CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM REPORT

20th April 2015, Civic Space, Nicosia

The third Civil Society Forum was hosted by Civic Space in Civic Space office on Wednesday 20 April between 16.00-20.00 h. The Forum was attended by 28 participants from 25 CSOs, and started with the welcoming words of by the Team Leader of Civic Space, Juliette Remy-Sartin followed by a discussion facilitated by Emete Imge and Mertkan Hamit from MAGEM using the content of the transparency and accountability training held on 15 and 16 April.

The forum was displayed in small working groups. Below is the agenda.

3rd CSO FORUM AGENDA

Forum Theme: Transparency and Accountability

Wednesday, April 20, 2016	
16:3017:00	Opening and Introduction ● Welcome remarks. ● Discussion by CSO members who have attended the Transparency and Accountability training facilitated by Emete İmge and Mertkan Hamit.
17:0018:45	Discussion about Transparency and Accountability ● Transparency and Accountability Checklist Topics Group Discussion (17:0017:30) ● Reporting from Groups to the Forum using good/bad examples (17:30 18:15) ● Code of ethics discussion (18:1518:45)
18:4519:00	Coffee Break
19:0019:30	Accounts by Emete İmge and Enver Ethemer, Steering Committee CSO Representatives, on their Participation and Role as Committee members ● Q&A ● Information regarding the new open call for candidates
19:3020:00	Wrapup session and outcomes
20:0020:30	Catering

The facilitators Emete Imge and Merktan Hamit built upon the training that was conducted and hereby disseminating practices and sharing on the methods and content:

  ✔ on the basis of the documents and check list that had been initiated questioning practices that enable or disable participation, transparency and accountability in CSOs
  ✔ introduced applicable tools and means to increase transparency and accountability of CSOs towards their members, stakeholders, constituencies and public in general

The participants from each table designated a moderator and a rapporteur to share the points of view of each group and a dynamic was established throughout the forum.

I. Transparency and Accountability: Introductory Part

5 questions were selected by Mertkan Hamit for the groups to answer.

The five questions were:

1 What did you like?

2 What did you not like?

3 Any issues to point out?

4 Any parts that you did not feel engaged?

5 Anything to underline?

The participants gathered in 4 groups, worked together on the answers, and after 45 minutes each rapporteur provided their answers below:

A.   Discussions in Working Groups

Group one:

Liked: Opportunity to brainstorm and find it appropriate that this topic Transparency & Accountability is chosen; it gave them opportunity to speak freely and a chance to confirm what is known to be true.

Pointed out: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) moving are towards a common goal despite their differences; the fact that the link between achieved benefits, transparency and accountability are not well-known as of key importance.

Disliked: Despite the fact that there was a lot of attendance, it was not so broad in terms of representation of different areas even though there were a lot of registered associations.

Felt included: People felt included by the fact that attendance was from all areas without discrimination, awakened the ideas to develop new projects together, new connections made, ideas were formed on how to identify ourselves. The CSOs felt they improved their network.

Things we did not like: There was a great participation, but it was important to have participation from other associations. There are many associations but they did not attend the training, they could not. We wish to have more.

The participation of everyone from different fields without any discrimination made us feel engaged.

Group two:

Liked: "We enjoyed a lot. It was such a good activity. We have positive aspects but our negative aspects are much less. We got the opportunity to meet with different civic society organisations. Being accountable to whom? The ones that are not transparent have a negative impact on the transparent organisations, thus the civil society in general loses its reputations before the society.

The importance of being transparent while being accountable was emphasized. Everybody agreed on this. We believe that such trainings will be useful for us and contribute significantly on the next generations.

We had the chance to measure the transparency and accountability of our associations. This was informative.

It is important that some associations are kept exempted from VAT within the amendment of law on associations. The new law has not been adopted yet and this is important since the associations were not consulted. No one has been informed. It is important to organise a workshop".

Group three:

Liked: Getting new perspectives based on the experiences of other CSOs, opportunity to get to know each other and have our voices heard.

The fear of maintaining the friendships made here once the training is over was highlighted. It was said that sharing the trainers' experiences were helpful, however none of them came from Northern Cyprus, therefore it was hard to visualize what the result was supposed to be.

"We learnt some scientific points. The trainers have informed us on some studies and experiences, which gave us good perspectives. We gather together, since this is a common space, we not only get to know each other but also listen each other.

Group four:

Liked: Gave CSOS a chance to meet, a chance to acquire new ideas, liked that there is an entity that support and ensure the development of CSOS and supports CSOS

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Disliked: CSOs being supported only by external sources and the lack of a larger support from the "government", writing the legislation that affects CSOs without consulting with CSOs first. This would enhance the transparency.

Felt included: Feeling included in a group that wishes to develop CSOs, the idea that as we gather, we will become a stranger group.We felt happy that we are a part of a group wanting to support and develop CSOs. We have agreed that we will become a stronger group when we gather."

II Transparency and Accountability: Discussions on Topics of social benefit, responsibility, respect to human rights, transparency and accountability.

The main outcome were:

1. Our autonomy from the public

The most discussed phrase was ''Being autonomous from the public does not mean a CSO can't carry out political activities''. Even though we have to be autonomous from the public, it is thought that the public must do auditing towards us. audit should not put weight and responsibilities upon CSOs that they are unable to carry. Also whether the audit will be done by the "govemment" or from an external source will be determined by what kind of service each individual CSO provides. There were some disagreements on this subject.

It was unanimously agreed upon that the CSOs were created with the initiatives of volunteers and have to get contributions from volunteers to fulfill their goals.

The first group confirmed that CSOs have regulating documents and regular meetings and their earnings are not for profit.

It was highlighted that in order for CSOs to be accountable to the public and its members, documents like accounting policies outside of the charter should be more widespread in our country

Recomendations :

It was suggested that Civic Space could support in disseminating documents.

 It was also suggested that a common document pool be created so that CSOs benefit from each other with ease through Civic Space.

2. Social benefit, responsibility and service manner

The second group interpreted and recognized the importance of setting, planning, sharing and budgeting . The participants highlighted that it was important to be respectful towards each other, support each other both morally and financially, and to share funds in an honest manner. The importance of a culturally, religiously, sexually etc. non-discriminatory and unifying environment was

pointed out. Examples were given on whether funds were being spent carefully or not by attendants and they were discussed. Regarding transparency and accountability, not only CSOs but also media was important. Voluntarism is important. Not only getting their contribution but also what we will give back. We perform some procedures but without any written rules, procedures and manuals, we work depending on the people."

3. Financial Transparency and Accountability

Standardized financial institution reports regularly being prepared and presented to the executive board and explanations regarding payment differences in budgets have been mentioned.

A system exists to track expenses and methods to effectively use funds and donations developed by organizations. It was said that financial reports were shared by the majority with the demand of donors or others and the disadvantages of not sharing this information freely was discussed. It has also been claimed that competition with other CSOs that have similar purposes values and goals were being avoided, and a reverse relationship was established.

Beyond supporting other CSOs, it was pointed out that they were walking shoulder to shoulder for a common cause.

4. *Discussion on the code of ethics*

The last point was directly linked to the proposal made during the first Forum. In February 2016, the SC decided that CSO representatives would draft a first document to work on, a code of conduct for the forum. Later the question was reiterated that the CSO representatives would share a draft before the forum. During the forum it was announced that work will be undertaken to produce a document to share with CSOS until the next forum. Civic Space and the CSO representatives met early June to prepare a draft to use as basic draft for the next forum on 22 July.

KE2 drafted a training evaluation form, which was filled by 20 participants. The answers were input into survey monkey by KE2, some of the evaluation results are presented below in excel

3. Sivil Toplum Forumu Değerlendirme / 3rd Civil Society Forum Evaluation

1. Etkinliğin beklentinizi karşıladığını düşünüyor musunuz? / Do you think that the event met your expectation

It was nice and delightful for evaluation of training and considering pluses and minuses of it.

But please don't organize it on 20th, do it in another day. μ

Although it was a good event I have doubts that it meets the expectations.

Realities of our country limit us. We think small and limited.

It was met with my expectations. Everyone could express their ideas.

In general, problems of civil society organisations were updated. Information shared

Important thing is finding the ways of solution and discuss them.

Since we believe in the benefit of gathering information, corroborate and share it, our expectations had been met.

We had a general information about the associations.

I think it could be more fruitful if we use the time more economically. Thank you,

in general, our expectations were met.

Yes, it met. We had a chance to repeat the previous training and inform the ones who did not have chance to attend.

I believe it is going to be better as we proceed. In each meeting we create new communication and new partnership.

Yes.

Yes, because many ideas were gathered on transparency.

Absolutely yes. It good to integrate with the country problems.

Yes. I had a chance to get information from the ideas of a cancer association which is a health association like us.

Apart from this, we confirm the importance of transparency once more.

It was a repetition meeting for me. Learning EU standards was a experience and information sharing both

for myself and in behalf of the association o represent.

Yes, it met. Giving chance to the CSO representatives was an opportunity to discuss about the local examples.

Common sides and sharing of problems

There is a lot thing to discuss, it was such a nice event. Of course our expectations were met

but we wish to have the continuation of such events.

Yes, organisation and plan were great.

Since I did not attend the previous event I can't answer this question:) but my friends from association told

that event was beneficial to raise awareness and it was necessary.

Unfortunately, I couldn't attend to the event full time however it was pleasing and valuable

that a subject which was missing at SCO's addressed.

Civic space is so active and effective.

It should keep the communication and dialogue sustainable and active.

It must create a platform for CSO's to work together

Maybe 5-10 minutes,

 maximum 15 min can be given to each speaker in terms of timing so no time exceed happens

and participants can be informed without shifting from the main theme.

Having higher number of participants. Having the meetings in rural areas as well.

Guide; Details etc. Sustainability of the news

Since it was my first time here, I will share my recommendations with you later.

It will help to understand the aims of the organisations, search identities of the members,

how they can be beneficial to the society and how much and this forum will be more effective.

I believe together with the increase of information and experience, effectiveness can be increased.

It can be better if trainings can be given to the civil society on funding.

It must be more frequent and trainings should be in rural areas as well.

    a) Written reports can be taken from the CSO's for better analysis of what is their organisation and their work programs

    b) Is it possible to collate the names and activities of all the CSO's in a book or journal *?
Let discuss the country in terms of human rights; economy and politics

SMS-Mail- Phone-Media can be again used effectively

Information of the works can be shared. Giving more concrete examples.

Reaching to the EU projects and project creating and completion support.

Guiding relevant associations to gather and have stronger voice and right of voice.

Each organisation can bring their example studies to the Forum after the training and it can be

beneficial to share them with real materials at the corners of CSO's.

Environment of guide as "best practice" "notice board" which shares of different CSO's can be placed

 and used in common and systematic manner.

Common works of the participatory organisations should be encouraged in the next periods.

An information network should be set up to reach contact addresses of organisations easily

Apart from this kind of gatherings, it would be nice if more frequent meetings can happen

 with the CSO's separately in different sectors and information can be shared.

3. Bir dahaki Sivil Toplum Forumu'nun hangi konuyu ele almasını istersiniz? / Which topic would you like to discuss in the next Civil Society Forum?

It can be a meeting which information on projects supported by EU is given

and opportunities given to associations to apply to those projects.

Information on Associations Law.

Use of social media; Media and civil society.

Mass community and mass movements. This mass community and parameters composed this mass community.

How the efficiency can be ensured?

Discussing the different benefits for civil society organisations, information sharing

Assisting to contribute for introduction of arts in abroad

How to reach and motivate more people.

Of course each subject is important. I want the question of how art associations can be converged to be thought.

Funding

Information should be given on finding funds

What can be done to increase the economical values of the CSO's?

Providing assistances to CSO's in terms of legal remedies and advocacy for the steps they will take in politics.

Subjects which will improve the CSO's more.

Waiting for the works for youth in particular scouting.

Professionalism in CSO's- Funding for CSO's- Communication- CSO's Networking-Volunteerism

How to create the environment/facility o mentioned above, reaching to that point in terms of quality

Working groups can be set up for the associations work in similar fields and they can share experience,

 projects and problems.

Construction of corporate identity, setting up vision/mission and implementation

μof those in cooperation with the members.