

What is the Study about?

This paper provides an overview of Serbian **civil society** involvement in development cooperation and assesses the extent to which the **government of Serbia** has taken steps to set up an institutional and policy framework for the provision of development assistance.

Serbia started the European Union (EU) accession negotiations in January 2014, during which it needs to align its legislation with the EU body of laws, also called the *acquis communautaire*. **Chapter 30 of the EU acquis** deals with external relations and includes legislation with regards to the provision of **development and humanitarian aid** to developing countries.

The study was put together by **Oana Raluca Badan** as a result of desktop research and interviews with Serbian CSO and government representatives.

What are the main findings?

- While little progress has been made in Serbia in the area of development policy and humanitarian aid in the EU accession process so far, in **its National Plan for the Adoption of the Acquis**, the Serbian government envisages the creation of a unit in the MFA dealing with development and humanitarian aid, the adoption of a law on Development Cooperation, as well as the appointment of a National Coordinator for 2015-2018.
- Serbia's involvement in development cooperation and humanitarian aid provision to developing countries to date has been very limited, but some examples exist. While **Serbia has not provided to date any ODA**, Serbian CSOs have been involved in regional cooperation initiatives in the Western Balkans. The Serbian government has, however, provided some ad hoc material **aid in response to natural disasters**, notably to South-East Asian countries.
- Serbia has the potential to build on its elaborate institutional set-up for aid coordination as a recipient of international assistance in order to become an effective donor in the near future.
- The past 15 years have seen the development of a vibrant, active civil society sector in Serbia. Some shortcomings regarding their legal environment and financial sustainability still prevent Serbian CSOs from reaching their full potential.

- The Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society has facilitated the **participation of civil society representatives in Serbia's EU accession process**. This practice is welcomed and should be systematically implemented in a manner that includes local, regional and Belgrade-based CSOs.
- The experience of civil society in Serbia's **post-conflict reconstruction phase and transition to democracy** is valuable and represents important potential to be used in the context of development cooperation.

What were some of the recommendations?

- Government of Serbia to systematically create opportunities for and facilitate the inclusion of Serbian civil society at all levels – national, regional and local – in the EU accession process.
- Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society to include Serbian CSOs in the follow-up to the bilateral screening meeting for Chapter 30 of the EU *acquis* on development policy and humanitarian aid, including subsequent briefing meetings, and the drafting of a potential action plan.
- Civil society to engage with the government on the topic of development policy and humanitarian aid, as well as the progress on Chapter 30 of the *acquis*.
- Government of Serbia and European Commission Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations to address the issues of development policy and humanitarian aid at an early stage in the EU accession process in order for Serbia to be fully prepared to take up its responsibilities as a new donor.
- Serbian government and civil society actors to promote and implement activities that support development education and awareness raising in Serbia.

Where can I find out more?

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