

NATIONAL FOUNDATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGY for 2009 – 2013

INTRODUCTION

Government considers strengthening of civil society important. It is confirmed by the Programme of the Estonian Government for 2007 – 2011¹: The goal of the Government in developing the respective field is to strengthen Estonian state and civil society through involving citizens and civic associations in state administration.

The National Foundation of Civil Society (NFCS) is a foundation established by the Estonian Government in 2008 and financed from state budget. According to the Statute, the goal of NFCS is to help building the capacity of Estonian non-profit associations and foundations to develop civil society and shape an environment that fosters civic action². The strategic bases for NFCS activities are the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (EKAK)³ adopted by the Estonian Parliament on 12 December 2002 and the respective action plans, the Concept of NFCS⁴ and this strategy.

The work of NFCS is administrated by a Board consisting of representatives of public sector and civil society organisations⁵; daily work is organised by a bureau and the structure and number of employees are set by the Board.

In its activities the NFCS follows the Code of Ethics for Estonian NGOs⁶ presuming it also from its partners.

PRESENT SITUATION

There is a numerous and diverse non-profit sector in Estonia as well as many strong organisations, advocacy and umbrella organisations and networks but the strengthening of civil society, cooperation of civil society organisations and coordination require systematic further support.

So far mainly short-term financial resources have been available for Estonian non-profit associations for thematic projects financed from the state budget of Estonia or the European Union. These funds do not provide enough resources for innovative civic initiatives, neither can they guarantee the stable development of organisations and capacity to set and achieve long-term goals. Shaping of an environment that would foster civic action, capacity for advocacy and capacity for partnership between civil society organisations and public authorities are randomly and poorly financed.

The low operational capacity of organisations has slowed down the ability to fulfil their role in the society.

¹ Programme of Estonian Government (in Estonian), <http://www.valitsus.ee/?id=6902>

² Statute of the National Foundation of Civil Society, <http://www.kysk.ee/?s=15>

³ Estonian Civil Society Development Concept, <http://www.siseministeerium.ee/30410>

⁴ Concept for National Foundation of Civil Society, <http://www.kysk.ee/?s=15>

⁵ Civil society organisation: an NGO operating independently from public authorities and business enterprises, including *social unions, non-profit associations, foundations* and their *umbrella organisations* in case they are not established by public authorities or enterprises in order to fulfil the tasks they have determined, <http://www.ngo.ee/sonastik>

⁶ Code of Ethics for Estonian NGOs, <http://www.ngo.ee/eetikakoodeks>

VISION AND MISSION

Vision of NFCS

Estonia has a functioning civil society and capable civil society organisations represent its main engine. In 2013 the NFCS shall be a significant supporter of the operational capacity of NGOs, an acknowledged cooperation partner for public authorities and civil society organisations, and has achieved better preconditions for the development of civil society.

Mission of NFCS

By funding organisations, innovative ideas and activities NFCS shall help increasing the operational capacity of Estonian civil society organisations and shape the environment and civil society that foster civic action.

TARGET GROUPS

The main target groups of NFCS shall be:

- Non-profit associations functioning in public interest, foundations, advocacy and umbrella organisations and networks;
- Organisations, institutions and individuals researching and developing civil society.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Civil society functions on the basis of values. NFCS shall proceed from the values and principles of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (EKAK) and the Code of Ethics for Estonian NGOs.

NFCS respects the following values with regard to itself and its partners:

Transparency and openness – guaranteed by extensive publication. In order to implement calls for grants– to compile applications, evaluate and inform – there are clear conditions and rules of procedure. Decisions of grant allocations are made public, applicants whose applications are denied shall be informed about the reasons for negative decision. Complaint can be submitted with regard to the made decision.

Competence and professionalism – being competent, open and innovative in daily work, flexible and learning from experiences but acting in a calculating and reasonably demanding way with regard to itself and its partners.

Impartiality and political independence – avoiding the preference of cliquey, institutional and political interests, presenting viewpoints and expert assessments fairly proceeding from the principles of equal treatment and internationally acknowledged good practice.

Partnership – working with target groups and partners, proceeding from their needs, being tolerant and open towards new ideas, keeping one's word and not giving empty promises.

People – friendly and creative work environment is valued, self-development is acknowledged and supported as well as a wish to face professional challenges.

Compliance with values is guaranteed by good governance and professional administration that are based on obligation for responsibility and reporting and ethical use of funds.

Based on values and proceeding from its vision and mission, NFCS is an organisation directed towards cooperation and achievement of social changes. NFCS shall support organisations in increasing their

operational capacity, social and ecological skills as well as the ideas and activities that bear the following characteristics:

- Involvement of a whole sector, region, nation and topic;
- Directed towards innovative, social changes and erudition of society;
- Longer-term and applying cooperation and search for consensus.

NFCS shall avoid conflicts of interest, shall not accept financial means the conditions of which are not in accordance with the values, mission and goals of NFCS or the source of which has a poor or suspicious reputation.

GOALS and ACTIVITIES

In order to fulfil its mission and achieve the vision, in 2009 – 2013 the NFCS shall focus on three strategic influential goals:

Goal 1: Civil society organisations are both nationally and regionally capable for operation and cooperation and they are the initiators and executors of social changes.

Goal 2: Innovative ideas and knowledge of civil society and international experience spread and are applied; international cooperation takes place.

Goal 3: Development, advocacy and support activities of civil society (researches, analyses, information and media campaigns, conferences, seminars, trainings, etc.) foster the operational capacity of civil society organisations.

In order to achieve the goals, NFCS shall apply action programmes that are the basis for annual action plans.

Programmes:

- **Programme for operational capacity of national and regional non-profit associations and foundations.**

The programme shall be implemented on the basis of an action plan approved by the Board of NFCS for the calls for grants.

- **Programme for innovative ideas and international cooperation.**

The programme shall be implemented through the implementation of good ideas and new knowledge and international distribution of the experience of Estonian civil society through permanently open call for grants.

- **Advocacy and support programme for civil society development.**

The programme (ordered researches, analyses, information and media campaigns, conferences, seminars, trainings, etc.) shall be implemented through the activities initiated by the Board of NFCS.

FINANCIAL MEANS

According to the Programme of the Coalition for 2007 – 2011 and the chapter entitled „Civil society and statehood”, in 2008 – 2011 the state shall allocate annually 20 million Estonian kroons from the state budget to implement the NFCS programmes.

Strategic use of resources

Programmes

- I. The minimum extent of the programme for operational capacity of national and regional non-profit associations and foundations shall be 50%, including the annual regional level call for grants with the minimum extent of 10% out of the NFCS resources;
- II. The minimum extent of the programme for innovative ideas and new knowledge and international cooperation shall be 10% out of the NFCS resources;
- III. The minimum extent of the support programme for civil society development shall be 10% out of the NFCS resources.

15% of the use of annual resources shall be decided by the Board of NFCS on the operational basis.

NFCS shall work actively in order to increase the extent resources to fulfil its goals and develop its capacity to administrate the additional resources. NFCS shall be open to administrate the external resources that are in accordance with its goals. In the first years of functioning, NFCS shall not focus on private donations and support but shape the respective capacity.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Goal: NFCS shall be a structure that efficiently and in a sustained way supports the civil society activities and organisations having a stable place and role in the society.

In order to achieve the goal, the Board of NFCS shall regularly analyse the activities of NFCS proceeding from source documents and plan the annual activities for organisational development.

Preconditions for the development and efficient functioning of NFCS shall be:

- Good reputation and prominence;
- Increase of resources, efficient use of funds and cost efficiency;
- Satisfaction of target groups and partners;
- Assessment of results and regular feedback from target groups;
- Application of the principles of good governance and professional administration;
- Improvement of structure;
- Motivation of people and creation of preconditions for development.

The maximum extent of financial means used for the administration of NFCS, creation of preconditions for development and guaranteeing the efficiency of activities shall be 15% out of the NFCS resources. As a result of NFCS development, the percentage of the respective resources shall gradually decrease.

PEOPLE

Board: The Board of NFCS shall consist of an equal number of representatives from public sector and civil society organisations. The Board shall fulfil the mission of NFCS, strategically plan the activities of NFCS, execute the supervision of activities and funds, set and apply the principles of NFCS daily work. The efficient work of the Board shall be guaranteed by competent and motivated Board members. The Board shall employ a Head of NFCS and appoint the members of expert group.

Auditing committee: The controlling body of the Board shall be an auditing committee of NFCS. With the increase of NFCS activities an institution for internal auditing shall be established.

Personnel: NFCS shall consist of economical, motivated, competent and impeccable employees. In-service training shall be enabled to personnel.

Experts: In order to elaborate the conditions and regulation for the calls for grants and enforce the principles and criteria of assessment, the experience of the NFCS expert group shall be considered. The expert group shall evaluate the applications and submit the proposals for funding to the Board. The existence of expert group shall guarantee the objectivity and independence of grant allocations as well as the emergence of the conflicts of interest. In each call for applications and grants there are at least 2-3 experts.

ASSESSMENT

In its activities the NFCS shall proceed from the principle: *plan – implement – assess / control – change – plan*.

In order to constantly assess the success of activities and organisation, measures of assessment shall be used guaranteeing the aimed influence in the society, good reputation and ethical use of funds, good governance, professional administration and achievement of the vision.

The efficiency of programmes shall be assessed by measurable goals. Constant supervision of the activities and influence shall guarantee the purposeful operation, correct use of funds and possibility to change strategy if necessary.

Measures of assessment:

- Strategic – influence of NFCS to be assessed and whether the actions are correct;
- Tactical – correctness of actions to be assessed.

The activities of NFCS shall be assessed according to the principles and measures of assessment of the National Foundation of Civil Society approved by the Board of NFCS.