Civil Society Code Implementation Guide

CIVIL SOCIETY CODE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

This Guide has been prepared to assist the implementation and understanding of the Civil Society Code. The Code consists of 8 aspirational commitments and 44 standards and principles that the civil society organizations should adhere to, apply and promote. For each standard of the Code, more detailed guidance on what this standard means and what it refers to, is given. For certain standards, appropriate procedures that must be observed are listed, and for some, only a more detailed explanation is given. In general, civil society organizations should independently find appropriate solutions for the application of this Code in accordance with the scope and complexity of the work processes and programs they implement.

COMMITMENT 1: Responsible decision making and transparent organizations

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

1.1

Civil society organizations are catalysts for positive social change with a clearly defined and publicly available vision, mission, target groups and beneficiaries.

As a civil society organization acting in the public interest, it is necessary to formally and clearly state your mission, which will be in writing and approved by the governing body. The mission should clearly indicate why you actually exist and what you hope to achieve in the future. The organizational mission should be well understood and supported by each member of the organization (employees and members of the governing bodies). Your mission statement in written form should be available to everyone (members, partners, donors, program beneficiaries and the general public). It is very important to periodically check internally within the organization whether your mission is still relevant given the rapid social changes. By this check, it is necessary to raise questions such as: whether the mission is achieved, whether the mission should be revised to reflect the changes and whether the organization should respond to some new needs that may require a new mission and the like. Very often the vision, mission and target groups and beneficiaries defined are an integral part of organizational governing acts such as statutes and multi-annual organizational strategies.

STANDARDS

1.2

The work of civil society organizations is based on a one-year or multi-year planning process. The strategic plans and projects arise from and are guided by the need to achieve the organizational mission and to meet the needs of the citizens for whom we act.

Programs and activities should be in line with the mission of the organization. The mission of the organization should be the basis for strategic planning and a basic roadmap for future activities. The programs and activities implemented by the organization should aim at achieving the stated mission. For the organizational success, it is necessary to compile a multi-year strategy/plan by which the organization will show to the public and its members and beneficiaries how it plans to achieve its goals and mission. This document will help you make decisions about important issues regarding the needs you should meet and the organization's funding more easily. In practice, organizations often involve an external person to lead the strategic planning process, but the strategy should be a joint product of staff and other supporters who are familiar with the organization and the social context. In most cases, organizations first adopt a multi-year strategy, and then based on that strategy develop annual work plans.

1.3

Employees, members, beneficiaries/ constituents and supporters are actively involved in the strategic planning process and thus they have an impact on decision-making processes within organizations.

In order to adopt a strategy that will be relevant to social developments and clear, it is necessary to involve a wider circle of people in its preparation, such as employees, members of governing bodies, beneficiaries/constituents, supporters and the like. It should be essential to involve different groups of people in the strategy preparation, and it should be not just pro-forma. Thus, the opinions and views expressed regarding various aspects of the organizational program working should be noted in official documents/minutes and then discussed with a tendency to be consensually translated into clear measures and activities to which the organization will be committed in the future. The organization should cultivate a culture of respect for everyone's opinion and allow a sufficiently long period of exchange for the issues that should be opened and closed before determining the organization's strategy for the upcoming period. The models of active involvement in the strategy preparation process can vary, thus face-to-face meetings and workshops, questionnaires and surveys, etc. may be organized.

STANDARDS

1.4

Civil society organizations have a practice of continuous monitoring and evaluation of the results and goals of their programs and projects. The results of the implemented programs and projects are aimed at creating lasting positive changes in the Macedonian society.

For a greater social impact, the activities of the organization need to be periodically examined to determine their relevance to the mission, their efficiency and effectiveness, the value of continuing programs or their revision, and the need for new programs. Organizations need to have clear insight into several important issues, such as: whether activities are consistent with the current mission or whether they need to be revised or discontinued given the changes in the mission, how efficient and effective the programs are in achieving the goals, what the benefits for program beneficiaries are and whether new services should be offered, etc. Evaluations should be open and honest and include input from multiple stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation may be done in accordance with the work dynamics of the organization in various ways, such as surveys, open-lines for feedback through the web and social media, open days of the organization for the public, focus groups, presentation of final reports and the like. The results of each evaluation should offer several options/recommendations for further development of the organization and provide guidance to the overall management and staff on the need for future improvements. Depending on the availability of funds, the organization should decide whether to conduct an external independent evaluation or an internal evaluation.

1.5

Civil society organizations have a practice of at least one-year reporting on the results achieved and activities implemented in the form of an annual organizational report. These reports are publicly shared and easily accessible for all stakeholders.

At least once a year, in a form of an annual organizational report, organizations should prepare and publish information about their programs, projects and services. This report should provide public access to appropriate information on the implemented programs, activities and services, funding received and realized costs in the current year for the previous one and other basic organizational data for all interested parties. Simply put, this report should give an account of what you have done. According to the Law on Associations and Foundations, every civil society organization is obliged to prepare and publish an organizational report (narrative and financial) in the current year for the previous one by April 30 at the latest. The organizational report, in addition to the program section where the implemented activities and results are described, should also contain a financial section where the income and expenditures of the organization will be presented in a clear and understandable way. The prepared organizational report after being approved by the governing body should be shared with the members, beneficiaries and constituents and especially with the general public. In most cases, the report shared with the public is smaller in size and without various annexes. Organizations can upload the report on a website, share it on social media, distribute a printed version, share it partially in daily newspapers, organize a public presentation and the like. It is important to provide easy access to it for anyone who would be interested at any time.

STANDARDS

1.6

Civil society organizations possess and constantly develop skills and capacities needed to implement programs and projects.

Employees and volunteers (staff) who are committed to the mission of the organization should also show appropriate professional skills and spirit for continuous upgrading. In order to foster that spirit, organizations should provide adequate training and orientation for new staff as well as appropriate office and field work conditions when needed. When staff attend training, organizations provide opportunities for individual growth and development, thus creating a work culture in which managers encourage personal growth of the staff. Staff should be encouraged and shown respect for the highest standards of professional and personal conduct, as well as for taking personal and professional responsibility for their actions and decisions in the performance of their work. Each organization, depending on the scope of work and work requirements, should determine what skills are needed for successful implementation of tasks.

COMMITMENT 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE

2.1

Civil society organizations that are signatories to this Code have adopted a Statute or other type of governing act which clearly defines the vision, mission and goals of the organization.

Having a Code is a sign that the organization has set high standards of work and conduct and based on them it establishes the image of the organization itself. The adopted Statute or other type of governing act is the starting point in this process, and the defined vision, mission and goals are basic elements that every organization-signatory of this Code should possess. In addition to these elements, the Statute describes the organizational structure, the role and function of the bodies of the organization and other policies that regulate the operation of the organization more specifically. The statute should be publicly available and easily accessible to the public in an electronic form.

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

2.2

Civil society organizations have a clear organizational structure with clearly divided roles, rights and responsibilities between non-executive and executive bodies. The work of the civil society organizations is overseen by an independent non-executive body that meets regularly and reviews and approves the annual organizational reports (narrative and financial), reviews and decides on significant organizational policies and key financial decisions, work plans and programs.

Good governance in civil society organizations begins with a clear separation of the executive from the non-executive bodies in the organizational structure. Executive bodies are those bodies that are responsible for the day-to-day operations and work of the organization. In practice, you can find them named as: Executive Director or Board of Directors. The persons who are part of the executive bodies are the legal representatives of the civil society organizations and make and implement decisions for the day-to-day work of the organizations. The employees in the civil society organizations are accountable for their work to the director or to the board of directors. Non-executive bodies are those bodies that govern the civil society organizations and monitor the work of the organization in relation to the stated mission, its short-term and long-term goals. In accordance with the Law on Associations and Foundations, the highest governing body in the civil society organizations is the Assembly, but often, in practice, civil society organizations, in accordance with their founding acts as non-executive bodies, have a Governing Board, a Council and/or a Supervisory Board. The non-executive body should:

- adopt and continuously monitor the achievement of the vision and mission and the goals, funds and services that the organization provides to the beneficiaries.
- elect the executive director or the board of directors.
- provide adequate financial supervision.
- provide adequate sources of support.
- ensure legal and ethical integrity and be accountable.
- provide efficient guidelines in organizational planning.
- recruit and elect new members and evaluate its own work.
- improve the public image of the organization.
- determine, monitor and strengthen the programs and services of the organization.
- support the executive director and evaluate his/her performance.

The Executive Office regularly organizes meetings with non-executive bodies for which it keeps regular records

STANDARDS

2.3

The non-executive body that controls the work of the organization is an independent body with clearly regulated rules for election and re-election of its members.

The non-executive bodies in an organization evolve and develop along with the development of the organization as a whole. Every organization goes through certain development stages. There is no standard or generic model for an ideal governing structure and therefore each organization should establish its own optimal model, certainly in accordance with the legal regulations. At each stage of the «life cycle» in the development of civil society organizations, it is necessary to find appropriate approaches, styles and strategies for the successful functioning of non-executive bodies. The Statute of the organization should envisage clear rules for the type of bodies and their composition, the manner of election and dismissal, the duration of the mandate of the members in the bodies, the possibility for re-election and the manner of decision-making. The Assembly decides on the internal organization and organizational forms of the bodies of the association and elects and dismisses members of the bodies. It is exceptionally important when electing members of non-executive bodies for them to be independent members who are not part of the executive office. If the non-executive bodies have members who are part of the executive office then they should have no right to vote.

2.4

The members of the non-executive bodies do not receive fees for performing their work except for the necessary expenses for holding the regular sessions and meetings.

It is good practice for the members of the non-executive bodies not to receive compensation/fee for their engagement in the civil society organizations, with the exception of the payment of travel expenses and/or other expenses related to the scheduled sessions and meetings (working materials, refreshments, etc.). In this way, they confirm that their commitment to the functioning of the organization is based on goodwill and strong support and commitment to its mission, vision and goals.

2.5

The leadership in civil society organizations is visionary, innovative and encourages the creation of team spirit in the bodies of the organization.

Management and leadership do not differ in terms of process (leading), but in the basis of power. Management is based on formal power or position-based power (hierarchy), while leadership is based on informal power or influence-based power. Civil society organizations need leaders who will primarily strengthen the team spirit and capacity and encourage strategic and innovative thinking and action.

2.6

Civil society organizations ensure independence in their operation from government, political parties and other powerful social actors. The members of the bodies put the interest of the organization above the personal interest, guided by the duty and responsibility to act in the best possible interest towards their beneficiaries, constituents and the general public.

Civil society organizations should be the critic, controller and oversight of any government and they should operate independently and be protected from any external power influence. They should cultivate a culture of accountability, where all bodies will have a strong sense of responsibility for their actions and impacts, and thus work in the best possible interest for their beneficiaries, constituents and the general public, thereby increasing the trust of these groups.

2.7

Civil society organizations clearly regulate and declare potential and actual conflicts of interest in their work.

Civil society organizations are more and more involved in cooperation with the state and local administration, as well as with the private sector. In fact, more and more often civil society organizations are expected to show that they provide quality services, but also that they efficiently manage their organizations even in difficult and challenging circumstances. Hence, it is good practice for the civil society organization to have adopted an internal policy for conflict of interest, or to have regulated the conflict of interest in one of its governing acts, such as the Statute. It is important that this policy applies to all governing bodies and the staff. By addressing conflicts of interest, the organization strengthens its reputation and sets higher standards for accountability and transparency in its operations. Also, the established policy for prevention of conflict of interest allows the organization to easily deal with situations that have the potential to negatively reflect on its work or negatively affect individuals associated with the organization.

STANDARDS

2.8

Information on employees, members, donors, as well as financial resources is publicly shared by the civil society organizations and easily available to all interested parties, and especially to the general public.

In the spirit of transparent and accountable operation, it is especially important for organizations to share information about who they are, what they do, what resources they have at their disposal, etc. The organization should provide information about the composition of its executive office, non-executive bodies and donors who have provided support for its activities on its website or social media. The organizations need to be careful with those donors who do not want their information to be shared with the general public. Sometimes it is individuals or private entities who, for various justified reasons (for example for security reasons), decide not to have their information shared publicly, in which case the organization should respect the contractual relationship. In this way, the citizens will have the opportunity to be informed in more detail about the work of the organizations, as well as for the organizations will obtain the image of a transparent and accountable organization. On the other hand, if the the organization demonstrates irrational or inappropriate behavior of spending, the public opinion may turn against the organization. Thus, financial sources are reduced and the organization may remain without work.

2.9

Civil society organizations establish equal gender representation in both non-executive and executive bodies of their organizations. The members of these bodies belong to different social groups and reflect the different cultural, multiethnic and social background of the environment in which they operate.

Civil society organizations should increasingly think about gender representation in their governing structures and aim for an organizational structure that reflects the different social and cultural environment in which they operate. The shortcomings in the governance structures related to gender representation and structure should be addressed first, and then they should be overcome and in this way the organization should be an example that will contribute to lasting economic, political and social changes.

STANDARDS

2.10

Decisions in the civil society organizations are made responsibly and are based on a continuous process of exchanging information and feedback with the beneficiaries and target groups.

Organizations should have the practice of analyzing feedback from key target groups, partners, collaborators and stakeholders to provide for quality decision making. In order to receive an appropriate response from stakeholders, the ways of communicating with them as well as the ways of feedback input and output during the decision-making processes should be clearly presented. Finally, it is also important to communicate the changes made on the basis of the feedback received thanks to which the appropriate decisions have been made.

2.11

Civil society organizations use digital technologies in the interest of greater integration of target groups and mission achievement by taking into account the respect for privacy. The personal information available to organizations is protected from misuse and unauthorized sharing with third parties.

The use of digital technologies for the implementation of organizational activities is becoming more and more relevant nowadays. The use of digital technologies for the inclusion of citizens and beneficiaries in social developments and programs implies new ways of maintaining the established relations. The Law on Personal Data Protection regulates the protection against misuse and unauthorized sharing of personal data as well as the processes that need to be carried out within the organizations in order to achieve full compliance with the legal solutions. It is recommended that civil society organizations be especially careful in the personal data use and management and do it in accordance with the above-mentioned law.

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

3.1

The fund raising and donations serve to achieve the mission and goals of civil society organizations. Organizations ensure reasonable and accountable management of financial assets and resources, by using them economically for the purpose for which they were intended in order to maximize mission achievement.

The issue of transparency and accountability is of great importance for the sustainability and strengthening of the financial capacities of the non-profit sector. The raised funds and donations are used only to achieve the mission of the organization. Therefore, it is advisable for organizations to design their own policy for public relations and donors, i.e. through continuous communications to inform all stakeholders and the general public about how many goals and added social value have been achieved with a given volume of resources in a given period of time. In the long run, such a strategy results in greater visibility of the organization, as well as public trust that its activities are legal, useful and socially justified. The narrative presentation regarding the planned projects, the essence and the results of the implemented activities, together with the financial data are a sign of the accountability and transparency of the organization.

3.2

Civil society organizations continuously monitor costs and provide internal and, if necessary, independent financial control of their operations.

The key to good internal control is in the distribution of responsibilities and tasks, the separation of incompatible elements of certain transactions. For example: the one who approves the payment of the bills, must not realize the payment and vice versa. The division of these functions reduces the possibility of paying the wrong bills. It is very difficult to establish such mechanisms in small organizations thus the non-executive body has an obligation to work more in order to protect the material goods of the organization. It is good practice for the organization to keep internal records of its funds in parallel with the accounting maintained by an external or internal accountant. At the end of the year these figures should match. If differences occur, the omissions should be identified in detail and the necessary corrections and settlements should be made.

The main role of the external audit is to verify the accuracy of the financial statements of the organization. The main goal is to inform the non-executive body and the membership about the current financial situation of the organization. The secondary goal is to determine how well the organization complies with the laws, the review of internal control mechanisms, the investment policy, the grant implementation, etc. In the case when the non-executive body does not have sufficient financial resources to hire an external professional audit firm, it should take alternative actions: two members (volunteers) of the organization can do a "membership audit" which will include testing of financial activities, evidence, accounts, etc. In such cases, it is important that these persons have the opportunity to control all areas of the organization's activities.

3.3

Civil society organizations comply with and apply legally established financial, accounting and administrative systems in order to reduce the risk of funds misuse and corruption.

While large organizations can afford an internal accountant, small organizations, even when their income increase, should continue to use external accounting, but may consider increasing the services within the accounting package they use. A well-informed accountant advises the executive bodies on all legal obligations and ensures that the organization operates in accordance thereto. However, it is very important that the governing structures are up to date with the legislation and have advanced skills in financial management. The members of the non-executive body need to understand the financial situation of the organization in order to be able to serve and protect the organization. Understanding the financial situation provides for making the right decisions even on issues that at first glance have no direct relation to finance.

3.4

Civil society organizations provide transparent reporting on the funds received and implemented in their annual organizational reports. The implemented funds are presented in a way that enables a clear understanding of the different categories of costs and funds received from different sources and donors.

CSO financial transparency is the willingness and ability of organizations to provide information about their assets, income and expenditures. Along with regularly publishing information about achieving their mission and goals, it is also crucial for their public image. Financial transparency fosters trust and readiness of the stakeholders to cooperate with civil society organizations. The annual financial report and its form is determined by each organization individually, but the recommended key tables that give a good insight into the financial operations are the tables with annual income and expenditures as well as the balance sheet. The total balances from these tables should be the same as the balances from the final account. By preparing an organizational financial report, organizations will understand financial flows accurately and precisely, and they will not have to focus on final account details that are more difficult for all program staff to understand.

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

4.1

As employers, civil society organizations ensure fair and transparent policies for hiring qualified staff with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies. Employment policies are based on non-discrimination and respect for the rights of marginalized and vulnerable categories of citizens.

As employers, civil society organizations should ensure a clear and transparent employment process that is in line with the Law on Labor Relations and other applicable legal regulations in the area of labor relations. At the same time, they should take into account the equal opportunities in employment, i.e. to establish procedures for recruitment, selection and election of employees in which emphasis is placed on non-discrimination and respect for the rights of marginalized and vulnerable categories of citizens. The process of recruiting, selecting and electing employees should be transparent and include public announcement of job vacancies, working conditions and the amount of the net salary. Additionally, in the process of recruiting and selecting employees, organizations should employ capable and responsible persons who possess appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies.

4.2

Civil society organizations practice culture of accountability in their work, where employees and volunteers have a strong sense of responsibility for their actions and impact.

Organizations should hold regular meetings with employees and volunteers in order to provide support, monitor their work, and discuss the organization's plans and activities, thus ensuring a culture of accountability in the operation of civil society organizations.

4.3

Civil society organizations are open to suggestions by their members, supporters and end beneficiaries and implement those suggestions to improve the operation and their involvement in the implementation and evaluation of programs and projects.

Civil society organizations should establish a decision-making process with participation of all members of the organization which provides for the involvement of the executive levels of the organization in decision-making, involvement of supporters, membership and volunteers in the decision formulation and making.

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

4.4

Civil society organizations invest resources in professional capacity building of employees and continuously measure their performance results.

Organizations should define a human resource development plan that will be in line with their goals and strategic plan. The human resource development plan should be regularly monitored and implemented. Employees and volunteers should have access to equal opportunities for acquiring additional skills and knowledge related to the jobs they perform. For this purpose, the organizations should continuously follow opportunities for additional training and development and share these opportunities with the employees and volunteers. At the same time, civil society organizations should have an established practice of transferring knowledge and skills among members and their further use in the work of the organization. Of great importance for the organizations' performance is the establishment of a system for measuring the performance results of employees based on the assessment of performance results and subsequent steps to improve the performance. Organizations with a small number of employees can simplify the above processes according to their needs and scope of work.

4.5

Civil society organizations provide income for employees that is calculated according to the complexity of work processes and the income in the public and private sector.

Civil society organization should give their employees work by the execution of which employees earn their salary. It is necessary to establish well-defined written procedures that will regulate equal pay for equal job position and responsibility in the workplace, as well as the level of education.

4.6

Civil society organizations continuously cultivate and develop the spirit of volunteerism, and volunteers are a resource for organizations. Volunteering in the civil society organizations is always welcome and appreciated. Depending on the needs and conditions, the volunteers go through specific training necessary for proper performance of the tasks and they are monitored and mentored in their work.

It is desirable for civil society organizations to engage volunteers in their work process. Therefore, it is necessary for the organizations to define a procedure for engaging volunteers that is in accordance with the applicable legal regulations (Law on Volunteering) and the needs of the organization. Organizations should have a program and description of volunteer positions and introduce volunteers to their rights and responsibilities. Volunteers should be provided with mentoring, pragmatic advice and continuous support that helps them constantly learn and develop. They should have appropriate training and continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills in accordance with their volunteer position. Volunteers receive adequate reimbursement for food and transportation costs to and from the volunteering site which is paid in accordance with the Law on Volunteering. Organizations should regularly monitor the success of the organization's volunteer program, whose results are used to increase the quality of work with volunteers. Additionally, according to their possibilities, the civil society organizations should have an independent practice of and get involved in volunteer initiatives for the improvement of the local communities.

STANDARDS	**IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

4.7

Civil society organizations comply with the legal framework of labor law and ensure equal pay for equal work and decent working conditions.

Civil society organizations should establish rules and procedures that are in accordance with the Law on Labor Relations and other applicable legal regulations in the field of labor relations.

The employment relation between the employees and the civil society organization may be regulated by different types of contracts such as: employment contract (fixed or indefinite), temporary service contract and freelance contract. All employees have a job description. Organizations should define written procedures that regulate equal employment opportunities for women and men, equal pay for equal job position and responsibility in the workplace, as well as level of education, ensuring safe working conditions in accordance with occupational health and safety regulations, as well as providing a healthy and pleasant work environment and prevention of all forms of harassment in the workplace. It is very important for the organizations to establish measures that they will apply in case of violation of the rules and insufficient quality of work.

COMMITMENT 5: RESPONSIBLE ADVOCACY

5.1

Civil society organizations actively and publicly advocate for important social issues, and advocacy is based on evidence (obtained from research that is verifiable and/ or in constant communication with target groups) and the needs of people in the communities.

For many civil society organizations, advocacy is one of the basic methods of work to achieve the missions and goals for which they exist. Advocating for change in existing systems is key to contributing to a society based on social justice, eradicated poverty, non-violence, gender equality and respect for the environment, etc. Advocacy priorities and approach should be established with the help of key stakeholders in the process. The focus of advocacy should be on long-term positive change, not just short-term benefits. Various approaches may be used in the advocacy process, such as awareness raising, mobilization of public opinion, expert advice, lobbying, pressure and other methods. Advocacy should enable the creation of platforms for networking among people, communities, and decision makers. In this process, the most important for the information that is the basis of advocacy initiatives is to be obtained from research conducted locally, nationally and internationally and/or by identifying the real needs of citizens. It is also important to create an advocacy plan because it will provide a clear goal that we want to achieve, what tasks need to be completed and who will implement the advocacy plan. The advocacy process should be public with information shared in a timely manner. Advocacy is just one tool for you to be able to accomplish your mission and improve the lives of citizens.

5.2

Civil society organizations advocate with integrity taking into account the truthfulness and honesty of the actions. In their advocacy methods, they do not expose their beneficiaries and groups of citizens to risk, and advocacy is done in accordance with the mission and goals and for the purpose of promoting the public interest.

Advocacy carries risks and these risks need to be minimized, openly communicated and constantly monitored, depending on the advocacy plan. The most important thing in the advocacy process is for you to be guided by a true intention for positive change. When you advocate with integrity, you have a responsibility towards the stakeholders, but the public as well, because you ask for their attention, their possible involvement and a certain reaction. In this process, stakeholders and the public must not be played around or misled into conclusions that are not true (such as fake news).

5.3

Civil society organizations clearly declare whose interest they advocate for in the framework of their activities and in communication with all stakeholders.

Always state clearly and loudly who you advocate for (on whose behalf) and what the goals of advocacy are. Regardless of whether you are campaigning, going to meetings with decision makers, appearing on certain shows in order to mobilize the public and develop public opinion, etc., clearly state whose interest you advocate for and what the goal is. In this way, you will enable the creation of greater trust and wider acceptance of the initiatives, and thus you will reduce the possibility of spreading incorrect information, various conspiracies and slanders.

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

6.1

Civil society organizations, while delivering (social) services, focus on their end beneficiaries and their real needs in order to improve their quality of life. Associations promote services that are equally and easily available to all beneficiaries.

Since more and more civil society organizations appear as providers of social services, it is necessary to show that in the creation and delivery of those services we have previously discussed and listened to and analyzed the needs of the communities and the local population. What is offered as a social service aims to improve the social, psychological, economic life of the population and contribute to their individual and collective development. Social services should not discriminate against in terms of who can be a beneficiary and who can have a benefit. As civil society organizations we need to ensure that citizens who need social services and especially those who are marginalized will be able to afford them financially and that they will be offered locally. In addition to social services, in their work, the civil society organizations offer other services that according to the type of service should meet the highest quality standards. Professional deliveries and services that come in accordance with the different areas of activity of organizations should be based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, efficiency, inclusiveness, etc.

6.2

Beneficiary care is based on the protection and promotion of human rights, guided by the principles of freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association, non-discrimination and capacity building of beneficiaries.

As civil society organizations, we need to show that for the citizens and especially those who come from the most vulnerable groups, the quality of services is the most important segment in the realization of their human rights. The management and assessment of services should be based on a human rights-based approach and in particular strengthen the voice of those outside the mainstreams of society. By complying with and implementing the highest standards of work in accordance with national and international regulations and protocols, we will ensure continuous strengthening of their rights promotion.

6.3

While delivering services, associations and foundations provide a feedback line in order to improve the services. The (social) service programs are subject to regular evaluations of the quality of the services and are constantly improved in accordance with the remarks received and the novelties in the social and economic context of the communities.

Civil society organizations should show that they use feedback (collection of feedback) for various aspects of the implementation of (social) services. Feedback should first come from the persons who use those services, and then from all stakeholders that create and provide support. Collecting feedback aims to improve services and provide greater impact in the lives of citizens. Organizations should show that they have a plan to collect this data, analyze it, and apply it to future operations. Data collection should be qualitative and quantitative and it should be done periodically depending on the complexity of service delivery.

6.4

Through (social) service provision programs we support the beneficiaries to take an active role in improving their lives as active actors in their transformation.

In the annual reports, the civil society organizations that provide (social) services should skillfully show that the beneficiaries of the services are not passive recipients of that service. In other words, that organizations take into account the individual needs and opportunities for development of individuals, encourage them at a pace that best suits individuals and constantly put them in challenging circumstances in order to develop their potential. For example, creating personal development programs and targets that are achievable together with the beneficiaries should be one way to encourage these individuals to take an active role in their transformation.

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

7.1

Civil society organizations, in their work, build partnerships based on respect and support that contribute to mutual development.

Civil society organizations should be familiar with the work of other organizations and institutions in their environment and cooperate with them, regularly exchanging data, information and work-related experiences. Communication among the civil society organizations (in public and mutual) is based on respect, understanding and an ethical approach. When necessary, organizations may refer target groups to other appropriate organizations and/or institutions. Civil society organizations build cooperation and partnership with other organizations and institutions in order to meet their organizational goals. Also, the organizations cooperate and have partnership relations with other civil society organizations that have the same or similar areas of activity both in the country and abroad. Organizations need to regularly conduct an analysis of the context and key stakeholders in order to identify and prioritize partners appropriately.

7.2

Civil society organizations cooperate with various actors to achieve common goals and activities, provide participation in decision-making to address important social issues and problems, build lasting platforms for networking and collaboration.

Civil society organizations should determine procedures for establishing partnerships and coalitions with other organizations and institutions. The procedures should define the internal decision-making steps for establishing partnerships, coalitions or networks and the role of the organization in achieving the ultimate goals of the association. Civil society organizations, within the platforms and networks in which they are members, should work with their partners in planning and defining the joint impact. Within networks and platforms, organizations should share common (formal and informal) mechanisms for planning, monitoring, communication, coordination, decision-making, evaluation, and dispute resolution. Therefore, they should clearly define the roles, responsibilities and commitments of each of the partners, as well as details of how each of the partners should contribute to the fulfillment of the goals. Networks and platforms should periodically review formal agreements among the partners through a process that enables and encourages joint discussion and feedback.

STANDARDS	IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

7.3

Civil society organizations, objectively and impartially, share information, resources and knowledge and make important social decisions collectively.

Civil society organizations build sectoral networks for greater social impact. Civil society organizations and networks of civil society organizations establish mechanisms for establishing internal consultations in the civil society sector.

7.4

Civil society organizations support citizens to take active roles and steps and engage in the change process at local and national level.

A constant tendency of civil society organizations is to build partnerships with citizens. In their work, they implement activities through which they mobilize the citizens and create opportunities for their active engagement through various platforms and mechanisms for civic engagement.

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8.1

External and internal communication reflects the fundamental values and principles of the work of civil society organizations. In their activities and relations with third parties, civil society organizations respect the principles of two-way, clear, truthful and non-violent communication and promote a culture of reasoned dialogue.

Adequate communication plays an important role in building a successful organization. Since different channels of communication are used today, organizations have the opportunity to reach a wide range of citizens and stakeholders. The various pieces of information you share should be true and clear in order not to lead to undesirable effects, such as spreading fake news, or lead to wrong conclusions about important social issues. You should insist on backing up news and information with facts and arguments from multiple aspects. For the official organizational communication sometimes, organizations have the opportunity to hire special professionals, and if this is not possible due to a smaller scope of work or it is about a small organization then it would be enough for persons working on the programs to attend basic public relations and/or use of communication channels trainings, etc.

8.2

Civil society organizations, transparently and timely, share information about their mission, goals, activities, finance, staff, members of non-executive bodies and contacts. The shared information is user-friendly and available to all interested parties, and in their work organizations ensure personal data protection in order to protect against misuse. Civil society organizations always tend to adapt the communication to the needs of people with disabilities.

Basic organizational information should be clearly visible on your communication channels. As more and more civil society organizations today have their own websites, it is necessary for one part of your website to have a section/segment that will be dedicated to the following things: clearly written mission and goals for which you work; basic information about your employees such as name and surname, position, brief overview of the professional and personal biography of the employees, contact; data on members of non-executive bodies such as the Assembly, Governing Board, Supervisory Board; organizational reports (narrative and financial) etc. For those organizations that do not have a website, this information can be posted on social media profiles in the profile description sections. Sharing of sensitive information about employees, members of non-executive bodies, beneficiaries or constituents should be protected in accordance with legal regulations on personal data protection. According to the Law on Personal Data Protection, each registered civic association should provide special procedures for establishing adequate protection (see more in the Law on Personal Data Protection). Civil society organizations should adapt their verbal and written communication to the needs of persons with disabilities for example through sign language interpreters, synchronization software and the like.

STANDARDS

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

8.3

It is in the best interest of the civil society organizations and in the interest of the service beneficiaries to strengthen the spirit of open communication. The goal is to promote and consistently respect the standards set out in this Code, as a basic measure for our relations within the civil society and in communication with the public.

Cultivating and applying open communication is aimed at strengthening the positions of organizations for acting in the general (public) interest. We will achieve open communication when, for example, through the media we inform the citizens about our activities, results achieved, topics we advocate for, etc. Providing easily accessible information and creating equal and open opportunities for all is also a way to ensure open communication. If we respect and promote the principles of this Code then we show that our tendency is to establish open communication and dialogue with all stakeholders and especially the public.

8.4

Civil society organizations enable two-way communication and encourage citizens and all stakeholders to express their thoughts, suggestions and comments on their work, in order to improve efficiency, effectiveness and impact in the performance.

Enabling two-way communication means that organizations allow feedback to reach the people who lead the organization. Feedback should reach people who make decisions about the organization's programs and future activities. The ways to do this are always different. For the beginning, it is enough to provide a communication line through the organizational email, phone, inbox in which feedback will be left directly in the organization, etc. But for more detailed and structured feedback it is necessary to organize other ways of collecting information such as feedback on programs by conducting external or internal evaluations, annual or multi-year evaluations of the impact achieved at the organization level and the like. All this is necessary for the organization to have a greater insight into the effects of its operations and to be able to improve in the future.

STANDARDS

8.5

Civil society organizations provide a grievance mechanism (external and internal), creating safe conditions and appropriate procedures for their resolution and further prevention.

Today, the business operation of civil society organizations is quite complex. It is comprised of countless operations in which employees and teams are led/managed, they work with partners and associates at multiple levels of decision making, they provide services for beneficiaries, etc. This situation requires the establishment of appropriate safeguard mechanisms to ensure smooth operation. Establishing a grievance mechanism is one of these safeguard mechanisms. This mechanism precisely indicates the procedure that stakeholders should go through in order to appeal for certain injustice, sexual harassment, mobbing, corruption, misuse of organizational resources and the like. The mechanisms may be different depending on whether they are intended for internal members or external members of the organization. Employees, beneficiaries, partners, etc. should be familiar with this procedure and it should be part of the organizational rules of work. In many cases, organizations leave a separate email for grievances or have a section on their web pages where people can leave a grievance text message. These arrangements should not always be complex but they should indicate the possibility that conditions are created for the grievance to be received and thereto responded accordingly.