



Financed by European Union



Steering Committee Meeting of the Action

## **Citizens' Empowerment in the Republic of Moldova**

### **MINUTES no 2**

**Date:** 29 October 2020

**Event:** Steering Committee Meeting of the Action "Citizens' Empowerment in the Republic of Moldova"

**Moderator:** Valentina Plesca, Head of Citizens' Empowerment and Capacity Development Unit, GIZ

**Participants:** The list of participants is attached

**Minutes drafted by:** Rodica Garstea, Citizen empowerment advisor, GIZ

**Distribution list:** Delegation of the European Union (EU) to the Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova (MARDE), National Council of NGOs, Regional Development Agencies (North, Centre, South, UTA Gagauzia), partner civil society organizations (CSOs).

### **Opening speech**

*Mr. Christian Ballaro*, the representative of the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, addressed the participants with a greeting message. He reminded of the EU's commitment to work with civil society and the importance of the "Citizens Empowerment in the Republic of Moldova" Action (CSO Action), for which 5 million Euros were dedicated. Mr Ballaro emphasized the role of civil society in mobilizing citizens to reduce corruption and increase accountability, which in turn will contribute to the social and economic development of localities. The pandemic and everything that followed during 2020 introduced new rules, approaches, challenges in all areas related to human activity. This would be an additional reason to improve local services and provide better living conditions for citizens.

Mr. Ballaro mentioned the importance of successfully launching and managing the CSO Action website, which is a communication and knowledge dissemination platform for all those concerned and interested. He expressed confidence that the Action will be a success and that the citizens of Moldova, through active involvement, will contribute to achieving results and bringing change to local communities.

*Mr Igor Malai*, Head of the Regional Development Policy Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MARDE), welcomed the participants and thanked the European Union Delegation, the German Embassy and GIZ for their contribution over the years to improving lives of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. Mr. Malai stressed that the CSO Action is of importance, because it coincides with the intentions of MARDE to ensure that the investments made meet the real needs of citizens. He also mentioned that empowerment and involvement are

important elements in ensuring the sustainability of EU-funded infrastructure projects, but also those in the National Fund for Regional Development (NFRD).

Mr Malai briefed the participants on the new approach to regional development, which already allows civil society and private sector organizations to apply to the National Fund for Regional Development. As a result, the Ministry relies on this Action to support CSOs to develop project proposals and participate in calls launched by MARDE, and for media organizations to promote the selection process and inform about the results of these projects.

*Mr. Achim Mortier*, the representative of the German Embassy in the Republic of Moldova, welcomed the members of the Steering Committee and thanked the partners for their support in implementing this Action. He mentioned that improving the living conditions of the people of Moldova and enabling citizens to participate constructively in decision-making processes are the priorities of German Cooperation. Significant investments have been made, especially in the field of water and sanitation, as a result, in order to ensure their sustainability, the participation of citizens as responsible customers is crucial. Mr Mortier recalled that civil society organizations have an important role to play in promoting quality services, but also in building partnerships with local authorities to maintain these services.

### **CSO Action implementation – progress and achievements**

*Ms. Elena Spinu*, GIZ, presented the main achievements of the Action during January-September 2020. Among the most significant achievements were mentioned: partner CSOs targeted capacity development; the process for selection of organizations awarded with grants under the Local Grants Programme (LGP) in all four regions and for media and communication; development of common visibility materials; CSO Action website upgrading, which provides now a safer platform for application, and a new a resource page.

The main activities planned for the next period were presented. Among the most significant are: further specific capacity development for the partner CSOs to implement activities, considering the restrictions imposed by the pandemic; support for partner CSOs and LGP beneficiaries to ensure good communication and visibility of EU-funded actions; support partner CSOs in launching the second call for proposals for local projects; support for local citizens' committees in monitoring EU-funded infrastructure projects; facilitate networking and experience exchange activities for CSOs in and between regions on citizen mobilization and empowerment, participation in decision-making processes, process monitoring, and information and awareness-raising; identify opportunities for collaboration with RDC members for a more active participation of civil society in regional development policies (*PPT presentation attached*).

*Ms. Valentina Pleșca*, GIZ, reiterated that since activities are planned to increase the capacity of CSOs, local CSOs will also be trained and supported to write project proposals and submit them to FNDR for funding.

### **Partner CSOs presentation and activities for the next quarter**

The five partner CSOs presented their main activities and results achieved, as well as the challenges they faced during the reporting period. Among key results the following were presented:

- Enhancement of local CSOs capacity in the field of community mobilization, visibility and communication, networking and monitoring of public service delivery were ensured;
- Ensuring CSO action promotion and visibility at local and regional levels;
- Implementation of 14 media CSOs local projects for increased outreach and awareness of citizens' engagement in decision-making, of EU-funded investment projects and sustainable service delivery is going successfully;

- Implementation of 62 local CSOs local projects in the 4 DRs to mobilize citizens and participate in decision-making, monitoring of public service Projects implementation, awareness raising on related environmental issues is successful.

The main challenges posed by partner CSOs are:

- Very small number of local CSOs, especially on media, able to write and manage projects according to the standards set by the Action;
- The increased complexity of project proposals evaluation, including due to the infrastructure component within medium and large grants, which reduced the period available for their implementation and made unsustainable the activities related to infrastructure elements;
- CSOs limited knowledge of local services system, as result, low capacities to carry out activities that require the involvement of local actors and conducting infrastructure procurement processes;
- COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions and insufficiently equipped organizations, especially small and medium-sized, reduce action at the local level, as well as increases the risk of not involving all targeted groups of citizens, especially vulnerable groups.

Detailed information on main results obtained, challenges and next quarter activities are presented in the *attached PPT presentations*.

Considering the above, the partner CSOs are in position to rethink their activities, but also requested the extension of their project implementation deadline in order to better achieve the objectives of the Local Grants Programme.

### **Comments and discussions on the status of the Action**

*Ms. Victoria Neaga*, project manager on civil society within the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, stressed that the European Union will continue to support actions aimed at empowering civil society and came up with some information and recommendations:

- GIZ and partners to develop a strategy for the sustainability of CSO Action interventions, at both regional and local levels. It was recommended to take over and adapt the sustainability strategy developed by the EU Technical Assistance Project to support the development of civil society organizations in the Republic of Moldova.
- Partner CSOs to make a continuous effort to monitor the activities of local CSOs, both to intervene promptly if adjustments are needed, but also to discover success stories that can be disseminated quickly and to a wide audience.
- The visibility of the support provided by the European Union is important, thus all partners should further ensure it.
- GIZs and partner CSOs to inform and invite the EU Delegation to monitoring visits that are undertaken at local level.
- The Action website, which is considered a very successful and useful product, will be taken over by the EU Delegation at the end of the Action.

*Mr. Igor Malai* stressed that the Action meets the needs not only of citizens in communities, but also of public institutions such as MARDE. Mr Malai made the following recommendations:

- The Action should consider more activities to involve CSOs in the regional development process and participate in RDC meetings, but also to launch initiatives to stimulate regional development processes.
- CSOs to direct the activity towards informing the citizens about the Regional Development policies; more active involvement of civil society organizations in the activities of RDAs and

RDCs to promote regional development policies among citizens; mobilizing citizens, but also training LPAs for closer collaboration and ensuring the sustainability of infrastructure projects.

- Regional and local organizations are encouraged to become more involved in monitoring NFRD-funded projects as well as apply themselves for funds.

*Ms. Pleșca* mentioned that the CSO Action was presented by GIZ advisors during the working meetings of the RDCs. *Ms. Pleșca* also informed about the upcoming Action activities, which support the recommendations made by *Mr. Malai*:

- The partner CSOs will propose cooperation to local CSOs members of the RDCs, but also to the Council itself, based on information and local analysis on the state of affairs in the field of local services.
- GIZ will ensure closer cooperation between local and regional CSOs and MARDE and its regional structures RDAs and RDCs.
- API, as a partner CSO, is preparing a series of TV shows on the national public channel Moldova 1, on CSO Action related topics, including the topic of regional development and the role of different actors in the process.

Considering that in current pandemic conditions most of the meetings are organized online and often overlap, *Ms. Luiba Stavinschi* proposed for future Steering Committee meetings to send the invitation in advance, with the exact time indicated.

### **Closing remarks**

*Mr Igor Malai*, in his closing remarks on the event, praised the results already achieved by the CSO Action. The discussion was necessary, including in terms of identifying interventions that need to be improved in order to have sustainable results.

### **Decisions**

1. GIZ, together with its partner CSOs, will develop a strategy for the sustainability of Action activities and grant beneficiaries, at national and local level.
2. CSOs members of RDCs will be invited to the information sessions for the second call for proposals of the EU Local Grants Program.
3. GIZ and partner organizations will invite the EU Delegation and MARDE to local monitoring events and visits.
4. GIZ will initiate a working meeting with EU to follow up on the challenges presented by partner CSOs.
5. The EU Delegation, after the completion of the Action, will take over the management of the website [www.eu4civilsociety.md](http://www.eu4civilsociety.md).

### *Annexes:*

1. Agenda of the Steering Committee meeting
2. PPT presentation of GIZ and partner organizations