government of Albania responsible for implementing the Road Map and describes the monitoring system.

With this revised Road Map, the Albanian Government wishes to demonstrate its commitment to enable a conducive civil society environment. While aware of the obstacles faced by the civil society sector, the Albanian Government expresses its firm commitment to continue and intensify the work already started with the previous Road Map.

The way forward

The revised Road Map document presents a series of actions and concrete measures in a variety of interrelated and complementary policy areas: the legal framework with emphasis on improving the registration issue, a strengthened institutional framework for the work of CSOs, clearer and more transparent public funding mechanisms for CSO programmes, inclusive involvement of CSOs in social service delivery on national and local level according to standards, regulated consultations with CSOs in drafting new laws, a favourable tax policy for CSOs, a more conducive legal, fiscal, and institutional framework for the promotion of volunteering, and an enabling promotion of philanthropy.

Three strategic areas have been identified with a set of 42 actions to be undertaken by the defined institutions so as to further create and maintain a conducive civil society environment.

To ensure proper monitoring of the implantation 130 indicators have been allocated to the 42 actions.

At the same time, civil society is seen as a close partner in implementing several actions in the Road Map and further promoting it as a platform for building a constructive dialogue on the development of the sector.

1) Institutionalized government - civil society cooperation

In view of an imminent start of Albania's EU accession negotiation, a much closer cooperation and coordination will be required and ensured at all levels of government with the parliamentary and civil society platforms dealing with EU integration matters.

The role of civil society organizations (CSO) in the National Council of European Integration (NCEI), established in 2015, will be further enhanced. CSO role and contribution to the Council's overall work is considered a vital part of the EU accession negotiation process in particular in their role to representing the citizen's voice and in supporting raising awareness to citizens' of Albania on the impact of EU integration in their lives. The new Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, established after elections of June 2017 is the line ministry responsible for ensuring the institutional strengthening of this cooperation and start the actions foreseen in the Road Map in 2019.

Since 2015, the adoption of the law establishing the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS), which has an advisory and consultative role to the Council of Ministers, provided the framework for a institutionalised dialogue and consultations with civil society organizations in all matters of CSO concern and in regard to key reforms and policies undertaken by the Government.

Institutionalizing government – civil society cooperation will require that, all ministries represented in the Council ensure proper information flow, the setup and functioning of the Council's working groups, as well as the inclusion of the CSO council members in the on-going inter-ministerial

working group's discussion process. This is the precondition for all the Council members in carrying out their mandate as foreseen in the law.

The ASCS is the technical secretariat of the Council and supports the Council in respecting the law and bylaws by ensuring wide public communication of the Council's work, as well as, raising awareness of the roadmap as a joint platform to further advance efforts in creating an enabling environment for civil society work in Albania.

The 2019 Council annual work plan, approved in March 2019, will be renewed every year according to the agreed actions to be undertaken by the NCCS and its state and civil society members and in the view of a wider coordination with the development partners (or Sector Working Group for Civil Society) engaged in actions related to the roadmap.

The system put in place for the implementation of Law No. 146/2014 on Notification and Public Consultation, widely supported by civil society as a key law in providing a space for a well structured dialogue, although, still in the early stages of development, it provides a big opportunity and potential for opening the space of dialogue and consultation between government, local government and civil society, think tanks, social partners and all other actors in the sector.

In the mid-term, the platform will also foresee a provision for separate CSO inputs in the electronic platform, to identify the CSOs in the category of Non-Profit Organization.

The Law on volunteering (No. 45/2016) will need further development, thus regulating clearly all the opportunities, rights, and obligations related to volunteer work. Sub-legal acts regulating the relationships between volunteers and host organizations will be introduced. The law will have to be embedded in a national concept for volunteering and active citizenship, which will be developed in close and public cooperation with civil society organizations, following good and applicable European practices.

The National Service for Employment and Vocational Training with its branches throughout the country is well placed to play an important role in the national volunteer scheme.

2) *Enabling legal environment & data governance*

Data concerning historical records and changes of CSO status are not readily accessible, despite their availability being required by law. In addition, data concerning activities and sources of income of Albanian civil society organizations is not available in consolidated form.

The lack of data poses obvious challenges for evidence-based policy making in the civil society field. This problem would be solved by the creation of a centralized CSO data management system into which all records could be collated. Accordingly, data concerning historical records and changes of CSO status will be made readily accessible in line with the law. In addition, data concerning activities and sources of income of the Albanian civil society organizations will be collected on a voluntary basis and published on the ASCS website.

In order to formulate necessary (policy) steps for supporting the growth of Albanian civil society reliable and comprehensive data must be available for policy-makers, the public, donors and partners.

On such regard, the procedures and practical approaches linked to CSO registration and deregistration are going to be addressed and the most burdensome and out-dated procedures will be overcome by identifying the most appropriate institutions for registration processes in future.

In addition, a series of new primary legislation based on gap analysis and proper research will be issued and several bylaws will be adopted. The Ministries in charge of the respective laws as defined below in this Road Map will take responsibility for the promotion of the above mentioned legislative changes.

3) Fiscal and funding framework

New national accounting standards for non-profit organizations are already in place. However, the regulatory framework for fiscal affairs related to CSOs needs to be updated, as the CSOs of Albania is facing some challenges, in this regard.

The Government of Albania through this Road Map, expresses its commitment to improve the regulatory framework for fiscal affairs related to CSOs. The measures foreseen include improving of current procedure for VAT reimbursement under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) funded grant, training of tax authorities, regulation of public funding for CSO initiatives, projects and programs both at the central and the local level, application of fiscal incentives for individuals and improving of incentives for corporate donations to CSOs.

All of the above commitments are also in line with the ‘Guidelines for European Union support to civil society in enlargement countries 2014-2021’, which have been developed by the European Commission. The guidelines ensure a solid framework for measuring the progress towards developing a participatory democracy in accession countries.

This Road Map is supported by a realistic budget for its implementation and the government’s will to enable its implementing bodies in establishing an enabling environment. This will encourage civil society independence, efficiency and sustainability, contributing thus to bridging the gap between citizens and government institutions.

2. Revised Road Map structure

This revised Road Map is presented through three strategic directions, mainly covering the original nine priority areas of the 2015 Road Map. The three strategic directions with its nine priority areas take into account the principles and objectives set out in the Guidelines for EU support to civil society 2014-2021. These EU Guidelines have been conceived as a framework for the EU enlargement region as a whole. They provide the basis for a tailor-made approach at the national level in accordance with the country context, but also allow for the measurement of progress at country level, as well across the enlargement region.

The Road Map also identifies responsible institutions, progress indicators and timelines and areas of technical assistance. The work plan will be followed, monitored and updated by each line ministry. The Prime Minister’s office in close cooperation with National Council for Civil Society Support will ensure the overall monitoring of the progress. Thus, progress made will be regularly presented at the Council’s meetings by the responsible institution. This will contribute to a more transparent, result-oriented Government - civil society cooperation as a prerequisite for the sustainability and irreversibility of reforms undertaken in the EU accession process.

The three strategic directions priorities are:

Strategic Direction 1: Institutionalized Government - Civil Society cooperation in policy making and EU Integration

Priority 1: Creation and maintenance of a nationwide strategic policy for civil society development

(5 Actions, 16 indicators)

Priority 2: Service-minded government institutions valuing cooperation with CSOs

(9 Actions, 31 indicators)

Priority 3: Sustainable and effective involvement of CSOs in policy-making process in policy making and EU Integration

(5 Actions 14 indicators)

Priority 4: Ensuring CSO contribution to Albania's EU accession process in line with EU good practice

(5 Actions, 11 indicators)

Priority 5: Supporting CSO volunteering and active citizenship with a special focus at local level

(5 Actions, 18 indicators)

Strategic Direction 2: Enabling legal environment & proper data governance

Priority 6: Introducing a more enabling legislative framework for the registration and operation of CSOs

(3 Actions, 12 indicators)

Priority 7: CSO data governance: collection and analysis of data on civil society development to feed into strategic decision-making and transparent support schemes

(3 Actions, 10 indicators)

Strategic Direction 3: Enabling Fiscal and funding framework

Priority 8: Creation of a public funding framework for supporting CSOs programmes in line with EU good practice

(3 Actions, 10 indicators)

Priority 9: Ensuring a nation-wide implementation of supportive financial reporting, accounting and tax treatment of CSOs

(4 Actions, 8 indicators)

2.1 Strategic Direction 1: Institutionalized Government – civil society cooperation in policy making and EU Integration

Priority 1: Creation and maintenance of a nationwide strategic policy for civil society development

Priority 2: Service-minded government institutions valuing cooperation with CSOs

Priority 3: Sustainable and effective involvement of CSOs in policy making process

Priority 4: Ensuring CSO contribution to Albania's EU accession process in line with EU good practice

Priority 5: Supporting CSO volunteering and active citizenship

Priority 1: Creation and maintenance of a nationwide strategic policy for civil society development

Five main actions have been identified under this priority and timeframes have been defined:

1.1. Proper planning and implementation of actions by each responsible ministry/state institution reflected in annual work plans.

Time frame: 2019 and the following years up to 2024

1.2. Ensure active CSO involvement in the progression of the Road Map, through comprehensive and inclusive dialogue with the sector.

Time frame: starting end of 2019, then annually

1.3 Set up an internal tracking mechanism on the implementation progress via the Project Management tool

Time frame: starting end of 2019, then annually

1.4. Enable the identification of CSOs in the Government Public Consultation Portal

Time frame: starting end of 2019

1.5 Based on achievements of Road Map 2019-2023, reflected in mid-term review and end-term evaluation report, a National Strategy (2024-2027) or road map will be developed while ensuring comprehensive CSO involvement.

Time frame: Evaluation in 2023, new strategic document done for 2024-2027 to be developed in 2024.

This 2019-2023 Road Map for creating an enabling environment for civil society development includes the action plan for implementing the Road Map for the coming four years, starting with approval by the Council of Ministers. It includes specific and measurable indicators per action accompanied by a financial assessment of all short, medium and long-term activities.

The National Council for Civil Society, reinforced by the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS) will have the important role to including as many CSOs as possible in the process of Road Map implementation. In addition, a mid-term review in 2021 and an end-term evaluation of the achievements and result of the Road Map implementation in 2023 will be built into the revised annual action plans. The result will be reflected in any successive strategic document. If widely considered necessary, the 2023 Road Map version will be used as a foundation for introducing a National Strategy for further Development of the Civil Society sector. Alternatively a new Road Map will be developed. This strategy/Road Map should clearly set out the aim and methods of Government CSO support and cooperation in the years to come after 2023.

This revised Road Map with its communication and annual action plan will contribute to better policy coordination in this area encompassing activities of a number of ministries and other

government agencies. The Road Map offers a solid basis for programming state budget and development partners, EU funds’ investments for the civil society sector. It also reflects strengthened local ownership of reforms in this important field. The Albanian private sector should continue and increase its support to civil society.

Cross-cutting issues related to the implementation of the Road Map

The Government of Albania will also in future enhance the inclusion of vulnerable groups of the society (e.g. minority groups, people living with disability) in all areas of its civil society policy development. It will undertake all efforts to include CSOs representing these groups in the process as reflected by composition of the National Council for Civil Society support. Good practices in various consultations processes, such as the National Council for Gender Equality have shown in the past the benefit of including civil society expertise in various policy making processes and will be further build on. The implementation of the Road Map will consider, wherever possible, the impact on the natural environment of Albania.

In implementing actions under this Road Map, the government will also consider the impact of its activities on gender equality.

Planned actions:

Action 1.1.

Ensure proper planning and implementation of actions by each responsible ministry/state institution according and reflect in their annual work plans.

Action 1.1.	Proper planning and implementation of actions by each responsible ministry/state institution reflected in their annual work plans.
Main responsibility	PMO in the role of the overall coordinator of the Road Map
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) in its chairing quality Ministry of Interior (MoI) Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MoTE) Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEFA) Ministry of Culture (MoC) Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport (MYES) Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE) ASCS, NCCS National Agency for Information Society (NAIS) Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance (ABD)
Implementation deadline	2019 and the following years up to 2023
Implementation Indicators	1. Final version of the Road Map 2019-2023 approved by the Council of Ministers by mid-2019 including overall budget and communication strategy. 2. Realistic budget for implementation reflected in the annual State budget of Albania and various developing partners ensured from 2020 onwards.

	<p>3. Actions and related activities reflected in the workplans of the responsible ministries.</p> <p>4. Annual reports of the inter-ministerial working group published on the websites of the ministries and the ASCS.</p> <p>5. Reports of CSOs involvement in evaluation available via ASCS.</p>
Additional remarks	<p>Ongoing promotion of Road Map via website by ASCS and other related activities conducted by the National Council with support of the ASCS, on website, social media, newsletter and during consultation meetings with CSOs.</p> <p>A communication plan will serve the purpose of internal as well as external communication. Attention will be given to main stream the cross-cutting issues.</p>
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 1.2.

Ensure active collaboration with the CSO, through the NCSC, in the progression of the Road Map, through comprehensive and inclusive dialogue with the sector in the respective meetings of the NCSC.

Action 1.2.	Ensure active CSO involvement in the progression of the Road Map implementation.
Main responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	NCCS and ASCS in it function as the Secretariat of the NCCS All responsible line ministries
Implementation deadline	Annual, starting 2019
Implementation Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of consultations / or themes of consultations conducted according to the communication strategy and number of participants 2. Number of comments and advices of CSOs on Agency's website 3. Number of (social) media coverage reflected in ASCS annual report 4. Number of media coverage 5. Number of issues addressed by line Ministries or other governmental bodies
Additional remarks	
Technical Assistance	Not relevant

Action 1.3.

Set up an internal tracking mechanism on the implementation progress via the Project Management Tools.

Activity 1.3	Set up an internal tracking mechanism on the implementation progress via the Project Management Tools
Main responsibility	PMO
Co-implementing Partner:	National Agency for Information Society (NAIS) Inter-ministerial working group ASCS
Implementation deadline	End 2019
Implementation Indicators	1. Internal online tracking system of the roadmap implementation put in place by NAIS. 2. Regular usage of the system and updating of the progress by the line ministries and responsible institutions.
Additional remarks	NAIS to install the tracking system
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 1.4.

Enable the identification of CSOs in the Government Public Consultation Portal.

Activity 1.4	Enable the identification of CSOs in the Government Public Consultation Portal
Main responsibility	National Agency for Information Society (NAIS)
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO ASCS NCCS
Implementation Deadline	End 2019
Implementation Indicators	1. Online Public Consultation platform identifies CSOs as category
Additional remarks	CSOs are provided with a tax number by tax authorities. In addition tax authorities identifies them as type of business 'non for profit', and this could be a mechanism for NAIS to identify the CSOs in the Portal of Public Consultation.
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 1.5.

Based on achievements of the Road Map 2019-2023, reflected in mid and end term evaluation reports, a National Strategy (2024-2027) or new road map will be developed.

Activity 1.5.	Draft National Strategy/Road Map 2024-2027 for CSO support
Main responsibility	PMO
Co-implementing Partner:	All involved line ministries NCCS and ASCS

Implementation Deadline	End 2023
Implementation Indicators	1. Mid-term and end-term evaluation conducted 2. Evaluation results widely published via PMO and Agency website 3. Methodology to develop new Road Map /Strategy with CSO input in place by end 2023
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA Expertise in evaluation and drafting the strategy (45-60 days)

Priority 2: Service-minded government institutions valuing cooperation with CSOs

Nine main actions have been identified under this priority and time frames have been defined:

2.1 Ensuring the efficient functioning of National Council for Civil Society in line with its work plan and government commitments. NCCS is to act as an advisory body of the government of Albania on matters of civil society development, bringing together representatives of government bodies responsible for key policy areas affecting CSOs, as well as representatives of CSOs.

Time frame: from 2019 onwards.

2.2. Ensuring efficient administrative support to the Council, including quality preparation for all activities and ensuring proper follow-up of all Council decisions and activities, by assigning appropriate legislation and resources including adequate human resources at ASCS.

Time frame: at least for the duration of this Road Map.

2.3 Agency to develop a manual on how to conduct the annual elections for the CSO members of the Council based on the previous support rendered by international donor community.

Time frame: by November 2019 to be used for 2019 elections and onwards.

2.4 NCCS involved as an advisory body in all government civil society development initiatives and programmes.

Time frame: ongoing from 2019 to end 2023.

2.5 Update the Agency's 2015-2021 strategy and annual work plans to achieve main objectives including Agency's as secretariat to the NCCS.

Time frame: 2019 onwards.

2.6. Support through an outreach plan and resources to strengthen ASCS responsiveness to increasing demands for information and support from local CSOs.

Time frame: 2019 onwards.

2.7. Continue technical assistance for ASCS to further develop the capacities in the priority areas of the organisation's revised strategic plan.

Time frame: 2020

2.8 Defining the specific tasks of the Agency for Dialogue and Co-operation in the function of its support for the implementation and monitoring of the Roadmap.

Time frame: 2019

2.9 Appoint CSO contact persons in ministries of strategic importance for CSO cooperation, as well as in the National Employment Service and the National Agency of Education, Vocational Training and Qualifications.

Time frame: starting in the beginning of 2020

Creating a favourable environment for government-civil society cooperation requires establishing quality institutional structures and mechanisms and building their capacities for effective accomplishment of key tasks, namely:

- Enabling regular structured dialogue among relevant government bodies and CSO representatives on all policies affecting civil society
- Providing sustainable public funding for CSO programmes and developing strategic partnerships with CSOs in delivering social services of general interest
- Ensuring solid central coordination of Government civil society policy development and implementation, including support to efficient strategic programming of State support to CSOs
- Supporting meaningful involvement of CSOs in policy-making processes in all sectors

Under the Revised Road Map, four main actors have been identified as drivers of change and responsible bodies in the government’s efforts for an enabling CSO environment. They are:

- NCCS (2.1-2.4) in an advisory role, which also included a monitoring functions
- ASCS (2.5 -2.7) in a supportive facilitating role to the NCCS as well as in its key role in outreaching to CSOs at local level
- PMO (2.8.) as the government institution with the overall responsibility for implementation and monitoring of all activities under this priority
- Line ministries (2.9) responsible for implementation of specific Road Map areas

A detailed description of each of the institutional mechanisms with basic information on their potential vision, mission and objectives, institutional links with other proposed structures, as well as key actions that should lead to fulfilling the objectives, accompanied by possible areas for future technical assistance can be found in Annex 1.

National Council for Civil Society

The principal instrument for dialogue and consultation between the government of Albania and civil society is the National Council for Civil Society. The law "For the establishment and functioning of the National Council for Civil Society” (no. 119/2015) establishing the Council was passed in November 2015. The Council has intensified its work since December 2017 and adopted a work plan for 2019 in March 2019.

Planned actions:

Action 2.1.

Ensuring the efficient functioning of National Council for Civil Society in line with its work plan and government commitments.

NCCS is to act as an advisory body of Albanian government on matters of civil society development, bringing together representatives of government bodies responsible for key policy areas affecting CSOs, as well as representatives of civil society organisations.

Action 2.1.	Ensuring the efficient functioning of National Council for Civil Society in line with its work plan and government Commitments
Implementing Body	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO Ministry of Health and Social Protection in its function as Chair

	of the Council according to the law ³
Implementation deadline	2019
Implementation Indicators	1. NCCS law reviewed to reflect changes in public administration 2. NCCS law and bylaws fully observed 3. NCCS work plan observed and funded via Agency budget 4. Supporting CSOs' substantial involvement in policy-making in all sectors
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA: Capacity-building activities for CSO members of NCCS and their constituents as defined in the CD plan for the Council – 30-50 days

Action 2.2.

Ensuring efficient administrative support to the Council, including quality preparation for all activities and ensuring proper follow-up of all Council meetings and activities.

Action 2.2.	Ensuring efficient administrative support to the Council, including quality preparation for all activities and ensuring proper follow-up of all Council meetings and activities.
Implementing Body	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Health and Social Protection in its function as Chair of the Council PMO
Implementation Deadline	2019-2023
Implementation Indicators	1. Support provided by ASCS in line with “NCCS Support Measures’ Manual” 2. ASCS having all necessary resources at its disposal 3. Full staffing at the Agency 4. Contact details and working hours of the ASCS staff supporting council publicly available 5. TA report on outcome of the CD support
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA Capacity-building for ASCS including development of “NCCS Support Measures’ Manual” (30 days)

Action 2.3.

Agency to develop a manual on how to conduct the elections for the CSO members of the Council, based on the previous support rendered by international donor community and facilitates elections accordingly.

³ The Role of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in its function as Chair is defined in Art.14 in Law No. 119/2015

Action 2.3.	Agency to develop a manual on how to conduct the annual elections for the CSO members of the Council based on the previous support rendered by international donor community and facilitate elections accordingly
Implementing Body	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Health and Social Protection in its function as Chair of the Council
Implementation deadline	For elections end of 2019 and to apply for all elections onwards
Implementation Indicators	1. "NCCS Elections Manual" in place by November 2019, 2019 elections conducted accordingly 2. High and country-wide participation rate due to inclusive, proactive good communication and high transparency (at least 2/3 of CSO in ASCS data base (581 in total currently))
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA Capacity-building at the ASCS including development of "NCCS Elections Manual" TA requirements: Senior expert in CSO matters; knowledge related to capacity-building in the region are an advantage (part of the 30 days under 2.2)

Action 2.4.

NCCS involved as an advisory body in all government civil society development initiatives and programmes.

Action 2.4.	NCCS involved as an advisory body in all government civil society development initiatives and programmes
Implementing Body	PMO/ACSC
Co-implementing Partner:	All line ministries ASCS
Implementation deadline	2023
Implementation Indicators	1. All civil society initiatives and programmes consulted with NCCS 2. All legislation related to EU accession consulted with NCCS, when necessary
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	

Agency for the Support of the Civil Society

The ASCS is a state agency regulated by the law No 10093/2009 and the statute.

One of its main functions is to distribute grants to CSOs on the basis of nationwide calls for proposals. Another main function is to developing inter-sector partnership and cooperation between civil society organizations.⁴

⁴ The objectives of the ASCS are: "1) To encourage the cooperation with non-profit organisations, who have as object of their work the role of fighting against the corruption, against trafficking of human being and her victims, against domestic violence and the violence against children as well. 2) Encouragement of the public in volunteerism activity and

In this view and in particular since end 2017 the Agency is increasing its activity as secretariat of the NCCS.

Action 2.5.

Update and implement the Agency’s 2015-2021 strategy and annual work plans to achieve main objectives including its role as secretariat to the NCCS.

Action 2.5	Revision of 2015-2021 strategy and use of annual work plans including functions described under Action 2.2.
Main Responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	
Implementation deadline	From 2019 on after revision
Implementation Indicators	1. Strategy updated in 2019 including function as secretariat to NCCS 2. Annual report 2020 reflects implementation of revised Strategy
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA under 2.2

Action 2.6.

Draft and implement communication, information and outreach plan for ASCS to respond to increasing demand for information and support from local CSOs.

Action 2.6	Draft and implement communication, information and outreach plan for ASCS to respond to increasing demand for information and support from local CSOs
Implementing Body	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	-
Implementation deadline	2019 onwards
Implementation Indicators	1. Communication and outreach plan in place, published and implemented 2. Revised and timely call for proposal information sessions for potential applicants 3. Section on improved communication information and engagement in annual report 4. Evidence of improved web design and data base 5. Number of meetings where the priorities of the Roadmap are discussed locally
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	

participation in community development as well. 3) To promote and strengthen the sustainability of non-profit organisations 4) Development of inter-sector and international cooperation with civil society organization. 5) to increase the role and influence of public and civil society organization. 6) Development of civic initiatives and engagement in non-profit organizations. 7) To increase the influence of civil society in policy and decision making,

Action 2.7.

Technical assistance for ASCS to further develop the capacities in the priority areas of the organisation's strategic plan.

Action 2.7	Continue technical assistance for ASCS to further develop the capacities in the priority areas of the organisation's revised strategic plan
Main responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	
Implementation Deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff trained in main areas of the revised strategy 2. Outreach of ASCS remarkably improved 3. Result-oriented project management and monitoring ensured 4. Potential applicants trained in Logframe approach 5. Annual Reports on grant selection outcome and results
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Technical Assistance support to the Agency for at least 30 days, including the strategic plan

Prime Minister's Office

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is responsible for the overall interaction and for monitoring the implementation of the Road Map activities by the line ministries and state agencies involved. Consequently, the PMO will ensure strong partnership between government and civil society in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating public policies. This is crucial for enhancing the role and effectiveness of civil society in preparation for EU membership.

The newly created Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance, established in November 2017, under the PM (DMC no.638, dated 6.11.2017) will support the PMO in its role of overall responsibility for the Road Map implementation, such as in drafting policies, coordinating processes within the government structures, and ensuring implementation from the government institutions through monitoring.

Action 2.8.

Define the concrete tasks of the Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance in their support function to the PMO for the overall coordination, implementation and monitoring of the Road Map progress.

Action 2.8	Define the concrete tasks of the Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance in their support function to the PMO for the overall coordination, implementation and monitoring of the Road Map progress
Main responsibility	PMO
Co-implementing Partner:	Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance
Implementation deadline	2019
Implementation	1. Task list for Agency for Dialogue and Co-Governance

Indicators	2. Regular reports of the Agency to PMO 2020.
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	None

Line ministries responsible for implementation of specific Road Map areas

Line ministries play an important part in the implementation of the Road Map. Good coordination within the ministries but also with the civil society sector is required. Contact persons for CSO cooperation in ministries and other government bodies will be appointed in particular in those ministries working intensively with CSOs like the Ministry for Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Ministry of Justice, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economy. The function of the CSO contact person could be combined with function of the member of staff responsible for contact with the public and public consultations.

Planned actions:

Action 2.9 Appoint CSO contact persons in ministries of strategic importance to CSO cooperation.

This function could be merged with the function of the coordinator for public information.

The Ministries of strategic importance are largely those now or in the future represented in the National Council for CSO: The Ministry of Health and Social Care; Ministry of Finances and Economy; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport; Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Tourism and Environment; Ministry of Interior. It will be the PMO's task to ensure regular coordination and information meetings among these contact persons to guarantee a unified and transparent approach by each contact person. ASCS will be included in the coordination. These coordinators will establish close links with the Agency for the Support of the Civil Society to exchange information on new legal frameworks in the development process, on events, on consultations, etc. By obtaining this information, the Agency for the Support of the Civil Society can ensure its widespread dissemination and engagement of civil society in various processes. Thus, a new channel for information exchange and more space is created.

Action 2.9.	Appoint CSO contact persons in ministries of strategic importance to CSO cooperation
Main responsibility	PMO
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Health and Social Protection; Ministry of Finances and Economy; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport; Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Tourism and Environment; Ministry of Interior.
Implementation Deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	1. All coordinators are assigned 2. Contacts made available on websites of all Ministries 3. Report of each coordinator integrated in the annual progress report. 4. Meetings once every two years of coordinators with PMO / ASCS and NCCS
Additional remarks	

Required Technical assistance	Not relevant
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Priority 3: Sustainable and effective involvement of CSOs in policy making process

Five main actions have been identified under this priority and time frames have been defined:

3.1 Guarantee the effective implementation of the Law on Notification and Consultation, as required by Article 22 of the Law on the Right to Public Consultation (No. 146/2014, dated 30.10.2014) and bylaws (DCM No. 828, 7.10.2015) through awareness raising and engagement of CSOs.

Time frame: 2020 onwards

3.2. Make provision in the electronic register on public notification and consultation to make CSOs visible as contributor

Time frame: until the end of 2020.

3.2 Develop the methodology for annual reporting on the results of public consultations and transparency of the decision-making process, with the necessary information on the number of acts adopted by public bodies during a given year, number of recommendations received by the stakeholders, number of recommendations and comments accepted and rejected during the decision-making process, and the number of public meetings organised.

Time frame: until the end of 2020.

3.4 Prepare a manual for civil servants on conducting effective public consultations, with detailed step-by-step guidelines with Sigma support.

Time frame: until the end of 2020.

3.5 Establishment of an official training program for civil servants to be implemented by Albanian Public Administration School, focusing on government-civil society cooperation in public policy making and in various areas of public consultation and dialogue

Time frame: until the end of 2020

Developing meaningful and effective communication with interested public is essential for the process of raising the level of public confidence and allows government to improve the accountability of the public bodies.

The obligation to consult with civil society is rooted in the Albanian legislation, but important bylaws and implementation instruments are still to be adopted. The rules of procedure indicate that consultations should be an integral part of the policy preparation process and guidance to the ministries for conducting consultations is given in the Law Drafting Manual.

As the law is still new, government bodies at all levels face numerous challenges in preparing and implementing consultations on designing and implementing new laws and policies, and in providing proper feedback to the participants on the results of public consultations. Albanian CSOs have been repeatedly voicing their concerns on the importance of establishing clear procedures and binding rules for involving interested public in decision-making processes, but also on the need for building capacities of civil servants for effective involvement of non-state actors in the development of new public policies. The main measure would entail adapting the main tool used for public consultations, the <http://konsultimipublik.gov.al> website to allow for separate civil society contributions. Additionally, results of consultations need to be clearly and coherently

presented and civil servants need to be trained in dealing with the sector and increasingly establishing a two way process of dialogue throughout all policy cycle. Systematic hearings sessions, with CSOs in parliament on the implementation of the Law on Public Consultation, will be encouraged.

Planned actions:

Action 3.1.

Guarantee the effective implementation of the Law on Notification and Consultation, as required by Article 22 of the Law on the Right to Public Consultation (No. 146/2014, dated 30.10.2014) and bylaws (DCM No. 828, 7.10.2015) through awareness raising and engagement of CSOs.

Activity 3.1.	Guarantee the effective implementation of the Law on Notification and Consultation, as required by Article 22 of the Law on the Right to Public Consultation (No. 146/2014, dated 30.10.2014) and bylaws (DCM No. 828, 7.10.2015) through awareness raising and engagement of CSOs
Implementing Body	PMO/National Agency for Information Society
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Justice, Agency for Dialogue and Co-governance, all government ministries
Implementation deadline	2019
Implementation Indicators	1. Number of CSOs actively participating and providing written inputs 2. Number of law initiatives influenced by CSOs
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA on public awareness campaign

Action 3.2.

Adapt the electronic register on public notification and consultation to include CSOs as a standalone contributor category.

Action 3.2.	Make provision in the electronic register on public notification and consultation to make CSOs visible as contributor category.
Implementing Body	National Agency for Information Society and PMO
Co-implementing Partner:	All government ministries and the Parliament
Implementation deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	1. Electronic register amended 2. Number of CSO using the register
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 3.3.

Develop a methodology for annual reporting on the results of public consultations and transparency of the decision-making process, with the necessary information on the number of acts adopted by public bodies during a given year, number of recommendations received by the stakeholders, number of recommendations and comments accepted and rejected during the decision-making process, and the number of public meetings organised.

Action 3.3.	Develop a methodology for annual reporting on the results of public consultations and transparency of the decision-making process.
Implementing Body	PMO
Co-implementing Partner:	Department for Development and Good Governance and Regulatory and Compliance Department All line ministries
Implementation Deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	1. Methodology consulted with CSOs 2. Methodology prepared and shared with all Ministries 3. Methodology applied in ongoing consultations 4. Annual reports published according to methodology
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA for the development of the methodology, reporting system and annual reporting.

Action 3.4.

Prepare a manual for civil servants on conducting effective public consultations, with detailed step-by-step guidelines.

Action 3.4.	Prepare a manual for civil servants on conducting effective public consultations, with detailed step-by-step guidelines
Implementing Body	PMO
Co-implementing Partner:	Department for Development and Good Governance and Regulatory and Compliance Department in PMO All government ministries Albanian School of Public Administration
Implementation deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	1. Manual prepared 2. Manual disseminated among all government units 3. Manual regularly updated to reflect ongoing changes (e.g. EU integration)
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	

Activity 3.5.

Set up an official training programme for civil servants that to be delivered by the Albanian School of Public Administration focussing on government-civil society cooperation in public

policy-making.

Activity 3.5.	Set up an official training programme for civil servants to be delivered by the Albanian School of Public Administration focussing on government-civil society cooperation in public policy-making.
Implementing Body	Albanian School of Public Administration
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO Department for Development and Good Governance and Regulatory and Compliance Department
Implementation deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	1. Civil servants from relevant units at each ministry trained 2. Training impact evaluated 3. Number of consultations and areas for public consultations defined annually
Additional remarks	See 3.4.
Required Technical assistance	

Priority 4: Ensure CSO contribution to EU accession process

Five main actions have been identified under this priority and time frames have been defined:

4.1. Development of the European Integration Partnership Platform, as defined by the Decision of Council of Ministers no. 749, dated 19.12.2018.

Time frame: 2020

4.2. Involvement of CSOs in the membership process in accordance with the Partnership Platform for European integration

Time frame: 2021

4.3 Enhance participation of CSOs in the programming of the EU pre-accession funding, based on the principle of partnership.

Time frame: 2020

4.4 Ensure adequate EU funding for civil society development, especially for programmes contributing to strengthening capacities of CSOs for effective monitoring of the EU *acquis* implementation and sustainability of EU accession reforms.

Time frame: 2020

4.5 Enable effective involvement of CSOs in the work of the National Council for European Integration as a key institutional mechanism of CSO consultation on EU matters within the Parliament of Albania. The Assembly (Law 15/15) has set up the CCIE where the CS participates, too, therefore, such a division should also be reflected in the Assembly, according to the parliamentary committees and in the CCIE

Time frame: 2020

The Albanian Government's National Strategy for Development and Integration (2015-2021), stipulates that the government's vision is to "create an enabling environment for a strong and consolidated civil society that contributes to the development of the society and the country together with an independent free media".

Furthermore, the National Strategy identifies three strategic objectives in the field of civil society:

- I. create a legal environment and financial premises to support civil society organisations' sustainability
- II. strengthen and institutionalize cooperation with civil society and public institutions, with the goal of establishing a partnership based on willingness, trust, and mutual understanding of common interests
- III. promote civil society organisations in line with the national priorities and EU recommendations including volunteering and citizen participation

European integration is one of the most important dimensions of the foreign and interior policy agenda of Albania. For this reason, as part of achieving the second strategic objective, it will aim to strengthen co-operation between negotiating structures, ministries, other institutions and civil society in the accession negotiation process. Civil society is expected to play an important role in this process at all levels, from citizen-based participation to umbrella organizations.

To coordinate the membership process, the Council of Ministers has adopted the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 749, dated 19.12.2018 "On the creation, organization and functioning of the state structure, responsible for the development of negotiations and the conclusion of the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Albania to European Union". In point IX, the Council of Ministers Decision stipulates that the inclusion of civil society, interest groups, etc. will be implemented in accordance with the Partnership Platform for European integration. This Platform will also define the modalities of information, consultation and communication with all stakeholders within the membership negotiation process.

As set out in the Decision of the Council of Ministers referred to above, the forms of participation, the functioning and institutional structure of the European Integration Partnership Platform will be approved by the order of the Prime Minister.

Planned actions:

Action 4.1.

Development of the European Integration Partnership Platform.

Action 4.1.	Development of the European Integration Partnership Platform
Main responsibility	MEFA
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO All ministries and coordinating institutions of inter-institutional work groups for negotiating chapters
Implementation deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	1.The designed document of the Partnership Platform for European Integration 2.Number of consulting activities for the Partnership Platform for European integration 3.Document of the Partnership Platform for European Integration i approved
Required Technical assistance	Potential Technical Assistance for the design and finalization of European Integration Partnership Platform

Action 4.2.**Involvement of CSOs in the membership process in accordance with the Partnership Platform on European Integration.**

Action 4.2.	Involvement of CSOs in the membership process in accordance with the Partnership Platform on European Integration
Main responsibility	MEFA
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministries and coordinating institutions of negotiating chapters, ASCS
Implementation deadline	2020 – 2021 on going
Implementation Indicators	1.Number of information, consulting and communication activities developed with civil society organizations, stakeholders, etc.
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Potentially: TA to support increase of CSO capacity's to contribute to the membership process and through the call for grants support.

Action 4.3.**Enhance participation of CSOs in the programming of the EU pre-accession funding, based on the principle of partnership.**

Action 4.3.	Enhance participation of CSOs in the programming of the EU pre-accession funding, based on the principle of partnership
Main responsibility	MEFA
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO/MEF
Implementation deadline	2020-2021
Implementation Indicators	1. Organization of information days and participation of civil society 2. Participation of civil society in information and / or consultations activities on the process of managing EU funds 3. Participation of CSOs in the IPA Monitoring Committee and sector groups of Integrated Policy Management 4. Publication of annual reports on implementation of IPA Programs (AIR)
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 4.4**Coordination of EU funding and programs, which the civil society can benefit from.**

Action 4.4	Coordination of EU funding and programs, which the civil society can benefit from
Main responsibility	MEFA
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO
Implementation deadline	2020-2021

Implementation Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publishing Programs that CSOs can benefit from and transparent application and evaluation procedures. 2. Publication of calls for project proposals on the official website of MEFA and the official websites of other responsible institutions 3. Publishing the results on the official website of MEFA and the official websites of other responsible institutions 4. Publishing the names and email addresses of contact points at MEFA for each Territorial Cooperation Program
Additional remarks	EU allocation of funds for this action through decentralized modality as well as through Territorial Cooperation Programs (IPA CBC and IPA-Interreg)
Required Technical assistance	Funds for civil society will be provided through Technical Assistance. In the case of Territorial Cooperation Programs funds will be provided through the application of CSOs (in partnership) during calls for proposals.

Action 4.5.

Enable effective involvement of CSOs in the work of the National Council for European Integration as a key institutional mechanism of CSO consultation on EU matters within the Parliament of Albania.

Action 4.5.	Enable effective involvement of CSOs in the work of the National Council for European Integration
Main responsibility	The Parliament of Albania
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO MEFA ASCS
Implementation deadline	2019
Implementation Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Numbers of meetings minutes as foreseen by law published 2. Names of key staff of the Council made public on MEFA website 3. Reflection and consideration of the recommendations / suggestions made by the National Council for European Integration and MEFA
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Priority 5: Support CSO volunteering and active citizenship with a special focus on local level

Five actions have been identified under this priority and time frames have been defined:

5.1 Develop national concept of volunteering and active citizens including bylaws, a comprehensive medium-term regulation for volunteers and for organisations receiving volunteers developed according to EU good practice

Time frame 2020

5.2 Improve the Law on Volunteering based on the national concept of volunteering including bylaws, (e.g. code for volunteers) a comprehensive medium-term regulation for volunteers and for organisations receiving volunteers developed according to EU good practice, e.g. insurance issue

Time frame: national concept in 2020, insurance issues solved by 2020, and improved law, including bylaws, by end 2021

5.3. Introduce state funding schemes for overall support to development and management of volunteer programmes by CSOs

Time frame: start in from 2021 onwards based on a national concept

5.4 Design instruments for collecting data on the frequency and spread of voluntary activities (possibly through special bylaws that would define reporting requirements for organizers of volunteer work), as well as on the economic and social value of volunteer work

Time frame: 2022

5.5 Support for the involvement of special target groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, minority groups, and unemployed in all volunteer actions

Time frame: 2020 onwards

Albania has recognized volunteering in its recent history, but its authoritarian regime applied it in a rather abusive form of a democratic concept. This has led to misconceptions and even stereotypes with regard to the understanding of volunteering and citizen participation. Hence, there is a particular need for developing a guiding document, which would not only define voluntarism and citizen participation, but also lead the way for further actions and implementation.

The Albanian Government's National Strategy for Development and Integration (2015-2024), adopted in 2016⁵, identifies three strategic objectives in the field of civil society: The strategic objective No. 3 is dedicated to the promotion of civil society in line with the national priorities and EU recommendations including volunteering and citizen participation.

Participation in an association as a member or a volunteer keeps a person active, helps distribute information, encourages society-centred thinking, brings people together and unites them.

A national concept of volunteering and citizen participation will be introduced and a clear action plan drafted and implemented. The Agency for the support of civil society will commission a technical assistance team with international and local experts in volunteering to develop the concept which will be widely consulted with the sector.

The Albanian Law on Volunteering (No. 45/2016) has been a first step towards the promotion of volunteering, but the law was not embedded in a wider concept or a public debate on the meaning and benefit of volunteering and citizen participation in Albania.

The role of the National Employment Service (through its country wide infrastructure) would be to register the CSOs (and other non-profit institutions) who are willing to offer volunteer work, issues them a reference number and these bodies could then register individuals and equip them with personal registration books and relevant documents. Twice or three times per year, these bodies would have to submit a database to the National Employment Service, including details about the registered or engaged volunteers.

Another current challenge is the insurance issues for volunteers. Since the law has not solved issues linked to insurance issues in a way that supports CSOs, a solution will have to be found within the coming year.

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection will finalise the work already started on a Code of Volunteer Conduct consulting CSOs on the matter.

A few enthusiastic Albanian NGOs are trying to promote the idea of volunteering according to EU good practice, and their expertise will be harvested by the responsible institution to design the concept and create, consequently, a fully functioning legal framework as indicated in the national concept.

⁵(Official Journal No. 86, dated 2016, Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 348, dated 11.05.2016)

The ASCS has already supported several CSO projects on volunteering over the past years, dedicated mainly to awareness raising for volunteering. It is crucial to evaluate the impact of such projects on the promotion of volunteering, so as to build on the experience gathered in the past. The above will happen in close cooperation with national organisations familiar with a broader concept of volunteering and citizen participation. The NCCS will play a crucial role in ensuring government-civil society cooperation throughout the later stages of the process.

Planned actions:

Action 5.1.

Develop national concept on volunteering and active citizens including bylaws, a comprehensive medium-term regulation for volunteers and for organisations receiving volunteers developed according to EU good practice.

Action 5.1.	Develop a national concept on volunteering
Main responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Health and Social Protection Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports State Agency for Employment and Vocational Training Ministry of Finances and Economy PMO ASCS
Implementation Deadline	National concept on volunteering and active citizenship in 2020
Implementation Indicators	1. National concept of volunteering and active citizenship in place in 2020, including the role of volunteer centres 2. CSO expertise included in the national concept following public dialogue and discussion 3. ASCS has an in-house concept on volunteering by 2020
Additional remarks	Close cooperation with Albanian organisations experienced with volunteering
Required Technical assistance	Technical Assistance for development of the national concept and the concept with the Agency (25 days)

Action 5.2.

Improve the Law on Volunteering based on the national concept of volunteering including bylaws, a comprehensive medium-term regulation for volunteers and for organisations receiving volunteers developed according to EU good practice, e.g. insurance issues.

Action 5.2.	Improve Law and necessary bylaws on volunteering and solve insurance issues based on a national concept.
Main responsibility	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Finances and Economy Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports State Agency for Employment and Vocational Training ASCS
Implementation	National concept in 2020

Deadline	Improved law, including bylaws, by end 2021
Implementation Indicators	Issues linked to insurance solved in 2020 1. Code of Volunteer Conduct finalized with wide CSO input in 2020 2. Law amended and bylaws approved in 2021 3. National State Agency for Employment and Vocational Training acts according to the law and bylaws by end 2021
Additional remarks	Close cooperation with Albanian organisations experienced with volunteering
Required Technical assistance	

Action 5.3.

Introduce state-funding schemes for overall support to development and management of volunteer programmes by CSOs.

Activity 5.3.	State-funding schemes to promote volunteering as defined in the Concept
Main responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	Ministry of Finances and Economy
Implementation Deadline	From 2021 onwards based on a national concept
Implementation indicators	1. Budget allocated and secured in the annual national budget of MFE 2. Number of calls for proposals for volunteer and active citizenship projects conducted publicly visible 3. Actual amount allocated annually 4. Project reports published
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 5.4.

Design instruments for collecting data on the frequency and spread of voluntary activities (possibly through special bylaws that would define reporting requirements for organizers of volunteer work), as well as on the economic and social value of volunteer work.

Action 5.4.	Design instruments and a methodology for collecting data on the frequency and spread of voluntary activities (possibly through special bylaws that would define reporting requirements for organizers of volunteer work), as well as on the economic and social value of volunteer work
Main responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	National Employment Service Ministry of Finance and Economy
Implementation	2021

Deadline	
Implementation Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The body responsible for collecting the data identified and authorized to do so. 2. Bylaws approved 3. Instrument for data collection designed 4. Economic and social value of volunteer work researched and published
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA see 5.1. as part of the support to national concept development

Action 5.5.

Support for the involvement of special target groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, minority groups, and unemployed people in all volunteer actions.

Action 5.5.	Support for the involvement of special target groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, minority groups, and unemployed people in all volunteer actions
Main responsibility	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Co-implementing Partner:	ASCS Ministry of Health and Social protection Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
Implementation Deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of vulnerable groups reflected in the Concept 2. Promotion of inclusion ensured 3. Hosting organisations trained 4. Volunteer placements for representatives of the target groups created
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	See under 5.1.

2.2 Strategic direction 2: Enabling legal environment & data governance

Priority 6: Introduce a more enabling legislative framework for registration and operation of CSOs

<p>Three actions have been identified under this priority and time frames have been defined:</p> <p>6.1. Change the current CSO registration law to introduce a simpler and more efficient registration procedure for CSOs and envisage in the law the creation of a CSO Electronic Register <i>Time frame: 2020</i></p> <p>6.2 Change the Law on the National Business Centre (NBC) and other associated legal acts (bylaws or regulations) to enable the NBC to take over the registration process of CSOs through the creation of a National Electronic Register of CSOs. <i>Time frame: 2021</i></p> <p>6.3. Adoption of additional necessary primary and secondary legislation related to CSOs <i>Time frame: by 2021</i></p>

Activities of civil society organizations (CSOs) are mainly regulated by the Law on Non-Profit Organizations and the Law on the Registration of Non-profit Organizations (No. 8789, dated 07/02/2001). The establishment, registration, functioning, organization, and activity of CSOs is regulated by the Law on Non-profit Organizations (No. 8788, dated 07/05/2001). According to this law, CSOs include: (1) membership organizations with at least five persons or two legal entities as their founding members and the general assembly as the highest decision-making body; and (2) foundations and centres that can be established by one or more persons or by testament and have a Board of Directors as the highest decision-making body. According to TACSO Needs Assessment Report 2017, most CSOs are concentrated in the central Albania, especially in Tirana. Most of the other CSOs are located in the major cities in the North (Shkodra) and South (Korca, Fier, and Vlora). The civil society sector is weaker in remote districts and especially in rural areas, while the number of active, informal community-based groups is low.

The current Law on the Registration of Non-profit Organisations foresees a centralized registration system for CSOs only in Tirana First Instance Court. Formally speaking, the Law on Registration of Non-profit Organisations establishes a clear and simple procedure and does not place any substantial legal obstacles to the registration of CSOs. It does not require a founding endowment for the registration and establishes a 15-days legal time limit between the request for registration and the decision formalizing the registration. However, in practice, Article 7 of the law, stipulating the Tirana First Instance Court as the only competent body for all registration and dissolution procedures of CSOs, poses an undue administrative and financial burden to CSOs, particularly to new CSOs outside Tirana. Decisions for registering non-profit organizations, as well as any other decisions related to actions in regard to their registration, is made by a single judge of the commercial section of the court upon the request of the subject concerned. The legal time limit of 15 days is rarely observed in practice allegedly due to the significant backlog of judges in other cases.

The centralised registration procedures combined with the lack of an effective electronic system of registration requires CSOs to travel to Tirana several times to follow up on their request for registration, or changes to their acts and deregistration. High financial costs of registration, lengthy procedures and related travel times, as well as lack of specialized professionals who deal with CSOs legal issues can create unnecessary barriers to grassroots CSOs outside Tirana, which have no access to initial funding, and may find the costs associated with the registration process prohibitive or discouraging.⁶

CSOs have advocated for legal changes to modernize the registration procedures with a view to simplifying the process of registration, and changes to their incorporating acts and deregistration, and shifting to a modern, quick, user-friendly, and inexpensive registration procedure for CSOs throughout Albania. In addition, the current manual registration system, which is outdated and insufficient to provide timely and accurate information on the CSOs, will be digitized. Modernizing the registration procedures requires changes to the existing law and other associated laws affected by the change. Engagement of CSOs in all stages of the drafting process should provide a meaningful opportunity to reflect the twenty years of the CSOs experience and eliminate legal requirements that impede, delay, or limit the creation or functioning of the CSOs in practice.⁷

Apart from the registration issue, some progress has been made in creating a more enabling legal

⁶ CSO Sustainability Index of 2016 for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID, July 2017.

⁷ For example, in Bulgaria the registration procedures are free of charge, whereas in Japan the request for incorporating a new CSOs is submitted online and the decision on registration is also communicated online.

environment for the operation of the CSOs.⁸ Several new legislative and institutional reforms have been adopted with increased participation of the CSOs.⁹ The above-mentioned law on Notification and Public Consultation, the law on Right to Information, Volunteering, Valued Added Tax, the National Council of Civil Society Law and Social Enterprises have produced initial positive effects in creating a friendlier legal and fiscal space for CSOs.¹⁰ These laws create better conditions for CSO engagement with central and local government institutions in developing national and local policies and holding state institutions publicly accountable for their implementation. However, there are also several legal interventions which would create a more enabling environment for CSO activities. In addition, several existing laws which have been adopted in recent years will be accompanied by necessary bylaws. Therefore, the government shall take steps to introduce new primary legislation and complete the sub-legal acts which need to be drafted with a view to creating a better legal environment for CSOs.

Planned actions:

Action 6.1.

Change the current CSO registration law to introduce a simpler and more efficient registration procedure for CSOs and envisage the creation of a CSO Electronic Register by law.

Action 6.1.	Change the current registration law to introduce a simpler and more efficient registration procedure for CSOs and envisage the creation by law of a National Electronic Register of CSOs
Main responsibility	Ministry of Finance and Economy / Ministry of Justice
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO Ministry of Justice NCCS ASCS NBC MHSP
Implementation deadline	End of 2020 for the Council of Ministers First quarter of 2021 Within first quarter of 2021 for the Assembly of Albania
Indicators	1. A participatory consultation process is undertaken within the auspices of the NCCS to change the current law on registration 2. A Discussion Paper outlining policy options and recommended changes for introducing a modern registration regime traceably integrating the CSO views is developed and forwarded to the PMO 3. Draft Law on Changing the Current Registration Procedure adopted by the Council of Ministers 4. Changes to the Law on the Registration of CSOs approved by the Assembly of Albania
Achievements 2019	
Additional remarks	CSO engagement required throughout the drafting stage

⁸ TACSO Report 2016, Monitoring Matrix 2016, CSO Sustainability Index of 2016 for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID, July 2017.

⁹ CSO sustainability Index of 2016 for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID, July 2017.

¹⁰ About 66% of CSOs surveyed in 2016 are positive about the recent improvements in the legal environment on CSOs. See TACSO Report 2016, page 9.

Required Technical assistance	
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Action 6.2.

Change the Law on National Business Centre (NBC) and other associated legal acts (bylaws or regulations) to enable the NBC to take over the registration process of the CSOs through the creation of a National Electronic Register of CSOs.

Action 6.2.	Change the Law on NBC and other associated legal acts (bylaws or regulations) to enable the NBC to take over the registration process of the CSOs through the creation of a National Electronic Register of CSOs
Main responsibility	Ministry of Finance and Economy / Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO NAIS, NCCS, ASCS, Ministry of Justice, National Business Centre
Implementation Deadline	2021
Indicators	1. A legal analysis of the impact of changes made to the registration procedure on the functions of the NBC set forth in the Law on NBC and associated legal acts is prepared in consultation with CSOs and forwarded to the PMO; 2. Draft Law on changing the mandate and functions of the NBC to take over the registration process of the CSOs through the creation of a National Electronic Register of CSOs is prepared; 3. National Electronic Register of CSOs is operational by 2022
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA for legal analysis of the impact of changes made to the registration procedure on the functions of the NBC. TA for application of ICT solutions elements of the national electronic register.

Action 6.3.

Adopt additional necessary primary and secondary legislation related to CSOs

Action 6.3.	Adopt additional necessary primary and secondary legislation related to CSOs
Main responsibility	Ministry of Finance and Economy for Philanthropy study and sublegal acts on Law on Financial Inspections Ministry of Health and Social Protection and Ministry of Finance and Economy on conducting a feasibility study on possible amendments to the law on social enterprises, Ministry of Health and Social Protection for sublegal acts for social services Ministry of Finance and Economy for sublegal acts of the law on inspection of public finances and law on volunteering
Co-implementing	PMO

Partner:	NCCS ASCS Ministry of Justice
Implementation deadline	By 2020
Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Comparative Study of the Regulation of Philanthropy in EU member states and candidate countries with a view to creating a more enabling legal basis on philanthropy by providing tax incentives to philanthropic activities is conducted; 2. Analysis of the shortcomings of the existing legislation regarding the law on Social Enterprises in the Republic of Albania, and finalise drafting of other sublegal acts required by Article 29 in the Law on Volunteering No. 45, dated 28.04.2016; 3. Adopt the remaining sub legal acts required by the Law on Public Financial Inspections; 4. Adopted sublegal acts required by Article 52 of Law on Social Service No. 121, dated 24.11.2016.
Additional remarks	CSO engagement required throughout the drafting stage
Required Technical assistance	<p>Technical assistance for carrying out comparative research and identifying good practices in the EU on incentivizing philanthropy by individuals or companies and conducting an analysis of the deficiencies of existing legislation related to the Law for Social Enterprises in the Republic of Albania (maximum 25 days).</p> <p>TA required for sub-legal acts to the law on volunteering.</p>

Priority 7: Collection and availability of data on civil society development

Three main actions have been identified under this priority and time frames have been defined:

7.1 Build the National Electronic Register of CSOs with full functionalities.

Time frame: 2022

7.2. Digitize the CSO records and archives enabling an up to date information sharing system including the CSOs status, location, type of activity, number of staff, and other relevant information pursuant to the changing legal framework.

Time frame: 2022

7.3. Build the MIS system of ASCS and start publishing updated fact-sheets with key statistics on civil society sector contribution to country's social and economic development and widely disseminate results.

Time frame: 2022

Consolidated data on the CSO sector can strengthen the work of many public institutions dealing with CSOs for a better provision of services towards them. The law on CSOs and other related legislation does not designate any government or public institutions to create or maintain the CSOs register.

In these circumstances, there are three main challenges to data governance on the CSO sector:

- **Lack of accurate and consolidated data on the CSO sector:**

Some public institutions have created simple registers of CSOs on their own to facilitate their daily operations. According to the First Instance Court of Tirana there are around 9280 CSOs registered since 1993, when this function was assigned to the courts only. The data are kept mostly on paper and not organized into a structured digitalized database.

According to the Tax Authority, in May 2016 there were 3766 CSOs registered.

The ASCS has started the process of CSO (volunteer declaration-based) registration in 2012. There are 562 CSOs registered. It is clear from different figures provided by main institutions that government institution use consolidated data on CSOs. The immediate intervention will be the development of a consolidated National Electronic Register of CSOs. This will improve the administrative services toward CSOs, will provide accurate and consolidated Information to interested bodies, will provide easy information sharing, transparency and accountability, and will enable a better performance of government Institutions. In addition, the CSOs electronic register should contain all financial reports of non-profit organizations that could be made public, for the purpose of increasing transparency and accountability of non-profit organizations. This will require changes to the current legislation regulating registration and reporting of CSOs (see priority 6).

- **Lack of digitized records on CSOs:**

The entire process regarding CSOs registration, changes and deregistration in the Court of Tirana is handled manually. In the absence of an electronic register, the Court has difficulties updating the on-going information such as changes to addresses or board membership. Besides, lacking a CSO electronic register, the court has no digitized data or scanned documents of the CSOs files. From the logistical point of view, it is not easy to deal with around 9280 CSO folders and the numerous documents for each CSO. The intervention needed for overcoming this issue is the scanning and digitization of all archives and documents of CSOs. This will require the synchronization of activities with the development and implementation of the National Database of CSOs, and also changes to the current legislation on registration and reporting of CSOs as stated above (see priority 6)

- **Need for advanced data and analysis of the CSO sector:**

Existing reporting requirements, in addition to being inadequate and burdensome, do not enable conducting regular and reliable statistics for the non-profit sector. For example, INSTAT¹¹ reports that 2465 subjects were registered as CSOs by the end of 2016, while according to the tax administration, there were 1507 NPOs that have submitted at least one annual tax declaration; whereas courts could not provide accurate data on the number of registered organizations. More detailed and specific rules for CSOs would enable conducting more advanced statistics on the development of the non-profit sector (i.e. overall revenues, sources of financing, assets, number of employees, number of volunteers, etc.) that are important for evidence-based programming, monitoring and evaluation of funding of CSO programmes. While the approach taken by various institutions in this regard may help them with their routine tasks, it has created issues with the authenticity and quality of the data. Another necessary intervention in data governance that could enable advanced studies and reports on CSOs sector will be the development of a Management Information System (MIS) of the ASCS that will act as a sharing information platform on CSOs. MIS will be developed to be interoperable with the foreseen National Electronic Register of CSOs. In addition to basic data on the number and profile of CSOs, it is necessary to keep track of other

¹¹ Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/industria-tregtia-dhe-sh%C3%ABrbimet/regjistri-statistikor-i-nd%C3%ABrmarrjeve/#tab2>

data that can enable social impact of CSO programmes and assessment of the contribution of CSOs to the overall social and economic growth, such as: field of activities, number of employees, overall revenues, sources of financing, assets, number of volunteers, etc.

This will require changes to the current legislation on registration and reporting of CSOs as mentioned under priority 6.

Planned actions

Action 7.1.

Build a National Electronic Register of CSOs with full functionalities. All relevant information on CSOs must be included (such as date of registration, address/contact details, sector(s) of activities, name of president/other persons authorized to represent CSO, etc.) and be searchable according to various criteria (name, group/subgroup of activities, city/region of CSO headquarters, etc.).

Action 7.1.	Build a National Electronic Register of CSOs with full functionality
Main responsibility	National Agency for Information Society (NAIS) Institution in charge of the CSOs Registration
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO ASCS Public Procurement Agency General Directory of Taxation
Implementation Deadline	2022
Implementation Indicators	1. Electronic Register of CSOs developed and implemented 2. Searchable information via Internet on CSOs accessible to public 3. A streamline registration process of CSOs as well as streamline process on changes and deregistration of CSOs 4. Searchable information via Internet on financial reports of non-profit organizations that could be made public
Additional remarks	Precondition to start the building of a CSO register could be the adoption of changes to the CSO Law Coordination between Institution in charge of the registration process and the regional courts, line ministries and Tirana First Instance Court for the collection of all records Interoperability of CSO National Electronic Register with the National Civil Register should be a prerequisite;
Required TA	TA required for drafting legal changes in coordination with legal expert, preparing ToRs of National Electronic Register of CSOs, draft the proposal of the connectivity and hardware specification for NER of CSOs; Prepare accurate Overall Costing of System, Connectivity and Hardware; Draft the manuals/guidelines as well as training and capacity building.(TA 10 days)

Action 7.2

Digitize the CSO records and archives enabling an up to date information sharing system including the CSOs status, location, type of CSOs, type of activity, number of staff and other relevant information pursuant to the changing legal framework.

Action 7.2.	Digitize CSO records and archives
Sub-Activities	
Main responsibility	NAIS Institution in charge of the CSOs Registration
Co-implementing Partner:	First Instance Court of Tirana Regional Courts Public Procurement Agency ASCS
Implementation Deadline	2022
Implementation Indicators	1. All CSOs registration records digitized 2. Searchable information via Internet on CSOs accessible to public 3. A streamline registration process of CSOs
Additional remarks	Coordination between regional courts, line ministries and Tirana First Instance Court for the collection of all records
Required Technical assistance	TA required for defining the methodology, processes and standards to be used for data digitization and consolidation; for preparing ToRs of digitization; prepare the analysis of the overall Costing of digitization process; Align the plan of activities with the development of National Electronic Register of CSOs (TA 10 days)

Action 7.3.

Build the MIS system of ASCS, start publishing updated fact-sheets with key statistics on civil society sector contribution to country's social and economic development and widely disseminate results.

Action 7.3.	Build the MIS system of ASCS
Main responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner:	PMO Public Procurement Agency National Agency for Information Society
Implementation Deadline	2022
Implementation Indicators	1. MIS system developed and implemented at ASCS 2. Searchable information on CSOs sector according to accessible to public 3. Reports on CSO sectors published by CSOs such as trend of CSOs in years, field of activities, number of employees, number of volunteers, etc.

Additional remarks	Implementation of the CSOs National Electronic register is a prerequisite for this action.
Required Technical assistance	TA required for preparing TOR of MIS-CSO for ASCS; Draft the proposal of the Connectivity and Hardware specification for MIS-CSOs; Prepare accurate Overall Costing of System, Connectivity and Hardware; Draft the manuals/guidelines as well as training and capacity building.(TA 10 days)

2.3 Strategic direction 3: Enabling fiscal and funding framework

Priority 8: Creating a public funding framework for supporting CSO programmes in line with EU good practice

Three main actions have been identified under this priority and time frames have been defined:

8.1 Based on gap analysis, revision of existing legislation related to financing of CSO initiatives funded by central and local government Institutions, including clarification of the procedures related to calls for proposals

Time frame: 2020 for gap analysis. 2021 for revised legislation

8.2 Completion of NS status and financing procedures of social enterprises through three forms of financial support

Time frame: 2022

8.3 Ensure comprehensive information on public funding opportunities for CSO programmes (funding plans and annual reports) and the procedures for the creation of the Social Fund

Time frame: 2020 onwards

CSOs remain highly dependent on foreign funding. Domestic public funding options for CSOs include contracting for service delivery, dispensing project grants through some line ministries such as Ministry of Culture, some municipalities, and grants from the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS).

Distribution of public funds always requires transparency in the phases of announcements of the calls, clarity on selection criteria and as well as full transparency on the beneficiaries of the public funds.

Best practices are for civil society to participate in the process of identifying the priorities that the government will address with the public funding. The ASCS with its consultations prior to its calls already exercises this best practice prior to its annual call for proposal.

These commonly accept requirements were also voiced by Civil Society consulted in the process of the Road Map revision.

Under this priority the government will utilise the experience made with public funding on a national level by ASCS. It will also learn from experience and different good practices of programmes and projects implemented by various CSOs and development partners on local level.

Out of the public funding approaches, i.e. (i) grants through the line ministries and municipalities, (ii) contracting out a service from public bodies, and (iii) providing third party payments through the ASCS, currently the most transparent seems to be the public funding through

the ASCS, although it still provokes a lot of criticism within the civil society sector and requires more trust building action from the Agency.

Clarity in terms of rules and procedures for public funding of CSOs in the framework of social service delivery will be achieved. Information on subsidies or grants provided by Albanian Ministries and municipalities will be made readily and timely available to potential beneficiaries.

Further reflecting CSO suggestions regarding public funding, government will work on the following: (1) Facilitation of application procedures and criteria; (2) Establishment of the social procurement fund linked to the implementation of the law on social care service and revision of the public procurement law; and (3) Dissemination of official data by the public institutions involved in the public funding process.¹²

Clear rules on planning and allocating public funds from ministries and municipalities and clear rules for social contracting CSOs in the frame of the social procurement fund will be provided.

Furthermore, with prospects for deepened decentralization of social services and in line with the new administrative reform in Albania, the capacities of contracting authorities to build partnerships with CSOs in service delivery will be strengthened.

As described under priority 6, the adoption of various sublegal acts as foreseen by the Law on Social Enterprises No. 65, dated 09.06.2016, as well as the Law on Social Service No. 121, dated 24.11.2016, will still be ensured¹³.

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection will finalise its work in regard to a set of bylaws for the implementation of the Law on Social Services, with four bylaws having been already evaluated by the Ministry of Justice and returned to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection for further improvements. An adequate country-wide costing system for social services will be developed so as to guarantee quality standards and income security for the associated service providers. Pilot projects like e.g. using confiscated assets for the benefit of the sector or services will be evaluated and further promoted based on adequate regulations. This will allow the government to establish the needs (to the detail of procedural specifications - e.g. minimum service standards. Philanthropy executed by citizens as well as by businesses will have to be enhanced by an enabling tax legislation, which will be accompanied by a country wide communication on the same¹⁴.

Planned actions:

Action 8.1.

Based on gap analysis, revision of existing legislation related to financing of CSO initiatives funded by central and local government Institutions, including clarification of the procedures related to calls for proposals.

Action 8.1.	Revision of the existing legislation related to public financing of CSO initiatives
Main responsibility	MFE/ ASCS
Co-implementing Partner	Prime Minister's Office ASCS NCCS MoJ

¹²Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development for Albania 2015, Partners Albania.

¹³Revised needs assessment report. TACSO 2017, EuropeAid/127427/C/SER/Multi/5.

¹⁴ This action is motivated by research conducted by Partners Albania over the last year in its surveys on Philanthropy. More information is provided by the Team in a special paper on Philanthropy

Implementation Deadline	2020 for gap analysis 2021 for revised legislation
Implementation Indicators	1. Legal gap analysis conducted 2. Outcomes and options discussed in NCCS (reported in minutes) 3. Legislation in need of amending identified 4. Legislation amended
Additional remarks	Coordination between MFE and ASCS is key for mitigating risks for this activity.
Required Technical assistance	TA for gap analysis and identification of legislation in need of revision, 15 days

Action 8.2

Financial Support to Nonprofits Organizations through the Social Enterprise Program and Social Fund.

Action 8.2.	Perform SE status acquisition procedures and procedures of social enterprise financing, through three forms of financial support
Main responsibility	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Co-implementing Partner	PMO NCCS Ministry of Justice Ministry of Finance and Economy ASCS Local government
Implementation Deadline	2021
Implementation Indicators	5. Forecasting in the MTBP of financial support funds for Social Enterprises, 2020-2022. Evaluation Committee meeting periodically. Approval of financial support measures, based on evaluation of applications. Periodic reporting to the Commission State Aid under applicable legislation. Design and development of a civil society outreach program. 6. Preparation and development of an awareness campaign regarding SE funding program
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA for the training programme and module, and capacity building delivery. TA for the awareness campaign as well. (around 20 days)

Action 8.3**Conduct Assessment procedures of Social Plans and of the approval procedures of financing of social services through the Social Fund Program.**

Activity 8.3.	Social services financed by the central budget within Social Fund Program
Main responsibility	MHSP
Co-implementing Partner	MHSP, MoJ, MFE, Ministry of Interior, NCCS, ACSC, Association of Municipalities
Implementation Deadline	2020-2022
Implementation Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forecasting the financial support funds for social services in the MTBP 2020-2022 2. Meeting of the Evaluation Committee, periodically 3. Approval of financial support measures for the establishment of social services based on the evaluation of the calculated and approved Social Plans 4. Support of Local Government for drafting their Social Plans and anticipating the establishment of social-based community services
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Regarding the fourth activity, assistance is needed from the organizations of UN and actors in the field of social services

Action 8.4**Ensuring full information on public funding opportunities for CSOs programs (funding plans and annual reports).**

Activity 8.4.	Publication of financing plans and annual reports for public funding of CSO programs
Main responsibility	ASCS
Co-implementing Partner	MHSP, MoJ, MEFA, Ministry of Interior, NCCS, ACSC, Association of Municipalities
Implementation Deadline	2020
Implementation Indicators	5. Publication of financing data on the official websites of public institutions at central and local level
Additional remarks	The obligation of relevant institutions to publish reports should be reflected in the legislation. Better coordination is needed between central and local government
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Priority 9: Financial reporting/accounting and taxation of CSOs

Four main actions have been identified under this priority with the following time frames:

9.1. Repeal the legal requirement obliging CSOs to have one full-time paid and insured staff member

Time frame: 2021

9.2 Align the current bylaws with the new VAT law from 2015 on the VAT tax treatment of CSOs

Time frame: 2020

9.3 Draft a Tax Audit Manual for tax inspectors for the purpose of treatment of CSOs that considers the sector's specificity

Time frame: 2021

9.4 Amend Law on Sponsorships of 1995 and other tax laws to allow possibility for all individuals to deduct the donations to CSOs in order to encourage individual philanthropy

Time frame: 2023

Proper and clear fiscal treatment of CSOs is key to CSO development. Tax incentives of corporations and private donors are a common approach to support the work of civil society working for the public good.

Four areas for improving the fiscal treatment of CSOs in Albania can be identified:

(i) The adverse impact of the current legal requirement for one full-time salaried and insured staff member; (ii) the VAT treatment of CSOs; (iii) lack of capacity of tax administration on how to enforce the applicable legislation to CSOs and (iv) tax incentives for CSO donations by private philanthropists as well as business structures.

The requirement for CSOs to mandatory register at least one employee and to thus, pay obligatory social and health insurance linked to the minimum wage is not compatible with the project cycle type of work of many CSOs and hampers the development of small-sized, newly established, and grass-root CSOs. Frequently, CSOs do not have any financial transactions for longer periods, but are nevertheless actively following their mission, and attempt to contribute to the community even without employing the activists/members. The prevailing opinion of tax authorities is that if CSOs are not engaged in commercial activities for a period of 12 months or if they do not file a tax return for the same period, they should be transferred to the passive registry of taxable persons has to change.

The problem arises because once categorised as “passive”, in practice these organisations are considered to be non-functional and even non-existent. Hence, they cannot apply for financial support from the state or international grant makers for their activities. This hampers growth of these organisations and the sector as a whole and has to change.

The new law on Value Added Tax (published in the Official Journal No.128, from 13 August 2014 which came into force on 1 January 2015) could have brought more clarity into the VAT issue. However, the clauses relating to VAT for CSOs were almost immediately invalidated by the Minister of Finance' instruction No. 6, dated 30.01.2015, which instead of clarifying the procedures of CSO VAT exemption (based on Article 3 of the law), reverted the issue back to a decision taken by the Council of Ministers in 1996. Thus, a legislative move to solve this problem was nullified within just 30 days. This contradiction will have to be solved, so as to restore clarity, initially intended with the Value Added Tax Law of 13 August 2014.

Instruction (No.22, dated 19.11.2014, Art 7) of the Minister of Finances regulates how to audit a CSO. According to this Instruction, each Tax Office has to have trained and specialized inspectors to audit the financial reports of CSOs, focussing mainly on their financial resources, the economic activities undertaken, sources and the use of their funds, assets, etc.

Consequently, the tax administration will draft an audit manual only for the purpose of

dealing with CSO taxation issues. Through training, the tax administration will develop the required capacities to understand the nature and fiscal implications of the civil society sector.

Sufficient incentives for charitable donations to CSOs are required. Introducing a possibility for all individuals to deduct the donations to CSOs from their personal tax liability will encourage individual philanthropy and contribute to more financial sustainability of civil society development efforts.

Albanian businesses pay standard profits tax. Currently, they may claim back tax on donations (classified as business “sponsorship”) to CSOs of up to 4% of taxable income. For entrepreneurs who pay “small business tax”, the tax on donations will be deducted up to 1% of taxable income.

These measures will support a more favourable environment to increase domestic funding of the civil society sector and contribute to overcoming international donor dependency.

Planned actions:

Action 9.1.

Repeal the legal requirement obliging CSOs to have one full-time paid and insured staff member.

Action 9.1.	Repeal the legal requirement obliging CSOs to have one full-time paid and insured staff member
Main responsibility	Ministry of Finance and Economy
Co-implementing Partner	PMO Ministry of Justice Ministry of Health and Social Protection NCCS ASCS
Implementation Deadline	2021
Implementation Indicators	1. Legal requirement repealed
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 9.2.

Align the current bylaws with the new VAT law from 2015 on the VAT tax treatment of CSOs.

Action 9.2	Align the current bylaws with the new VAT law of 2015 on the VAT tax treatment of CSOs
Main responsibility	Ministry of Finance and Economy
Co-implementing Partner	PMO Ministry of Justice NCCS ASCS
Implementation deadline	2020
Implementation	1. Drafting new bylaws and aligned with the new VAT law

Indicators	
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Not relevant

Action 9.3.

Draft a Tax Audit Manual for tax inspectors only for the purpose of treatment of CSOs that considers the sector's specificity and conduct trainings.

Action 9.3.	Draft a Tax Audit Manual for tax inspectors only for the purpose of treatment of the CSOs that considers the sector's specificity and conduct training
Main responsibility	Ministry of Finance and Economy
Co-implementing Partner	PMO Ministry of Justice ASCS Tax authorities NCCS
Implementation deadline	2020-2021
Implementation Indicators	1. Manual developed 2. Training program developed 3. Trainings delivered
Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	TA for preparation of the TOR for the manual TA required for drafting the manual approx.30 days Training of Tax Authorities throughout the country (30 days)

9.4 Amend the 1995 Law on Sponsorships and other tax laws to allow possibility for all individuals to deduct their donations to CSOs in order to encourage individual philanthropy.

Action 9.4.	Amend the 1995 Law on Sponsorships and other tax laws to allow possibility for all individuals to deduct their donations to CSOs in order to encourage individual philanthropy
Main responsibility	Ministry of Finances and Economy
Co-implementing Partner	PMO Ministry of Justice Tax authorities ASCS NCCS
Implementation deadline	2019-2021
Implementation Indicators	1. Legal analysis of the current incentives in the legislation conducted 2. Amended law on sponsorships adopted 3. Awareness-raising campaign on importance of developing individual and corporate philanthropy conducted

Additional remarks	
Required Technical assistance	Technical assistance in conducting legal analysis and proposals for amending the law (30 days) TA required for designing the awareness campaign 15 days

Conclusion

Through a timely implementation of the actions outlined in this revised Road Map 2024-2024, the Government of Albania will create a more favourable environment for civil society development nationwide and advance the partnership, collaboration and institutionalized dialogue with civil society actors in policy processes and toward EU integration.

The implementation of such a complex and comprehensive Road Map requires co-responsibility, coordination and initiative taking on the side of a number of state administration bodies. In view of the on-going reform process and upcoming accession negotiations, the scope of work of the administration is extensive, often just marginally touching upon cooperation and creation of preconditions for civil society development. In this respect, in some areas, the Road Map implementation will require more human resources, higher level of knowledge and constructive cooperation of all involved stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental. In addition, Albania can benefit from experiences, good practices and lesson learnt of other countries in the region which have gone through similar challenges and processes.

Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

The Prime Minister's Office is responsible for the overall coordination of all involved stakeholders. The identification of responsible institutions, indicators for each action, and a timed action plan, a solid mechanism for inner governmental, as well as public monitoring of progress, will be fully ensured. The Prime Minister's Office will organise external mid-term evaluation as well as an end-term evaluation of this Road Map. It will enable the evaluators to have access to all required documents.

Inter-ministerial working group as an internal governmental instrument will be following the implementation and will report on progress of the Road Map.

The NCSS will not only play a crucial role in ensuring that CSOs have a voice in the implementation of this Road Map by channelling their ideas and proposals through the NCCS to the respective ministries and the Prime Minister's Office, but it will also ensure that regular follow up on the implementation of the various actions is taking place.

The following bodies will be involved in the monitoring applying the below defined tools:

On the government side

- 1.) Inner – governmental monitoring via NAIS – shared annual work plan progress report
- 2.) Inter-ministerial working group (members: all ministries involved in the implementation as defined above plus responsible Agency's with the purpose of implementation and monitoring the progress of the Road Map)
- 3.) National Council (see below)
- 4.) National conference for CSO members of the Council and their networks (see below)
- 5.) Information on the respective government websites in their annual reports

Monitoring scheme

Who	How: Tools	Report progress to whom?	How often per year
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Inner – governmental monitoring via NAIS	Work plan matrix shared Via existing online system of the government	PMO	Detailed annual report on the websites of Agency and line ministries part of the RM Periodical progress report
Inter-ministerial working group for CSOs	Meeting agendas and minutes internal	PMO	Periodical meetings
PMO	Prepares reports for the General Secretary of the PMO	Secretary of the PMO	Twice per year
ASCS	Obtains updated information from the PMO	Reports to the NCCS in its function of the technical secretariat	
NCCS	Meeting agendas and minutes external, annual report(s) on AMSHC website)	Council of Ministers	Twice per year
National conference for CSO members of the Council and their networks	Conference agendas and minutes external (on AMSHC website)	ASCS (is funding the event)	Once per year
Information on the respective government websites in their (bi-) annual reports	Annually on web sites of The line ministries Plus PMO report	PMO	Once per year

Monitoring by the Civil Society

Via the ASCS web site an opportunity will be created at the end of each year to collect opinions and inputs from civil society – this is to ensure country wide inclusion of CSOs in the road map monitoring. Hereby the Agency can tap into the experience gained during the revision of the 2015 Road Map with having supported the Technical assistance team with the conduction of the group consultations as well as the online survey.

ASCS is to report the outcomes to the first meeting of the following year to the National Council for Civil Society Support.

ASCS will refer regularly in its newsletters on the implementation process of the Road Map. In addition, and based on the outcome of the monitoring results, a mid-term evaluation and an end term evaluation will be conducted with technical support and input from Civil Society.

The Government has taken on the obligation to ensure financial support for the Road Map, including both national and international funding. Progress Annual update of the 2019-2023 Road Map Annual action plans, as well as an end-term evaluation, are instrumental to its implementation.

The document that will follow this Road Map in 2024 will be embedded on a systematic public debate and consultations with all actors of organised civil society as part of an inclusive process of producing ways forward, such as a national strategy or any other strategic framework, and as required by the law on notification and public consultation for creating an enabling environment for civil society development in Albania in 2024, based on the outcome of an evaluation in 2024.

The needs of civil society change over time and new challenges for the sector are certain to appear. The Albanian Government will work closely and in partnership with the civil society sector, as well as with other development partners, in order to adjust to changes as they emerge.

Assumptions and Risk Management has made several critical assumptions, including:

1. The government with all respective line ministries is willing to push the work on the progress of the Road Map within timelines established.
2. The NCCS is functioning and can take on its role to monitor the implementation of the Road Map.
3. Members of the National Council for Civil Society Support are willing to monitor the progress of the Road Map and participate in the public debate processes offered by the government
4. There is an overall political will to ensure a conducive CSO environment also by implementing the actions defined and agreed upon in the Road Map 2019-2023.

Annex 1: Governmental bodies involved in institutional CSO – government mechanism

The below information is detailed description of each of the institutional mechanisms with basic information on their potential vision, mission and objectives, institutional links with other proposed structures, as well as key actions that should lead to fulfilling the objectives, accompanied by possible areas for future technical assistance can be found in Annex 1.

National Council for Civil Society

The principal instrument for dialogue and consultation between the government of Albania and civil society is the National Council for Civil Society. The law "For the establishment and functioning of the National Council for Civil Society" (no. 119/2015) establishing the Council was passed in November 2015. The law has three main aims:

- Creation of the National Council for Civil Society to guarantee institutional cooperation with civil society organizations in the Republic of Albania, in favour of the expanding of democracy, strengthening of good governance, increasing transparency in public decision making, through better involvement of civil society in this process.
- Development of institutional cooperation with civil society organizations to design and implement the national strategy and the Road Map of the Albanian Government, to create an enabling framework for the sector of civil society and inter-sectorial cooperating relations between public institutions and civil society organizations and development of philanthropy and social capital.
- Defining the principles and procedures under which the process of dialogue and consultation in the National Council for Civil Society is directed and developed.

The law defines NCCS as an independent and an advisory collegial structure at the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania, operating to fulfil the three main aims listed above. The Law stipulates that NCCS' meetings are held in the Prime Minister's Office premises, and that NCCS is supported by the ASCS, which performs administrative and supportive functions for the NCCS.

NCCS consists of 27 members, of which 13 representatives of public institutions, 13 representatives of CSOs, and one representative from the business community, member of the National Economic Council.

The mandate of the representatives of public institutions and of the representatives of the National Economic Council in NCCS is associated with the time during which they exercise the relevant public duty, because of which they are appointed members of NCCS.

Civil society organizations select four representatives for each of the following sectors:

- Democratization, rule of law, human rights and integration into the EU;
- Economic, territorial and environmental development;
- Welfare, social services, health protection and life quality improvement

The duties of NCCS are:

1. To advise the Council of Ministers on establishment of state policies to promote sustainable development of civil society.
2. To propose to the Council of Ministers the principal programmes to promote sustainable development of civil society and the inclusion of this sector on issues related to the economic and

social reforms, European integration, respect of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and strengthening democracy and the rule of law in the country.

3. To advise the Council of Ministers on legislative improvements that affect the development of civil society in Albania and their inclusion in public decision making.

4. To provide recommendations on public policies related to affecting the activities and development of civil society organizations, and their involvement in the inter-sectorial cooperation.

5. To express opinions to the Council of Ministers and to the ASCS on the planning of priorities regarding the distribution of public funds, in support to the programmes and projects of civil society organizations, as well as in support of the annual reports analysis of ministries and other governmental agencies for financed projects and programmes.

6. To offers suggestions to the Council of Ministers for the setting of priorities regarding European Union funds or other international institutions funds for Albania that affect the development of civil society.

The Council's first official meeting took place in February 2017. The second meeting was held in December 2017, where a civil society Deputy Chair of the Council has been elected and internal regulations for the Council's operations have been approved. A third meeting took place in March 2019 and led to the approval of the 2019 annual work plan and the instalment of working groups on CSO registration, public funding, taxation and social enterprises.

As the Albanian government ministries have been reformed after the June 2017 elections, the structure of public institutions' membership has changed. The Council is now chaired by the Minister of Health and Social Protection.

The Agency for Civil Society Support

The ASCS is a state agency regulated by the law No 10093/2009. The Council of Ministers appoints its governing body, the supervisory board. The board is by law composed of four members of state institutions of the central public administration and five members from representatives from civil society, respecting principle of gender equality.

One of its main function is to distribute grants to CSOs on the basis of nationwide calls for proposals. It is governed by a supervisory board whose membership is divided between government officials and representatives of civil society. Since end 2017 the Agency is increasing its activity as secretariat of the NCCS. It will make urgent provision in regard to staff and annual budget from 2019 on to accommodate this role as supportive secretariat to the NCCS.

The financing for grants comes from the annual state budget. The law specifies that the state cannot provide a smaller budget to the Agency than the budget it was given the previous year. In addition, the state budget covers the administrative expenses of the Agency from a separate budget line and the state provides premises for its activity.

Between 2010 and 2017, the Agency provided grant support to 418 projects, with a total of 724,738,840 ALL (approx. 5,4 million EUR).

A strategy for 2015-2021 has been developed and is currently work in progress. The vision of the ASCS is to contribute to the creation of an active civil society in Albania. The mission remains defined by the law, which is to encourage the sustainable development of civil society and the creation of favourable conditions for civic initiatives for the good of and in the interest of the public. The law also stipulates that, in the exercise of its duty, the ASCS is guided by the strategic priorities of the government for the development of civil society.

The objectives of the ASCS are:

- encouraging the development of volunteering and participation of citizens in

community development

- promoting and strengthening capacities and sustainability of non-profit organisations
- developing inter-sector partnership and cooperation between civil society organizations
- increasing the visibility and public influence of civil society organizations
- developing social entrepreneurship and employment in non-profit organizations
- increasing the influence of civil society in policy and decision-making
- encouraging the cooperation with non-profit organisations which have the role of fighting against corruption, human trafficking and treatment of its victims, as well as domestic violence.

CSOs confirm ongoing high expectations towards the Agency as a central mechanism for public funding of CSO programmes in Albania and with regard to its function as a general CSO support unit. The Agency is also expected to act as an intermediary between civil society and government institutions.

In 2016 the Board of the Agency approved grant rules and procedures. The organisation has introduced group consultation sessions in some parts of the country linked to upcoming calls for proposals. At the same time there is ongoing criticism concerning to the transparency and accessibility to the funds granted by the Agency, also rooted in the limitation of the overall budget available for grant making.

The information and consultation sessions are mainly aimed at collecting ideas of local CSOs in regard to the call for proposal formulation – and will be improved in designed and conduction. The sessions will be used for information sharing on latest government news in regard to civil society and active citizenship.

The discussion with CSO participants during the sessions will be guided by national strategic objectives and the outcomes of the funded projects will be linked to evidence based local community needs, or national wide problems.

Result-oriented management and monitoring of the projects financed by the Agency will be introduced.

Since end 2017 the Agency is increasing its activity as secretariat of the NCCS. It will make urgent provision in regard to staff and annual budget from 2019 on to accommodate this role as supportive secretariat to the NCCS.

Line ministries responsible for implementation of specific Road Map areas

Line ministries play an important part in the implementation of the Road Map. Good coordination within the ministries but also with the civil society sector is required. Where possible, coordinators for CSO cooperation in ministries and other government bodies will be installed in particular in those ministries working intensively with CSOs like the Ministry for Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Ministry of Justice, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economy.

The process of appointing coordinators for public consultations in all public bodies has been envisaged by the draft Law on Notification and Consultation and the process has already started. Thus, the Prime Minister's Office, as well as nine ministries, have published the contact addresses of their coordinators for the right to information, partly combining the task of the Coordinator for Civil Society with that of Coordinators for Public Consultation.

The establishment of the Agency for Supporting the Civil Society, as well as the National Council for Civil Society, complement, and do not substitute for the regular and open dialogue of all public bodies with CSOs and citizens in conducting everyday tasks fulfilling strategic goals within their policy areas. Meaningful dialogue between ministries/government agencies and civil society will be ensured. Involvement of CSOs in decision making processes in all sectors is an excellent tool for the good governance and management of public policies and will be backed up by the coordinators being put in place by the end of 2020. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that all public bodies of strategic importance for civil society development appoint a contact person for cooperation with CSOs, where the scope of communication and collaboration in implementing specific policies or delivering social services is more extensive.