

European Workshop

**European Co-operation Projects
Experiences – Strategies – Networking and Follow Up**

4 - 6 November 2010, Trent (Italy)

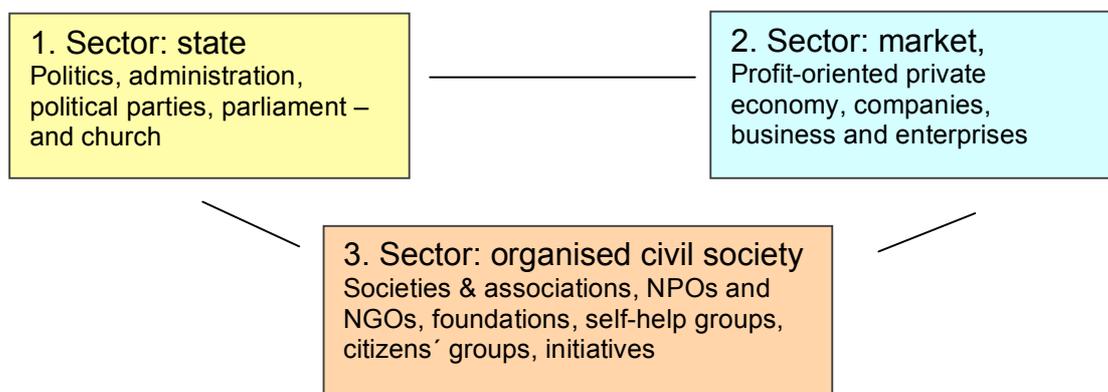
Input

**Project funding for citizenship education
The challenge of applying for EU-funds**

by

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Speaking about funding opportunities for citizenship education, was seen crucial for the participants of the NECE workshop, so as to position the applying organisation in the context of the three different sectors of the society:



The message to start the input was the awareness of the increasing importance of civil society as an intermediary sector as millions of Euros are provided via NGOs and NGO-projects for the development and the needs of society each year from institutions, states and the European Union.

Understanding NGOs

Definitions of the most important forms of organisations were relevant to be presented to the participants in order to know when to apply for public funding:

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation – more than just not-for profit!

NPO: Non-Profit Organisation, this can also be a state funded organisation!

CSO: Civil Society Organisation – a more general and “positive” definition by avoiding the term “Non” to mark opposition to the state or the market.

The aim of the introduction of the input was to explain that there is no general definition of NGOs, which would be valid for all, as definitions are subject to perception (self-perception and perception through the others).

So, how could the participants identify NGOs?

Remember: NGOs are defined by characteristics:

1. Legally constituted organisation

The organisation has to operate independently from the government and with a legal status

2. Non-profit oriented

The potential profit of the organisation is re-directed to the aims stated in the statutes and not to owners or members of the organisation

3. Clear benefit for society

A global concern has to be shown, not just for a group, but for the whole society

4. Free access

No exclusiveness or forced membership should limit citizens' access, transparency on activities and aims and methods used for fundraising is obligatory

5. Aspects of voluntary engagement

E.g. honorary a voluntary working board of directors or working with volunteers, show the engagement of the organisation

Goals and objectives of NGOs are not for the money...

- **Value-oriented**
Make clear in any project proposal description the aim of the organisation and the reason why an organisation was set up
- **Problem-oriented**
Projects to be funded have to be facing concerns on a global level, or at least at the European level, in order to be taken into account for public money
- **Non-profit oriented**
Institutional funding frameworks can differ in their funding and accounting conditions for projects, but they are mostly on reimbursement basis only. A “mixed financing”, including private donations & membership fees, is recommended not to rely solely on public money.

Policy fields of NGOs

The next step of the speech was to highlight the necessity of positioning the organisation in a certain policy field, to overcome barriers of a single field, to motivate NECE participants to network with other fields and to gain partners and new ideas from policy fields like education, environment or consumer’s rights.

When looking for funding, ask yourself the following questions first:

1. Who is responsible for citizenship education in the government at a EU-level?
2. Which policy fields are dealing with citizens` participation in the institution?
3. Which issue is related to citizens` involvement at all?
4. Which authority is referring to citizens and offering potential project funding?
5. What would be the benefit for this authority?
6. What will be the general requirement, the additional value and the “USP” (Unique Selling Point) of the applying organisation?

Relevant EU-Funding programmes recommended to NECE participants

1. **Europe for Citizens programme:**

http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programme-actions/doc18_en.htm

The different Programme strands as outlined in the PPP, have the overall goal to **bring citizens in Europe together** promoting mutual understanding and sense of EU-ownership. NECE co-operation projects like the project “Confusing Conversations” focus mainly on the exchange of people, learning from each other and reflecting the European identity of civil society, which are perfect to approach this programme. High visibility of the activities through media or other channels, leadership of NGOs and useful co-operation with institutions, were recommended to the NECE participants for project proposals in this programme. The co-operation project “GrafStat” was recommended to be applied, especially for the budget line for studies, tools and database projects.

2. Fundamental Rights and Citizenship

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/funding/rights/funding_rights_en.htm

This programme might be interesting for NECE activities because it is funding general **supporting activities** of non-profit organisations, voluntary associations, foundations, NGOs and similar bodies. It seeks for general European interest, to enable them to carry out a set of activities during their **financial year for 2011** in their annual work programme (€ 75.000 - € 300.000), so it will be for the activities with a special aim for the whole year to be considered. The co-operation projects such as “VoteMatch Europe” or the “Action Days” have just being adapted slightly to fit in here with the aim of democratic rights and knowledge. If another organisation of a NECE co-operation project has any close link to rights based on NGOs or rights related to relevant issues, application was recommended. Education of citizens in relation to fundamental rights, fighting against racism or xenophobia and anti-Semitism; should be in the spotlight of NECE activities. Involving legal professions such as lawyer’s associations, training institutions of judges or consumer right organisations might be useful!

3. Flagship projects - European Year of Volunteering

www.eyv2011.eu

Only 1 or 2 projects per Member State of the EU will be financed, so great visibility and co-operation with illustrious organisations or VIP-personalities will guarantee good marks! If NECE co-operation projects like the “Action Days” or “TWIN LESSONS” could be shaped as festivals or big public events, the European Years might be considered as appropriate funding programmes, not only in the context of the direct available budgets of the programme, but also on local or national level “on the occasion of...”!

Besides the flagship projects, NECE activities centred on volunteering might be interesting throughout the year 2011 and even targeting already the European Year 2012 on ACTIVE AGING and intergenerational solidarity, as the first wave of the “baby boomer” generation will come to get their pensions in the next few years. ACTION DAYS, TWIN LESSONS and the PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING projects should check this opportunity!

Other than EU-funding, e.g.: EEA grants & Norway grants

www.eeagrants.org

This funding opportunity, a contribution from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway on reducing economic and social disparities in Europe, was presented to show the importance of looking beyond EU-funds. A co-operation with an organisation in one of these countries is needed and not all European countries are eligible as beneficiary states, so the first step is to look up if you are in the position to apply!

Before NECE participants apply, they should read e.g. the “2010 Status Report” of the programme (available at the website), which highlights the activities undertaken in previous projects 2004-09, to get an idea of what this grant is looking for. In case of looking for partnerships (e.g. with Norwegian NGOs), NECE participants should address the Norwegian Centre for Voluntary Work/FRISAM: www.frivillig.no or the NGO Norway Organisation www.ngonorway.org.

Pitfalls of public funding and possible escape ways

NECE participants were reminded of the most common pitfalls. For example, projects with only or mainly national aims will not be funded by European funding schemes as the “added value” on the European level has to be described clearly. The message:

→ Think European! Look over your borders!

Many organisations underestimate the preparation phase it takes before applying for funding, which is limited “for the best” applications. This means: Who is addressing the aims of the programme in the best way?

→ Become a key player for solving an issue, so it will make a striking difference on why your organisation is applying for public funding!

The third pitfall in European funded projects mentioned to the participants, was the potential danger of work overload. Since there are many aspects to be considered, many documents have to be prepared and all the details have to be accurate and well thought. How to manage this comprehensive task? The message provided to NECE:

→ Don’t do it alone, never try to make it on your own, get your partners, friends or freelancers in the scene to support you!

The final statement addressing the NECE participants was to remind them: “Even if you won’t get your NECE project funded, the work put into such a proposal will not be lost!” The members should consider an “alternative” project, to be funded only on the national or local level. Because of all that perfect planning, it will surely be financed in another context. So the closing remark and wish for all NECE projects finally is:

Good luck with your future European activities!

Any open questions left?

Don’t hesitate to contact office@ngo.at