



EU FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS IN THE WB: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BY NICOLE FARNSWORTH, KOSOVO WOMEN'S NETWORK (KWN)¹, 22 NOV. 2017

INTRODUCTION

Women's rights civil society organizations (WCSOs) play a crucial role in supporting, monitoring and advocating for implementation of reforms related to European Union (EU) accession processes. The EU has [recognized](#) the importance of funding civil society in Western Balkan (WB) countries. However, the [Guideline for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries](#) is gender blind. In 2015, the European Commission (EC) adopted the '[Gender Action Plan](#)' (GAPII) for 2016-2020. It calls for 'all actions, whatever aid modalities (e.g. Budget Support)' to be informed by 'strong and rigorous gender analysis that is reflected in the final programme implementation';

Why Fund WCSOs and movements?

- **Relevant:** Securing their input in programming will improve actions' relevance to diverse target groups
- **Efficient:** Lower costs, closer location, better access to stakeholders, knowledge of context, and motivated by dedication to social change, not profit.
- **Effective:** Track record in social change, results.
- **Sustainable:** After actions end, WCSOs remain, monitoring implementation, advocating reforms. Investments in capacities remain in country.

Key Features of GAPII for IPA II

- Gender analysis to inform all programming
- Involve WCSOs in all programming
- Support WCSOs
- Increase funding for girls and women

consultations with WCSOs to inform actions in all sectors; support to WCSOs' political participation; and an increase in 'dedicated funding to improving results for girls and women'. The [EU Council has stressed](#) 'the need for increased funding [...] to ensure the effective implementation of the [...] GAP'.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WCSOS ACCESSING EU FUNDS

- Due to [poor data collection systems](#), information on the extent to which EU funding has reached WCSOs is lacking. This hampers monitoring whether funding is reaching WCSOs.
- [Financing UN agencies](#) under the Civil Society Facility (CSF), evaluators note, is 'inappropriate'.² UN agencies were to receive 27.5% of [CSF in 2016](#). CSF should fund civil society.
- [Short-term grants](#) contribute to poor sequencing² and piecemeal interventions, hindering impact. Policy and social change take time. Time fundraising/reporting is not spent advocating.
- [Limited use of operating grants](#), comprising only 9% of funding under IPA II CSF.² WCSOs struggle to secure human resources for advocacy (i.e. policy input on short notice). Operational support enables flexibility. Also, important for sustainable capacity-building, an EU aim.
- [Reach](#): IPA II better reached grassroots groups, but small/mid-sized CSOs remain underserved.² Most lack information about funding, language skills and resources for applying.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGES TO PRIORITIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- The '[fundamentals first](#)' approach lacks [gender perspective](#). WB EU officials tend to believe (incorrectly) 'fundamental' issues must be 'prioritized' over gender equality (for 'later'). Insufficient gender mainstreaming in *all* actions undermines relevance and effectiveness.
- [Weak accountability](#): Many EU Delegations (EUDs) did not report on several GAPII indicators. The Midterm Evaluation did not assess GAPII. Regular reporting has not incorporated GAPII indicators. If EUDs do not need to report, resources will not be set aside to achieve results.
- [Insufficient gender mainstreaming](#): Cross-cutting sections in IPA templates are a 'formality'. Gender *must be* mainstreamed in templates, including gender analysis in the Situation Analyses, objectives, results, and indicators. Otherwise, insufficient resources are set aside for meeting targets. EUD officers and beneficiaries drafting IPA programs [lack capacities](#)

¹ [KWN](#) is a network of 126 diverse WCSOs. KWN has provided technical expertise to the EUD in Kosovo since 2015, including on GAPII. KWN advises on progress reports and national reforms. Findings draw from KWN experience, a desk review, and interviews with 92 EU officials, WCSOs, and gov. officials in six WB countries in 2017, supported by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation.

² 'Presentation of the findings of the evaluation of the Civil Society Facility', Prishtina, 27 October 2017.

in gender mainstreaming, which requires expertise and time. Some EUDs have addressed this by contracting expertise, such as from WCSOs (see box).

- Insufficient involvement of WCSOs: According to GAPII, ‘significant stakeholder engagement’ must include WCSOs. They have not been involved systematically in Sector Working Groups, policy dialogues or programming. This undermines effectiveness, impact and sustainability, as the needs of women are unconsidered in programming and women are insufficiently involved in implementation. Further, EUDs have not considered human resource costs for WCSOs to engage in IPA programming, including time to review documents, consult constituents, attend meetings, prepare input and monitor programming.

Best Practice: Contracting Gender Expertise

In Kosovo, the EUD contracted KWN to mainstream gender in Sector Planning Documents (SPDs) and Action Documents (ADs), as well as to provide a helpdesk, building capacities of the EUD, ministries, and NGEMs in gender mainstreaming and GAPII implementation. This has improved gender mainstreaming in SPDs and ADs and enhanced capacities among officials. It is an efficient and effective Service Contract at €70,000 for 30 months (negotiated procedure).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DG NEAR

- Improve data management by including in OPSYS specific indicators on: # of grants given to WCSOs; amount; funding towards gender equality; and other GAPII indicators.
- Amend templates (including SPDs and ADs) to require gender analysis, objectives, results, and indicators. Contract gender experts to review and comment on all Actions prior to approval, an Austrian Development Agency best practice.
- Improve accountability and reporting on gender equality by making it mandatory as part of External Assistance Management Report, external evaluations, reviews and evaluations.
- Convey to EUDs that gender equality is a priority that is part of and not separate from the ‘fundamentals first’ agenda.
- In ToRs and contracts, require contractors in all sectors to earmark funds for gender mainstreaming and expertise, contributing to GAPII implementation.
- Encourage contracting of WCSOs as gender experts, recognizing their expertise. Enable them to hold officials accountable over time in delivering on gender-related reforms in specific sectors. WCSOs also can provide vital statistics, qualitative information and insight.
- Earmark Action Grants for furthering gender equality: While mainstreaming is essential, so are specific actions towards gender equality, addressing inequalities shown in gender analyses.
- Encourage increased CSF use of Operating Grants under Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) with competitively selected CSOs that have reputations, constituencies and strategies for working on long-term social and policy reforms.³ Earmark funds for WCSOs.
- Continue sub-granting via local CSOs, especially Women’s Funds, including larger and long-term grants: Increase amounts available for sub-granting for 4+ years. This would relieve the EU of administrative burden, enhance efficiency, better reach mid-sized WCSOs and enable small/medium-sized WCSOs to contribute to long-term social changes.
- Use diverse funding modalities: A mix of Action Grants, Operating Grants linked to FPAs, sub-granting, and contracted gender expertise can reach diverse WCSOs.

Best Practice: The Kosovo Women’s Fund

The KWN-administered Fund, showcased by DG NEAR as exemplary, was built via a consultative process with KWN members: diverse WCSOs. They set criteria, prioritizing rural and vulnerable groups. The innovative approach couples grant-giving with capacity development via ‘learning by doing’.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU PARLIAMENT

- Encourage DG NEAR to address the aforementioned recommendations.
- Require accountability from the EC and DG NEAR in reporting on GAPII indicators. Ensure independent evaluations reflect on GAPII implementation as part of ToRs.
- Follow up on the EUP Report on EU funds for gender equality (2016/2144 (INI)) 8.2.2017 recommendations and continue pressuring the EC to follow-up on GAPII implementation.

³ In the External Evaluation of IPA, experts also recommended a long-term approach (R1, p. 44).