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# Croatian CSOs and Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid to Third Countries **Executive Summary**

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REPORT ON CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Croatian CSOs and Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid to Third Countries 2013

CLIENT:

TACSO Croatia Office for the Platform of CSOs for International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of Croatia (in the process of establishment)

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## Executive Summary

This Report provides an assessment of experiences, capacities and needs of Croatian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) involved in International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (IDC & HA). The assessment was carried out from April to July 2013 for the Platform of Croatian CSOs for IDC & HA (in the process of establishment) (in further text: Platform) and in cooperation with the Centre for Peace Studies Zagreb, which coordinates activities concerning establishment of the Platform and TACSO Office in Croatia.

Main objective of the assessment was to identify the capacities of Croatian CSOs and their interest in IDC & HA. In order to accomplish the set objective we prepared a survey questionnaire covering various aspects of involvement of CSOs in implementation of IDC & HA projects, enabling us to collect the following groups of data:

- Scope of engagement
- Programmatic areas and areas of engagement
- Geographical areas of engagement
- Financial aspects
- Cooperation and networking of Croatian CSOs with foreign associations
- Priorities of the Platform and the needs and capacities of CSOs

This assessment could assist the Department for IDC & HA of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA) in improving participation of CSOs in creation and implementation of programs and with consultation processes concerning IDC & HA on EU level. The Platform might find this helpful in defining priorities according to the mapped interests and available resources of interested CSOs, as well as for internal organisation of work by programmatic areas in which CSOs are involved. Moreover, this assessment could contribute to creation of more effective CSO consultation mechanisms in the processes of planning and providing IDC & HA; and to offer initial data for monitoring and evaluation of Platform's achievements and public administration efforts.

Out of 78 organisations, which participated in the survey, approximately one third (23) already has experience in implementation of IDC & HA projects, about as many intend to try it, whereas the remaining others are interested in monitoring IDC & HA but are still not ready to participate in implementation. More organisations engaged in IDC & HA over the last three years than during any earlier five-year periods.

The majority of currently implemented projects concerns programme areas of governance and human rights and human development, whereas the area of economy and trade is the least represented, which probably reflects the capacity level of Croatian CSOs concerning individual programme area. Majority of projects is implemented, or is planned for implementation, in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, where the language barrier is negligible. The surveyed CSOs participate in African or Asian countries included in Implementation Program of the National Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Republic of Croatia only sporadically.

Projects outside Croatia are mainly implemented by CSOs with higher income level. Financing sources for such projects are equally EU funds and international donors, and to a much lesser degree the state or local budgets. Budget share for IDC & HA projects is in majority of organisations lower than the share earmarked for other activities. This tells us that there is still not a significant number of CSOs in Croatia,

which direct their activities primarily to IDC & HA projects. Nevertheless, during the last year CSOs included in this survey spent at least 1.6 million Kuna to IDC & HA project, which may be used as a signpost for the planning of future support.

CSOs implement projects mainly in partnership with other organisations, twice as frequent within international groups than with other Croatian organisations. The majority of CSOs included in this survey participates in some form of international association, but these are used primarily for information exchange and to a lesser degree for project implementation.

Among the objectives of the Platform, the surveyed organisations pointed out primarily participation in creation and implementation of IDC & HA policies of the Republic of Croatia and European Union, and among the business activities the needs assessments in countries in which implementation of projects is foreseen and cooperation with relevant state bodies and EU bodies on the relevant public policies.

There is a need for continuous education and provision of information to CSOs on IDC & HA, especially as concerns the financing mechanisms at state and EU levels, as well as the need for better contacts in IDC beneficiary countries. Knowledge transfer methods for empowerment of individuals; research and IDC & HA beneficiary countries' needs assessment methods, practicing the code of good international development cooperation practices and lobbying at international level are the skills and knowledge that CSOs wish to acquire or improve. They particularly emphasize the need to improve capacities of Croatian CSOs so that they may participate at equal footing in EU consortia involved in IDC & HA projects. At the same time, Croatian CSOs believe that they have a wide scope of skills, knowledge and experience that they can offer within framework of IDC and HA.

In the further planning of official IDC & HA the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs would need to find an adequate method for including CSOs in the planning and implementation of National Strategy for Development Cooperation. Hereby it would be good to stimulate networking of domestic CSOs, but it is also necessary for organisations themselves to continue developing their cooperation and long-term partnerships.

During the initial phase it would be important to work on introducing Croatian CSOs to CSOs in the regions, which National Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Republic of Croatia defines as priorities, for example, through thematic conferences, study visits, internships or seminars. Likewise, to establish quality contacts it would be important to also explore the introduction possibilities through the existing networks, such as Anna Lindth Foundation or TACSO project.

All activities directed towards establishment and stimulation of structured formal and informal experience exchange in provision of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance may contribute to strengthening of Croatian CSOs' capacities for implementation of partnership projects. Open calls for financing of IDC & HA projects that would promote partnership and complementarity of Croatian CSOs might be one measure that MFEA could implement. In addition to publication of Open Calls, it would also be important that MFEA recognizes the potential of domestic CSOs for joint implementation of specific areas of Croatian foreign policy, which means that it would be necessary to operationalize strategic objectives of Croatian foreign policies for specific geographic areas (countries) and actively include CSOs in implementation of those projects in which domestic CSOs are experienced. Such collaboration would at the same time strengthen CSOs capacities for IDC, whilst MFEA would provide quality expertise and operations necessary for implementation of individual policies.

MFEA would also need to educate and prepare the Embassies for collaboration with domestic CSOs, given that Embassies might be an important logistical partner both to MFEA and CSOs implementing IDC

projects in respective countries. Therefore, it would be important to sensitise Embassies' employees to CSO activities and maybe even designate one person for collaboration with CSOs in implementation of IDC projects.

The challenge before the Platform is to stimulate exchanges between Croatian CSOs concerning their experiences in working with international consortia, as well as working out appropriate models and activities to stimulate synergetic partnerships of CSOs through domestic consortia formed on mutual interests. MFEA could also initiate establishment and development of inter-sectoral Croatian consortia formed around individual programmatic areas.

The Platform could consider internal organisation based upon thematic groups that would be formed around programmatic areas, such as governance and human rights, human development, food and natural resources, economy and trade. Such internal organisation might induce stronger interest-based associations and exchanges, as well as simpler cooperation and recognition of joint priorities. This, in turn, might create a space within thematic areas for greater self-organisation of the members of the Platform and at the same time function as mobilisation factor.

The needs of members of the Platform for greater knowledge and understanding of IDC might partially be satisfied through active participation in the work of the CONCORD, therefore, it is recommended that they get involved into thematic work groups of the CONCORD as soon as possible, as they give an opportunity to influence EU policies on IDC.