

National Foundation of Civil Society Strategy for 2014 -2020 and Assessment of the Results

According to the Articles of Association, the objective of the National Foundation of Civil Society (NFCS) is to contribute to enhancing the capacity of non-profit associations and foundations acting in the public interests of Estonia in the development of civil society and in the formation of an environment that favours civic initiative. The strategy of NFCS is based on the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept approved by Riigikogu on 12 December 2002.

NFCS's mission:

By contributing to the development of non-governmental organisations we strengthen civil society.

NFCS's vision:

There is a viable civil society in Estonia and in 2020 NFCS is an efficient assistance, development and support centre.

TARGET GROUPS

The main target groups of NFCS are non-governmental organisations acting in the public interest and the persons and organisations facilitating their activity.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

NFCS operates pursuant to the values and principles of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept and the Code of Ethics of Estonian Non-profit Organizations.

NFCS's action is based primarily on the following values and principles:

Honesty and transparency. Honest behaviour ensures reliability and is the basis for equal partnership. Acting in the public interest means responsibility, readiness and obligation of civic associations and NFCS to inform, communicate and report their activities and the use of their resources.

Involvement and cooperation. Effective action is achieved by informing the interested parties and engaging as many people as possible and by listening to their positions, taking their special interests into account and respecting their values.

Competence and professionalism. Expertise, continuous improvement and application of knowledge and skills, strictness to oneself as well as to partners enables to achieve the best results.

Innovativeness and up-to-dateness. We achieve the desired changes and impact in the society if we respond quickly and flexibly to the arising new developments, challenges and needs.

Impartiality, political independence and avoiding conflict of interest. Impartiality is guaranteed by adhering to the principles of equal treatment and internationally recognized good practice, refraining from giving priority to cliquish, departmental and political interests. A person related to NFCS shall not make a decision within the framework of his or her duties that has a significant impact on his or her economic interests or the economic interests of his or her close relatives or relatives by marriage or the legal persons connected with them and shall refrain from activities that do not conform to NFCS's values, mission and objectives.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Proceeding from the survey “Institutionalisation of Civic Initiative in Estonia”, Centre for Civil Society Research and Development of Tallinn University, 2010, and the annual NGO Sustainability Index prepared by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Articles of Association of NFCS, NFCS considers it important to continue its activities for enhancing the capacity of non-governmental organisations also during the next period. Besides organising project grant calls, the target group sees the need to increase the percentage of development and support activities enhancing the development of civil society and non-governmental organisations. NFCS sets the following strategic objectives for the period 2014 – 2020:

Objective 1. Non-governmental organisations are capable and operate efficiently.

NFCS affects the readiness of non-governmental organisations to act and provides assistance in the realization thereof in order to develop the operational capacities arising from the needs of different non-governmental organisations.

NFCS regards the following as operational capacity: goal setting, management, involvement of people and engagement and planning of financial resources, cooperation, partnership and communication capacities and other organizational capacities required and significant for achievement of the objectives of non-governmental organisations.

NFCS directs non-governmental organisations to operate efficiently – to achieve the objectives and results by sustainable use of resources and in the best possible manner.

Objective 2. The development of civil society and non-governmental organisations is supported by providing assistance in the formation of a favourable operating environment meeting the needs of the target group and by development and support activities.

NFCS focuses primarily on the development of the awareness, knowledge and skills of non-governmental organisations and on the provision of assistance in the formation of a better economic, technical and communication environment for these purposes.

The direct impact of NFCS at the level of objectives cannot be measured or assessed, since all the changes are a combined impact of several factors.

NFCS analyses the trends of combined effects by the survey “Institutionalisation of Civic Initiative in Estonia”, Centre for Civil Society Research and Development, and the annual NGO Sustainability Index prepared by USAID and other surveys and analysis in this field.

ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

NFCS plans its activities for the achievement of the objectives in compliance with

- **national development plans.** NFCS's activity complies with the Civil Society Development Plan and other relevant national development plans. If necessary, NFCS's strategy will be corrected when a new and/or supplemented national development plan is adopted.
- **assessment of the needs.** In its activity NFCS takes into account the results of the surveys and analysis and the development needs of the civil society and civic associations pointed out by involved target groups.
- **endeavouring public impact.** NFCS strives, through its support actions, to enhance conscious activity of non-governmental organisations in achieving changes in the society.

In order to achieve its strategic objectives, NFCS assesses its activity by performance indicators. The results and impact of supported projects is assessed based on the reports and follow-up reports of the supported associations and in seminars summarizing the results of calls for proposals. The results and impact of the events supported and organised by NFCS are assessed based on the reports and participants' feedback sheets.

NFCS refrains from duplicating other funding instruments applied for the implementation of national sectorial strategies and action plans.

For the achievement of its strategic objectives NFCS supports non-governmental organisations and organises activities in the following areas of activity:

AREA OF ACTIVITY 1. Organising calls for proposals.

The activities are carried out through the organisation of calls for proposals, where non-governmental organisations can apply for grants in order to develop different capacities and to act consciously and purposefully in the pursuit of their objectives. Through calls for proposals the applicants' development needs identified as a result of self-analysis that ensure rapid progress are supported or the calls for proposal are directed to the development of a specific capacity.

The Supervisory Board of NFCS shall establish the specific requirements of calls for proposals at least two months before launching a call for proposals.

In order to assess the results of calls for proposals, NFCS analyses the development of the non-governmental organisations both, by quantitative performance indicators and based on the assessments of the non-governmental organisations.

General performance indicators:

- number of members;
- fees received from the members (incl. membership fees);
- grants received (incl. project grants and operating grants);
- donations received;
- other revenue (incl. sales revenue);
- labour costs;
- number of contracted employees;
- number of permanent volunteers.

NFCS decides upon the application of general performance indicators based on the nature of the call for proposals.

Specific performance indicators:

- are defined in the conditions of a call for proposals proceeding from the objective of the call for proposals launched.

In order to provide assessment, we compare variation of the indicators over time: at the moment of applying, at the end of the project and two years after termination of the project period.

Results are assessed:

- in the closing seminars of calls for proposals by analysing summaries and shared experiences;
- by means of project report forms based on the conditions of the calls for proposals and consolidated reports of calls for proposals;
- in the monitoring reports and operational reports submitted to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Interior.

AREA OF ACTIVITY 2. Funding and organisation of activities and innovative solutions promoting the development of civil society and non-governmental organisations.

The activities are carried out through innovative ideas and solutions and competitions organised for the development of the operating environment of non-governmental organisations and support activities promoting the development of non-governmental organisations. The Supervisory Board of NFCS shall establish the conditions and/or initial tasks of the competitions and decide upon the resources required for carrying out the support activities.

Results are assessed:

- by analysing the results of the supported projects of novel ideas and innovative solutions and by analysing their application and sustainability;
- by analysing the application of the surveys organised for the improvement of the operating environment of non-governmental organisations;
- by analysing the reports of supported and organised support activities and feedback from the participants.

AREA OF ACTIVITY 3. Promotion of international cooperation

The activities are carried out through competitions for travel grants allocated for the promotion of civil society and competitions for partial support for self-financing of grants of the European Commission or other foreign contributors allocated to non-governmental organisations. The Supervisory Board of NFCS shall establish the conditions for the competitions.

The results with regard to travel grants are assessed:

- by analysing the results of the allocated travel grants.

The results with regard to partial support for self-financing of grants received from the European Commission or other foreign contributors are assessed:

- by analysing the reports of the supported associations;
- by analysing the number and area of activity of the supported associations.

ASSETS AND THEIR USE

The assets of NFCS are constituted of grants allocated from the state budget, grants allocated by European Union institutions and other foreign contributors. NFCS is also ready to cooperate with legal and private persons in order to mediate their donations for the promotion of civil society.

The Supervisory Board of NFCS shall decide upon the use of NFCS assets for financing areas of activity and activities in the financial plan drawn up for each subsequent year and in cooperation with the partner allocating resources under a contract.

The development and effective action of NFCS is ensured by allocating up to 15% of the managed resources for administrative expenses, the amount of which shall be decided annually by the Supervisory Board of NFCS.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The prerequisites for the development of NFCS are:

- quick response to changes in the society and the needs of the target group;
- implementation of the principles of good governance and management skills;
- the policy of staffing with professional employees and experts and motivating them;
- regular team training and development events;
- obtaining additional funds for the achievement of the objectives.

Objective. NFCS is an institution valued highly by the target group and it supports non-governmental organisations and provides support activities meeting the needs of the target group.

NFCS is an institution that senses and analyses the development needs of civil society and non-governmental organisations and involves target groups, supports non-governmental organisations and their operational capacity and provides necessary support activities for them.

For quick and flexible responding in accordance with the development of the target group and the society NFCS:

- analyses regularly the content and volumes and variations of the resources mediated for support and of non-state support allocated to non-governmental organisations through NFCS;
- implements new policies and practices and applies for additional resources, if necessary.

NFCS has good public reputation and the target group is satisfied with NFCS's activity, work and communication ethics.

The employees of NFCS are experts in civil society and their expertise has been applied:

- in the preparation of the terms and conditions of calls for proposals and other support activities and in the promotion of the implementation of supported projects;
- through information, communication and educational activities of non-governmental organisations;
- in the preparation of sectorial development documents and conduct of development activities both, in state authorities and expert organisations and in the organisation of financing of non-governmental organisations by other donors.

We assess:

- the satisfaction of a target group with allocation of grants, processing of applications and reporting and employees of NFCS on the basis of the feedback received from the target group;
- on the basis of variations in the amount and content of state budget resources over time;
- on the basis of variations in the amount of non-state resources mediated to non-governmental organisations over time;
- on the basis of the number of non-governmental organisations and projects supported by non-state resources where NFCS plays a role.

We assess NFCS employees on the basis of:

- expertise, proceeding from the objectives and courses of action of NFCS;
- work and communication ethics proceeding from the feedback received from the members of the target group;
- participation in the sectorial development and information activities organised by NFCS;
- working as experts in sectorial working groups;
- working as assessment experts at other donors.

The Supervisory Board of NFCS analyses and assesses the implementation of NFCS's strategy regularly twice a year:

- when discussing and approving the annual report;
- in the NFCS development seminar every summer.

Based on the results of these discussions, NFCS plans its annual activities for the achievement of the objectives, development of the organisation and, if necessary, initiates amendment of the strategy. .