



Comparative brief¹ on monitoring of policy documents for cooperation

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This brief provides information on key issues related to monitoring and reporting on implementation of policy documents for cooperation (PDC)²: possible purposes of monitoring, available monitoring mechanisms and aspects in developing the monitoring report on implementation. The brief also includes a comparative overview of monitoring processes in place from Macedonia, Croatia and Estonia.

Based on review of examples³ from countries where policy documents for cooperation are implemented, it is clear that specific rules for monitoring and reporting on implementation of policy documents for cooperation should be in place. Monitoring is usually vested within the body designated for cooperation/implementation and should be conducted in collaboration with other state offices, parliament and/or civil society organizations (CSOs). The government can support the process if it structures the monitoring process together with CSOs and, if possible, allocates specific budget allocations for it.

What is the value of monitoring the implementation of policy documents for cooperation?

Typically, public authorities establish a formal monitoring mechanism to follow and report on the implementation of PDCs for the following purposes:

1. **Show progress in achieving the objectives.** This is the main reason for carrying out monitoring, as it gives a more detailed overview of the carried out activities in the reporting period and provides a reality check on current state of implementation (e.g., is it completed, or in process, or has not started). It holds the stakeholders accountable to their commitments and ensures that there is common understanding on what has been achieved and what still needs to be done.
2. **Promote examples of successful implementation of specific objectives.** Quite often, the stakeholders focus on criticism of missing components, but fail to acknowledge the success examples and progress made in certain areas. The success examples may be guiding inspiration for other implementers to undertake, e.g., if certain policy document was developed in a highly participatory manner and reflected on needs of the sector and state's priorities, then the process of its development can be considered by other state authorities.

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² Policy documents for cooperation may cover a range of documents – concept for cooperation, strategy for civil society development, compact with the nongovernmental sector, charter, etc.

³ ECNL, European practices on implementation of policy documents and liaison offices that support civil society development (2009). The article available in English: <http://www.icnl.org/research/resources/ngogovcoop/paperpol.pdf>



3. **Establish the cause for delay of activity and suggest what can be done to address it.** Strategies and other documents for cooperation are flexible, living documents. Their implementation is, and should be adjusted according to changing circumstances. This is why one of the purposes of the monitoring is to establish the changes and put forward suggestions for adjusting the implementation plan. Further, some objectives and activities may not get implemented at all. The reasons can be multiple, e.g., change of priorities, need for further assessments or lack of resources. Monitoring report should help to identify the reasons for delay and propose feasible solutions.
4. **Give feedback on the monitoring process.** Monitoring is also a learning process, as it provides information not only on the achieved results, but also on the overall level of cooperation. Hence, it is important to reflect on cooperation during developing a monitoring report. It can reflect on the methods of information collection, participation of stakeholders and their input to the process. It can also provide suggestions for improving the process of developing the monitoring report and what can be done differently the following reporting cycle. The government may encounter similar issues in collecting the necessary information or ensuring implementation of certain objectives depending on level of cooperation by other stakeholders.

Who is involved in monitoring the implementation of policy documents for cooperation?

Based on examples of European countries, the implementing bodies for PCD are usually in charge of carrying out internal monitoring and reporting to other stakeholders and general public.

The stakeholders involved in the process of monitoring are:

- Parliament – in countries where the policy document was adopted by the parliament, it may play a key role in initiating annual or biannual hearings on the status of implementation (Estonia, Latvia);
- Government office – in many countries the government offices are established to facilitate coordination of ministries' work on implementation of the policy document, serve as secretariat for government-CSO relationships, carry out regular monitoring of implementation (Croatia, Macedonia);
- Joint committees – these are composite bodies of government, and/or parliament representatives and civil society (Croatia, Estonia);
- Ministry office – in case of the United Kingdom there is a special ministry established for civil society, which is in charge of carrying out monitoring process as well;
- Ministries – as the ministries are responsible for implementation of the objectives of the policy document, they are also closely involved in the process. For example, the Ministry of Finance has a special role in this, as it is also in charge of allocation of resources for implementation;
- CSOs – non-governmental sector may undertake a function of regular monitoring of the policy implementation, publish and present joint and/or shadow reports (United Kingdom, Estonia).



Possible methods of monitoring the implementation by public authorities

Through European examples, we identified the following methods of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of PDC, which can also be used in combination with each other:

- regular internal reports (e.g. quarterly) summarizing the results from the implementation, usually developed by the key ministries on implementation of PDC and submitted to the focal point in charge of coordination of implementation;
- annual or biannual composite reports summarizing the results from the implementation and developed by a responsible government unit;
- parallel reporting by CSOs, including shadow reports;
- real time online monitoring on implementation of objectives, i.e. continuous update of information on a webpage dedicated to the document and its implementation;
- regular (monthly, quarterly) joint committee meetings;
- public hearings at the Parliament.

Some countries (Estonia, Macedonia) have developed an internal monitoring mechanism in place with guidance for the implementers, i.e. ministries, and CSOs.

Setting clear guidance to the responsible government offices in charge of implementation of the specific objective of the strategy is important because it:

- ensures clarity about the division of tasks and specific responsibilities assigned to the Ministry;
- provides for regular monitoring of how implementation is going and early identification of possible challenges;
- contributes to better understanding and embedding of strategic principles of cooperation with CSOs in the work of the ministries;
- supports joint decision-making with CSOs;
- identifies good practices or areas where support is needed;
- ensures that undertaken activities meet overall objectives of the strategy and the actions.

In the absence of methodology on monitoring, it is likely the public authorities in charge of implementation will provide information only on the accomplished activities without reflecting on process, good practices, what needs to be further achieved. However, this approach does not provide the full picture on implementation, nor allows for improvements. In addition, it will not show if certain number of activities (meetings) has been implemented, but the overall objective (for instance, improving conditions for financial sustainability of CSOs) has not been achieved.

Involvement of CSOs

CSOs as the target beneficiaries of the policy document for cooperation hold an essential role in the monitoring process. The modality of their involvement may be:

- Public consultations before preparing the report on implementation (e.g. Macedonia);
- Ongoing complaint procedure to the responsible government body on delays in implementation of specific objectives (Estonia);



- Parallel shadow reports by CSOs (Estonia, Macedonia).

It is beneficial to provide opportunity to CSOs to give feedback and facilitate their input to the monitoring process by the public officials. This way in the run up to the public hearing, for example, the state officials can also prepare their responses to the questions, address the expressed concerns and give more extensive information on the status of implementation.

Country examples on monitoring policy documents for cooperation

Below we provide country examples on how monitoring of implementation of the policy document for cooperation is carried out in the countries of Estonia, Croatia and Macedonia.

ESTONIA

*Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (EKAK)*⁴ was adopted by the Estonian Parliament in 2002. It sets the goals for cooperation between the sectors, promoting civic initiative and supporting democratic development in Estonia. The document establishes the principles of cooperation and suggests ways of implementation for achieving the goals.

Based on the EKAK provisions, development of the implementation plan was vested with the **Ministry of Interior**.⁵ The Ministry was appointed with this assignment because the development of civil society was set as a priority in the coalition agreement and so the Government saw the need to appoint a separate minister to deal with the matters. The Local Government and Regional Affairs Department under the auspices of the Minister of Regional Affairs is specifically tasked to undertake activities to support the development of civil society. In the department, two chief specialists are responsible for analyzing, planning and coordinating the active community development and the co-operation between the state and CSOs.

In 2006 the Government adopted the first *Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support (KATA)* for the period of 2007-2011. Later on, new *Civil Society Development Plans (KODAR)* for 2011-2014 and 2015-2020 were developed and adopted by the Government. These documents are based on the long-term priorities specified in the EKAK. The Ministry of the Interior also coordinates work by other stakeholders - Ministry of the Finance, Ministry of the Education and Science, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economics. These state bodies are expected to cooperate with the local government units, CSOs and businesses in the implementation of the activities.

The Ministry of the Interior prepares and submits to the Government **annual progress reports** on the implementation plan and the **Development Plan**, based on the assessment of the responsible ministry and involved ministries on the compliance of the activities with the goals specified in the Development

⁴ Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (EKAK) is available in English at the Ministry of Interior's webpage: https://www.siseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/dokumendid/estonian_civil_society_development_concept.pdf

⁵ European Practices on implementation of Policy Documents and Liaison Offices that Support Civil Society Development (2009): <http://www.icnl.org/research/resources/ngogovcoop/paperpol.pdf>



Plan. To collect information, the Ministry of the Interior contacts the involved ministries and other relevant interested persons and institutions in the matters associated with the reporting on the Development Plan, its cost prediction and implementation plan, as well as supplementation and amendment of the documents. The ministries involved and other relevant interested persons and institutions associated with this Development Plan are required to submit the data related to the implementation, supplementation or amendment of the document. Each year the involved ministries and institutions inform the Ministry of the Interior about the civic initiative support activities planned for the next planning period and budget year in their government area, based on which the Ministry of the Interior will launch the implementation plan and Development Plan amendment process if required.

The Ministry of Interior chairs and coordinates work of **the Joint Committee for Implementation of the Estonian Strategy**⁶. The Committee consists of 22 members: including representatives of five line ministries, a representative of the Parliament from the Civil Society Support Group, chancellors, heads of foundations, employers 'and employees' organizations and CSOs selected through public competition. The Joint Committee meets at least twice a year for review of the EKAK implementation. Among other responsibilities of the Joint Committee is reviewing **complaints and appeals** by both public authorities and CSOs regarding the implementation of EKAK. The procedure is clearly described on the Ministry's webpage. It also has a [template complaint form](#). The form can be submitted by CSOs and public authorities equally. Every month the Committee's Secretariat reviews admissibility of complaint and then the appointed members of the Joint Committee (two representatives of the public authority and two representatives of CSOs) provide their opinion on whether a violation took place and suggest remedy. The opinion is circulated among all Committee members and is publicized on the Ministry's webpage. However, there are arguments by local stakeholders that this procedure is not necessarily effective, nor is in line of good cooperation principles.

At the level of the Parliament, there is a special **Civil Society Support Group**, which includes representatives of all parties and it is one of the largest of its kind. It was established based on a decision of MPs to form such a group and it does not have separate legal status or separate administrative rules. It uses the parliamentary administrative support and receives no separate funding. The purposes of this group are to attend to issues concerning civil society and to initiate legislation in support of the development of the third sector. The Civil Society Support Group is also represented on the Joint Committee.

Every two years the Parliament convenes **public hearings on implementation of the EKAK**⁷, where the Ministry of Interior is commissioned to present its report on implementation of the Concept. Upon

⁶ Ministry's of Interior webpage for EKAK implementation outlines the main actors, key documents and the procedure of complaint: <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/tegevusvaldkonnad/kodanikuuhiskond>

⁷ The minutes of all hearings are available on NENO's webpage: <http://ngo.ee/ekaki-kuulamised>



presentations by the Ministry of Interior and a parallel report by CSO, debates take place on each area of the document.

CROATIA

The Office for Cooperation with NGOs is the key coordinator in the implementation of the Strategy and is tasked to ensure that the goals and action plans developed in the *Strategy*⁸ and its *Operational Plan* are realized. Currently, it consists of Department for Strategic Planning, Programming and Informing, Department for EU Programs Implementation and International Cooperation and Department for Financing Management and Quality Assurance. There are 22 employees in the Office for Cooperation.

Previously on the annual basis the Office for Cooperation with NGOs prepared reports on implementation of the Strategy. From 2014 a new webpage, which serves as a real time online monitoring tool⁹ is in operation for tracking of implementation by each Strategy's objective. Each objective is color coded based on the status of implementation (green for completed, red for not started yet, yellow for those actions in progress). Anyone can submit their information on the progress made toward achieving the objective through the response form online. While this is a novelty tool, which was initially met with much enthusiasm, it has not been recently updated (last time in the beginning of 2014).

The screenshot shows the website of the Croatian Government's Office for Cooperation with NGOs. The header includes the logo of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the text "VLADA REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE URED ZA UDRUGE". Below the header, there is a navigation menu with links for "Ured za udruge", "Nacionalna strategija", "Pojmovnik", and "Kontakt". The main content area is divided into two sections: "AKTIVNOSTI" (Activities) and "Novosti" (News). The "AKTIVNOSTI" section features a vertical progress bar with three items: 3.1. Izraditi nacrt Zakona o udrugama (Status: Završeno - green), 3.2. Izraditi nacrt Zakona o zakladama i fondacijama (Status: Nije započeto - red), and 3.3. Izraditi nacrt Zakona o računovodstvu neprofitnih organizacija i donijeti podzakonske akte za primjenu Zakona u vezi s registrom neprofitnih organizacija (Status: In progress - yellow). The "Novosti" section contains three news items, each with a colored square icon and a date: a red square for a report on public consultations (27.02.2014), a blue square for a call for proposals (17.01.2014), and another blue square for a regulation (date not visible).

⁸ The First Strategy for Cooperation was adopted in 2006.

⁹ Online monitoring tool for Strategy implementation: <http://strategija.uzuvrh.hr/index.php/podrucje1.html>



The Office for Cooperation works closely with the **Council for the Development of Civil Society**¹⁰ in the implementation and monitoring process of the Strategy. The Council for Civil Society Development is an advisory body to the Government of the Republic of Croatia acting towards developing cooperation between the Government with the civil society organisations in Croatia. The Council has 27 members out of which 12 representatives of relevant state administrative bodies and the Croatian Government offices, 12 representatives of non-governmental, non-profit organizations and 3 representatives of civil society from foundations, trade unions and employers' associations. The Council has a president, elected by the Council members representing civil society from their own ranks while the vice-president is elected by the members of the Council representing the state institutions. The president and the members of the Council are elected for a mandate of 3 years and can be re-elected. The logistic and administrative work for the Council is done by the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Croatian government. To support the implementation of specific tasks in the implementation plan of the Strategy, the Council established **3 working groups**, which work in the areas of legal framework for NGOs, financing of NGOs and international cooperation and EU accession. The mandate of these working groups draws from the National Strategy and the specific goals outlined in it.

Based on the practice of implementation and recommendations of the Council, a special **Committee for the Implementation of the measures of the Operational Plan of the National Strategy** was established in 2008. The aim of the Committee is to ensure more efficient monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Strategy. The Committee is composed of coordinators/representatives of 18 different ministries and government bodies responsible for implementation of the Strategy and the Operational Plan. The Office for Cooperation with NGOs coordinates the work of the Committee and holds individual meetings with the coordinators to discuss and monitor the steps and activities in realization of the tasks from the Operational Program. These meetings are an opportunity to provide further guidance and consultation to the coordinators in the implementation of the tasks from the Operational Plan.

MACEDONIA

Macedonian **Government Unit for Cooperation with NGOs within the General Secretariat of the Government** is in charge of coordinating preparation of annual action plans, implementation and reporting to the Government on implementation status of the *Strategy for cooperation with the civil sector (2012-2017)*. The Strategy sets the measures and methodology for implementation and updating of the Action Plan on biannual basis. At the same time, the Government Unit developed forms for planning and reporting activities by the state bodies for the implementation of the Strategy, which set the monitoring framework.

¹⁰ Council for the Development of Civil Society webpage: <http://www.uzuvrh.hr/page.aspx?pageID=75>



After adoption of the Strategy, the Unit for Cooperation with NGOs developed a Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation of Implementation of the Strategy.¹¹ The monitoring plan was developed based on desktop research and consultation with the informal group that also took part in the development of the strategy and the action plan. The aim of the monitoring plan is to provide guidance to the Unit for Cooperation with the NGOs and the various ministries in the process of delivering activities under the Strategy's Action Plan and also the reporting on the achieved results. The monitoring plan contains steps to revise the Action Plan after the two year period. Importantly, it outlines the steps for involving CSOs in the reporting and planning processes.

The monitoring plan includes the following measures:

1. An Annual Report to the Government about the performed activities and accomplished objectives in regard to implementation of the Strategy by the General Secretariat, which will summarize the reports submitted by state administration bodies.
2. Annual reports on the implementation of the Strategy's measures by state administration submitted to the Unit for Cooperation with NGOs and preparation of a form regarding the format and contents of annual reports for implementation of Strategy's measures;
3. Consultations with CSOs in the processes of assessment of implementation of the Strategy.

In addition, there are templates that ministries need to fill in when developing reports and plan the following year actions. The reporting of the Unit for Cooperation with NGOs also follows an established template. The annual report of the Government Unit for Cooperation with NGOs is submitted to the Government by February 15 of the following year.

The structure of the annual report by the Government Unit for Cooperation with NGOs to the Government is the following:

I. Introduction
II. General overview of the achieved results and aims of the Strategy in the current year
III. Summary overview the accomplished measures and activities on each priority area <i>Priority area 1: Developed and sustainable civil society</i> ▪ <i>Measure 1:...</i>

¹¹ This process was done with support of ECNL expertise.

<i>Summary description of activities carried out under each measure, achieved results and what in general needs to be done to achieve the aim.</i>
IV. Total funds allocated for aims under the budget, and funding provided through CSOs and other donors
V. Summarized overview of the basic recommendations for further implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan, and review the messages received from civil society organizations
VI. Attachment: Annual reports on implementation of the strategic goals of the state administration

The annual report is drawn based on reports submitted to the Government Unit for Cooperation with NGOs by the ministries and other state bodies in charge of implementing specific actions. The ministries' reports are prepared in the templates provided by the Government Unit. They include information on consultations carried out with CSOs in the run up to preparing the report, and consultation with other responsible state bodies in charge of the same objective. The ministries' reports are due not later than January 20.

The reporting template for the ministries is developed on the basis each ministry's yearly action plan in relation to CSO policy development. The plans are prepared and submitted by the ministries to the Government Unit before December 20.

The sample of reporting template for the ministries looks the following:

Activities	Indicators	Status of implementation	Description of activities	Who was involved in the process (gov-t and CSOs)	Financial resources	Recommendations for future	New initiatives
Measure 1: Monitoring of implementation of the Law on Associations and Foundations (responsible body: Ministry of Justice)							
Forming a working group on	Working group, system	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>					



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developing monitoring and evaluation system	for monitoring and evaluation	No <input type="checkbox"/> In process <input type="checkbox"/>					
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Before publishing the annual report, the Government Unit for cooperation with CSOs carries out consultation with CSOs on its contents. The draft report and the monitoring tables are published on the [Government’s webpage](#) for CSOs’ feedback. The CSOs have 15 days to provide their input. Opinions must include:

4. Good practices in implementation of measures and activities that were implemented;
5. Opinions on implementation of measures and activities in their area of operation and how it can be improved;
6. Method of involvement by CSO in implementation of the measure, activities.

The Unit also organizes a consultation with CSOs on the developed draft report. These inputs are then submitted as aggregated input in the attachment to the report on the Government. It also explains why some of the inputs were not reflected in the final version of the report.

In 2015 CSOs issued their own report on implementation of the Strategy in 2014, according to which 48% measures did not have any progress, excellent progress was made in 10% measures, considerable progress in 13%, 13% was partial progress and in 12% there is little progress. Only two measures were fully realized, which constitutes 4% of the planned.

Resources and further readings:

ECNL, European practices on implementation of policy documents and liaison offices that support civil society development (2009): <http://www.icnl.org/research/resources/ngogovcoop/paperpol.pdf>

Croatia, online monitoring tool on implementation of the Strategy:
<http://strategija.uzuvrh.hr/index.php/nacionalna-strategija-17.html>

Estonia, Ministry of Interior’s webpage on implementation of EKAK and KODAR, in English:
<https://www.siseministerium.ee/en/regional-affairs/civil-society>; In Estonian:
<https://www.siseministerium.ee/et/tegevusvaldkonnad/kodanikuuhiskond>

Macedonia, Government Unit for Cooperation with CSOs webpage with public consultation on annual report: <http://nvorabotka.gov.mk/>