

TERMS OF REFERENCE
RESEARCH CONSULTANT / RESEARCH TEAM

Project:	Follow-up Activity - Black Sea NGO Forum, 7 th edition, 2014
Assignment:	Conducting a research on the current status of the enabling environment for civil society organisations in the Black Sea Region, which should also include proposals of strategic priorities for civil society in the region
Location of the assignment:	Black Sea countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine
Period of contract:	4 months (April – July 2015)
Type of contract:	Consultancy contract
Budget	3000 EUR (including taxes)
Open to:	Research/policy experts or team of experts
Deadline for submitting applications:	9 April 2015
Submit to:	office@fondromania.org

OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The current call for applications is directed at research / policy experts or team of experts to design the methodology and conduct a desk and field research on the current status of the enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Black Sea Region, with the purpose of:

1. **Providing an overview of the current status of enabling environment for CSOs at national and regional level**, taking into consideration the three dimensions of enabling environment (legal framework, policy influencing and donor – CSO relationships)¹;
2. **Gathering proposals from respondents for strategic priorities of CSOs in the Black Sea Region**, based on the needs and challenges identified through the overview on enabling environment in the region;
3. **Identifying which should be the role of the Black Sea NGO Forum (from the respondents’ perspective)** in addressing the above-mentioned needs and challenges and in elaborating and implementing a Strategy of Civil Society in the Black Sea Region.

RATIONALE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The current assignment is part of the **follow-up activities of the 7th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum, which is an annual regional event launched in 2008 by the Romanian NGDO Platform (FOND)**, in the framework of the Black Sea Synergy Policy, with the support of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Representation of the European Commission to Romania and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation.

¹ <http://www.csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CSO-Contribution-to-Indicator-21.pdf>.

The goal of the Black Sea NGO Forum is to create an open space for debate, mutual knowledge and understanding, communication and cooperation among civil society representatives, governments, international organizations and donors active in the wider Black Sea region, with a focus on sharing good practices in various domains and success stories of regional cooperation.

Over the time, **the Black Sea NGO Forum evolved into a more and more structured initiative, with each edition strategically building on the objectives of the previous editions.** Since its first edition, the Forum has been a driver of change in the region, reuniting more than 700 participants with various backgrounds from 11 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania and Russia. The Forum has facilitated 18 bilateral projects and 19 regional projects and supported the creation of two regional networks: The Coalition for Child Protection in the Wider Black Sea Area – ChildPact and a regional youth network initiated by the National Youth Council of Moldova.

Therefore, **the aim of the Forum changed** from merely providing a space for discussion and networking to facilitating a more intensified regional cooperation that would respond to common needs and challenges identified by CSO representatives from the Black Sea countries. Considering the growing importance of the space provided by the Black Sea NGO Forum annually for civil society organizations and their partners, it was considered necessary to **re-design the strategic approach of this traditional forum** in order to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability in terms of regional cooperation at the Black Sea.

In order to respond to this new aim, the following steps have been taken:

Conducting an evaluation of the impact of the Forum after the first 4 editions (2008-2011). The impact study showed that, while appreciating the current approach of the Forum and recognising its merits, the participants felt the need for a common cooperation framework with medium-term objectives and a permanent structure that would allow the Forum become a resource facilitator for CSOs in the region and engage more actively in policy and advocacy work at regional level.

Organising a Strategic Meeting on the Future of the Black Sea NGO Forum at the Permanent Representation of Romania to the EU in Brussels to discuss the future strategic directions of the Forum. Based on the participants' input, the future of the Forum should focus on: its role of resources facilitator in the region; promoting standards for civil society, according to the concept of creating an enabling environment for CSOs; providing the participants & Forum alumni tangible cooperation & partnerships incentives and opportunities in the region; allowing for an increased regional ownership of the Forum; developing a more sustainable institutional framework of the Forum.

Launching the process of creating a Strategy of Civil Society in the Black Sea Region with the occasion of the 7th edition of the Black Sea NFO Forum (8th-10th of December 2014, Kyiv, Ukraine), by engaging participants in a regional multi-stakeholder consultation on the common needs and challenges for having an enabling environment in which civil society carries out its activity. The consultation was based on CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness - CPDE's monitoring framework which focuses on three major dimensions: legal framework, policy influencing and donor – CSOs relationships.

The main critical points highlighted during the consultations are the following:

- There is a pressing need of ensuring an enabling legal framework for CSOs in the region, with many CSOs from the region facing legal restrictions and administrative burdens;
- Policy influencing is still weak in many countries from the Black Sea Region due to a lack of institutionalised mechanisms for policy dialogue, only formal consultations with limited implementation of CSOs recommendations, a limited advocacy capacity of CSOs etc;
- Donor – CSOs relationships are affected by a top-down approach, lack of core-funding for CSOs, limited flexibility in the financial support offered to CSOs etc.

Moreover, participants made the following recommendations with regard to the type of support Black Sea NGO could offer both in the context of ensuring an enabling environment and in a broader strategic perspective:

- Monitoring civil society enabling environment using the models presented at the Forum (CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness - CPDE's monitoring framework/ Balkan Civil Society Development Network - BCSDN's monitoring matrix);
- Encouraging the creation of regional thematic coalitions;
- Encouraging dialogue between CSOs and donors;
- Stimulating communication and interaction between CSOs in the region throughout the year;
- Supporting capacity building for CSOs and the transfer of know-how and best practices among CSOs across the region.

Implementing a follow-up activities plan in order to address the recommendations resulted from the multi-stakeholder consultation:

1. Developing an in-depth participatory research on enabling environment in the Black Sea Region that will provide the basis for elaborating a draft paper on strategic directions for civil society in the Region ;
2. Organizing 2 regional meetings in between forums to discuss more in-depth the ideas expressed at the Forum;
3. Elaborating the draft paper on strategic directions, which will be discussed in a multi-stakeholder process at 2015 edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum;
4. More coordinated action with similar regional initiatives, such as: the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (developed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy), the EU- Russia Civil Society Forum, the Baltic and the Mediterranean cooperation initiatives.

For more background information, please do not hesitate to contact us at: office@fondromania.org.

TASKS TO BE PERFORMED

The activity of the expert/ team of experts will correspond to the first follow-up activity regarding an in-depth research on enabling environment in the Black Sea Region, and constitutes a source of support for the follow-up activity 3. As part of their assignment, the expert/ team of experts must:

- **Elaborate the methodology of the research** in accordance with the objective of the assignment and based on the above-mentioned monitoring frameworks;
- **Conduct desk and field research** in accordance with the agreed methodology. Field research is mandatory as the assignment is part of a participatory process of elaborating strategic directions for civil society in the Black Sea Region. The project could cover 3-4 visits of the expert/team of experts in the region for exploring more in-depth the results of the desk research;
- **Elaborate a report on enabling environment for civil society in the Black Sea Region** – the draft version must be presented at the second regional meeting organised in between forums (July 2015) and the final version at the next edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (October/November 2015 - TBC);
- **Elaborate a document with proposals of strategic priorities for civil society in the region** – the questionnaire/ interview or focus group guide should also include questions in this regard. This document will also be presented at the second regional meeting (July 2015).

DELIVERABLES:

- **Research plan and proposed methodology** which should include: process and criteria for selecting participants to be part of the research, sample size, full methodological approach taking into consideration the objective of the assignment, timeline for implementing the agreed methodology.
- **Data sets** to include: database of participants included in the research together with contact details, quantitative data received through surveys/questionnaires, qualitative data received through interviews and focus groups (recordings/transcripts if available in English).

- **Draft report on enabling environment for civil society in the Black Sea Region**, highlighting main findings both nationally and regionally regarding the three enabling environment dimensions and main recommendations for strategic priorities of civil society in the region.
- **Final report on enabling environment for civil society in the Black Sea Region** to include: methodology, context, results, analysis of findings, recommendations and conclusion.
- **A document with proposals of strategic priorities for civil society in the region** gathered from participants to the research in question.

OTHER REQUESTS

The draft report, as well as the document with strategic priorities will be presented at the second regional meeting organised in between forums (July 2015), and the final version of the report at the next edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (October/November 2015 – TBC). Both presentations in July and October/November must be made by the expert/ team of experts in person. The participation at these events will be covered by the project and are separate from the visits that the expert / team of experts will conduct in the region as part of their research.

TIMELINE

Activity	Deadline
Identification of expert/ team of experts	Mid April 2015
Finalising contracting process	End of April 2015
Agreement upon proposed research plan & methodology	End of April 2015
Implementing the research according to the agreed plan & methodology	May – June 2015
Draft report	Early July 2015
Document with proposals of strategic priorities	Early July 2015
Final report	End of July 2015

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Expert (Consultant)

- Develop the methodology of the research;
- Conduct the research according to the agreed research plan, which will include also a calendar of activities;
- Respect the deadlines established in this ToR – early July for submitting the draft report and document with strategic priorities and end of July for submitting the final report to the project team;
- Present the draft report and the document with proposals of strategic priorities at the second regional meeting organised in July;
- Present the final version of the report at the 8th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (October/November 2015 – TBC).

The Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND (BSNGO Forum - Project team):

- Cover the expert’s/ team of experts’ travel and accommodation expenses related to the implementation of the field research in the region (3 or 4 visits in the region maximum).
- Support the expert/ team of experts with necessary background documents and information about the Black Sea NGO Forum (including contacts of participants);
- Provide feedback on the documents resulted from this assignment.

BUDGET

The total budget for the assignment is 3000 EUR, including the taxes that have to be paid to the fiscal authorities by the contracted expert(s). The budget will cover fee of the expert(s). The travel and accommodation costs related to field work will be covered separately.

REQUIRED SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Essential:

- At least 3 years of research / policy analysis experience;
- At least 1 year of research/ policy analysis experience on issues related to civil society and enabling environment for CSOs;
- Proficiency in English;
- Experience of working in multicultural contexts;
- Excellent interpersonal skills;
- Excellent planning and prioritisation skills;
- Proven ability to adapt the research plan to challenges and opportunities emerging during the research;
- Proven ability to multitask and work under tight deadlines.

Would be considered an advantage:

- Research experience in the Black Sea Region;
- Knowledge of the Russian language.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application procedure consists of two stages:

1. Initial selection

Interested candidates must send the following application documents by e-mail: office@fondromania.org, until the 9th of April 2015, 5:00 PM Romanian time (GMT+2):

- **CV and motivation letter** (in a separate document);
- **Two relevant research/ policy analysis samples** (one preferably on a subject related to civil society);
- **Research plan** (including a calendar of activities and a clear identification of roles and responsibilities in case of a team of experts).

Please note in the case of a team of experts, the application folder must contain CVs, letters of motivations and two relevant work samples from all persons involved.

Candidates will be announced the results on the 16th of April 2015.

2. Interview

The interviews will take place between **the 20th and 21st of April 2015**, with the possibility of organising the interviews via skype for candidates residing outside Romania.

At the stage of the interview, the selected candidates must demonstrate their motivation and commitment for carrying out the assignment, as well as present the research plan together with the calendar of activities to the project team.

ANNEX 1

USEFUL RESOURCES:

Available online:

Information about the Black Sea NGO Forum: www.blackseango.org;

Report on the Impact of the Forum after the first 4 editions (2008-2011):

http://issuu.com/fondromaniaorg/docs/the_impact_of_the_black_sea_ngo_for_e7f8912ecc648

CPDE monitoring framework on enabling environment for civil society: <http://www.csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CSO-Contribution-to-Indicator-21.pdf>

BCSDN monitoring matrix: <http://monitoringmatrix.net/>

CIVICUS Enabling Environment Index: <http://civicus.org/eei/>

CSO Sustainability Index: <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/democracy-human-rights-and-governance/cso-sustainability-index-methodology>;

<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/E%26E%202013%20CSOSI%20Final%2010-29-14.pdf>

Assessment Tools for Measuring Civil Society's Enabling Environment:

<http://www.icnl.org/research/trends/trends5-1.pdf>

Should you need any other information related to the current assignment, do not hesitate to contact us at: office@fondromania.org.

This activity is part of the follow-up of the 7th edition of the Black Sea NGO Forum (8th-10th of December 2014, Kyiv, Ukraine), organised by the Romanian NGDO Platform – FOND and supported by the European Commission, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – CPDE.



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