

The Strategy of the National Foundation of Civil Society for the Years 2021–2024

The basis for this strategy is the conception for the development of the Estonian civil society, as was approved by the Parliament (Riigikogu) on the 12th of December 2002, as well as the Government of the Republic's Civil Society programme for 2021–2024. The National Foundation of Civil Society's main goals, as is also vocalized in its programme, are efficient NGOs acting in the name of public interest, a strong civil society, and active people.

Our actions are carried by our values: **cooperation, compassion, honesty, transparency, and competence:**

- **Cooperation** – it is one of the prerequisites of growing social capital and, in relying to this, solving society's problems is far more effective than in a situation where the parties have been opposed to one another. In order to achieve our goals, we collaborate with the independent sector, local governments, state institutions, and enterprises. With the help of donations, supportive activities and counselling, we will be able to better the work experiences and skills of communities as well as NGOs.
- **Compassion** – we take into account the diversity of the independent sector, and the needs of the participating organizations. In communication, we are flexible, understanding, and humane, and we make sure to ask for feedback in order to increase the effectiveness of our activities in the direction of the independent sector. In our actions and decisions, we follow the principles of diversity, accessibility, and environmental sustainability. We value collegial support and mutual caring in our team.
- **Honesty and transparency** – we are politically independent, we follow the principles of funding NGOs through the state budget. We show an example to other public funders. We try to avoid a conflict on interests, to keep the decision process transparent, and expect openness from beneficiaries in their work. It is possible to receive and use funding without unnecessary complications and bureaucracy.
- **Competence** – We focus on the capacity and impact of NGOs in solving society's problems. We are knowledge-based and we rely on impact analyses as well as the most qualified experts' judgment in planning subsidies, guiding the applicants, and in our operation as a whole. As the backers, we dare to experiment in order to find the most efficient way to offer subsidies; we also encourage NGOs to seek and use the most effective solutions in their work.

Our mission

The National Foundation of Civil Society is a centre for assistance, development, and support, which strengthens communities and civil society by constituting NGOs.

Our vision by the year 2024

The Estonian civil society is a vigorous one, in which potent NGOs and active communities are a breeding ground for mutual cooperation, active participation and civic awareness.

In order to achieve this, we have three directions of impact for the years 2021–2024:

1. Active participation and civic awareness

The aim of our operation is a compassionate society with courageous and active citizens. We can increase participation and civic awareness by supporting the capacity of NGOs – when NGOs are able to include more people in improving social development and solving problems, able to represent the interests of communities, able to carry the values necessary for participatory democracy to flourish and are efficient in their doing so, it aids the growth of civic participation and awareness.

We are especially attentive of supporting leaders, so there would be enough of those who know how to inspire and include others and, in doing so, organize collaboration. Our subsidies and supportive activities are aimed at helping the independent sector grow and develop in different fields, but also at offering support in the development of NGOs working in various forms and scales.

We make sure that various social groups receive the opportunity to participate in civil society, by planning separate support activities or contests to encourage them. We will increase civic awareness and motivation by sharing success stories and best practices.

In this direction, the goal of our operation is:

- **efficacious NGOs and social enterprises;**
- **an equal involvement for various social groups in the activities of the independent sector;**
- **a bigger awareness of civil society and of the possibilities of impacting civil processes**

Our activities and their results:

<p>Development leap application rounds for NGOs: we will support civic education activities and developing values, increasing skills needed for participation and cooperation, ensuring a base revenue for the independent sector's organisations (including diversifying sources of funding), adjustment in order for the business models to be more efficacious, expanding collaboration networks etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subsidies are divided by different fields, regional and national, horizontal subjects of civil society; • for those receiving the development leap subsidy – sustainability, as well as development according to the indicators chosen by the receiver of the subsidy.
<p>Open contests to manage regional and nationwide support actions directed at the independent sector, including supporting the aftergrowth of the leaders of NGOs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the leaders' competence has improved; • the capability of organizations (Estonian as well as non-native ones) in various fields has improved.
<p>We will support global Estonian news outlets in mediating news and information, strengthening the sense of belonging with Estonia and in maintaining and developing the Estonian language and culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sustainability of global Estonian outlets has increased; • global Estonian outlets' ability to achieve their targets has grown; • best practices and modern solutions have been collected and shared.
<p>Even-levelled consulting for NGOs across Estonia in order to help them launch, manage their activities, and apply for subsidies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs are highly satisfied (including the recommendation index) with the consulting service; • NGOs are highly satisfied with the support activities.
<p>Recognition and sharing success stories, consistent communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the visibility of the beneficiaries in our communication channels has increased.

The impact of this direction of action is shown by: a growth in the percentage of permanent volunteers and permanent donors in the population, the increase of volunteering rates among various social groups, the rate of participation in the organisations of civil society and the existence of employees.

2. Powerful and caring communities

A community is based on mutual values, it takes note of and focuses on its members' needs, offers solutions to its problems and implements them. It is a network that brings together either those connected by a single area or those unified by a common interest. If communities are caring, open-minded, and active, the civil society strengthens thereby.

We will support the growth of the capacity of organizations contributing in community-wide cooperation and in protection of interests. Through this, we will also help to increase cooperating amongst as well as in between communities. In addition to offering guidance to NGOs, we also help out non-formal initiatives stemming from a motivation to represent the interests of a specific community.

We will contribute to raising general awareness of the nature and role of communities, will support communities' collaboration practices and share success stories. We will begin taking supportive actions to help community developers in networking and will counsel local governments in order to better their skills in involving the community as well as in their practices.

In this direction, the goal of our operation is:

- **an increased knowledge of the nature of communities;**
- **a wider communal cooperation.**

Our activities and their results:

<p>We will support activities directed at motivating, activating, and networking communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as a result of counselling and offering subsidies, people are more involved in communal actions and in the initiatives aimed at improving local life; • communal initiatives have turned into changes within fields; • cooperation, involvement and changes within fields will have been measured.
<p>In our support activities, we will support experimenting with new ways of participation in communities and will arrange for sharing experiences (for</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a program designed to increase the capacity of communities has been implemented; • good examples and best practices in community involvement and

example, a mentorship program for communities).	participation are highlighted and communicated.
We will offer proactive counselling for communities including civil initiatives with no judicial form, and local governments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communities' needs are mapped out; • the local governments', who use our help in improving communal cooperation, percentage has increased.
We will collect, describe, and communicate the best cooperation practices.	<p>the following are mapped out, analysed, and communicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the current situation of involvement of civil society in local governments; • the funding practice of civil society on a local level; • an increased cooperation between communities and local governments, between communities and various organizations of civil society, and between communities themselves.
We will help to equip and launch the work of community coordinators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the job description for a community coordinator has been created.

The impact of this direction of action is shown by a functional cooperation between communities and local governments, and communities participating in shaping the local environment.

3. A society backed by cooperation

We value cooperation and a dialogue in searching for the solutions to society's problems as well as working towards fulfilling a mutual vision. We support social innovation, increasing cooperation skills in the independent sector as well as intersectoral cooperation. This is in order to increase the impact of civic initiatives in providing for the community's needs as well as creating and implementing policies.

For this to become a reality, we will offer support in the form of applicant rounds and contests in order to enable co-creational experimenting and launching collaborative models that include different parties. By way of supportive activities and consultation, we will support creating and improving cooperational relationships between the public sector (the state, local governments), various establishments, NGOs, and different groups; this includes international cooperation, which enables searching for partners and sharing best practices, it also supports the development of networks.

In this direction, the goal of our operation is:

- **the independent sector using new models of cooperation and co-creation;**
- **for social innovation to be supported, and the results to be communicated;**
- **a more widespread international cooperation for the NGOs operating in Estonia.**

Our activities and their results:

<p>As a supportive operation, we will launch and support the introduction of new co-creational funds and models, as well as the expansion of those that already exist (for example, NULA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of permanent co-creational initiatives, launched with our support, has grown; • new efficient solutions (incubators, co-creation, design thinking, participatory or inclusive funding) have been introduced in order to encourage cooperation and co-creation.
<p>In our supportive activities, we hold cooperation and improving partnerships in high regard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaboration with NGOs and other establishments is used and developed in our directions of action; • we have good examples of our practices to communicate.
<p>A continuous value in applicant rounds is cooperation. Keeping this in mind, organizations and projects reliant on cooperation will be preferred.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of NGOs that rely on cooperation in solving problems and planning initiatives, has grown.
<p>We will increase competence in social innovation, with a goal to raise awareness of the field in society, by sharing and communicating best practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional efficient co-creational initiatives created to solve society's problems have been launched.
<p>We will support the international cooperation between NGOs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Estonian NGOs' capacity to actively participate in international networks has grown; • as a result of international cooperative projects, the capacity of Estonian NGOs to achieve their statutory goals; • good examples of international cooperational projects have been shared and communicated; • the cooperational capacity developed within the framework of projects, and their effect on the

	actions of organizations, have been mapped and shared.
We will improve partnerships with international funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Estonian independent sector has received additional support and experience for their activities; • our knowledge of international funds and competency coordination has increased; • our international visibility has increased; • additional funding has been received in order to promote international cooperation.

The impact of this direction of action is shown by the number of co-creational initiatives created as a result of social innovation, as well as by the percentage of NGOs who collaborate with other NGOs, local governments, state institutions, and international organizations.

We will carry out our goals by taking on three different roles:

1. **A financial backer of civil society.** We will organize contests and applicant rounds which will help to increase the impact of NGOs. In order to do this, we will be attentive towards society's needs and towards the needs of the independent sector. We will constantly search for more efficient funding and supporting strategies and will include NGOs and communities in this.
2. **A support center for the development and the support of civil society.** We offer supportive operations to develop efficient cooperational models and distribute them in order to empower leaders and organizations. In every county, NGOs communities, and local governments are eligible for advice and support in launching, developing, and finding support for their initiatives. We will be proactive, ambitious, and community-based in offering consulting services. We will also ensure additional training for consultants and will level the quality of the service across Estonia.
3. **A loudspeaker for civil society.** We will mediate the interests of civil society and the state. We will support the big events of civil society, since they empower the cooperation and messages of the independent sector. Through our means of support, we will contribute to the capacity of national as well as local advocacy organizations in order to help them raise and manage important discussions for the development of the independent sector and for the benefit of civic initiatives. We will empower local advocacy by differing nationwide and regional NGOs/organizations in applicant rounds, if necessary.

In order to implement the strategy, our development as an organization is required. For this, it is important to address the following success factors over the next four years:

- Enough resources to implement our objectives. Our field is continually expanding; taking efficient action and managing changes are will ensure the existence of a sufficient budget.
- The competence and development of the team. We will ensure the development and regular self-improvement of our team and our regional consultants in order to grow into a trustworthy support and consultancy centre for the independent sector.
- The introduction of digital solutions and automation. We will automate work processes and will begin using new solutions in organizing applicant rounds and contests as well as communicating with the beneficiaries. Adopting the use of digital solutions will help reach the target audience better, it supports counselling, assessing the result and the impact, skillful responding; it also enables to focus on developing into a competency centre.
- Analysis and being based on knowledge, assessing the impact. We act as role models to the independent sector through the science-based planning, assessing, and managing of our operations. We will implement a new system for assessing impact, which will help analyze, evaluate, and improve programmes, funding models, and counselling systems.
- Keeping in contact with NGOs and communities. Knowing NGOs and their needs, we will be humane, friendly, and trustworthy in our relationships.
- Visibility and communication. Efficient communication in Estonian as well as Russian will help communicate with target groups; it also helps achieve strategic goals by sharing good examples.

Implementing strategy and evaluating the implementation.

We implement our strategy with the help of action plans created for each year. The action plans are based on the goals set by the strategy. At the end of each year, we assess the implementation of the action plan as well as whether we have achieved the desired results through our activities. The council discusses the impact of our activities each year and makes suggestions to specify the following year's activities; it also initiates changing the strategy if needed.

Definitions

Civil Society* means the people's own initiative for cooperation in order to protect and carry out their interests, as well as participate in discussing public affairs, and making decisions on them; it also means the organizations, networks, and institutions that enable this sort of cooperation.

A community* is mostly a group of people habitating a specific area, connected by a specific type of network of social relations. Communities might also be based on field or interest. A community-based approach is a notion and a way of working through which problems are identified and solved along with the target groups (communities).

An NGO is a non-profit organization or a foundation and its umbrella organization in case they are not founded by a public authority or a commercial enterprise, and their administration is independent from public authorities and commercial enterprises. A collective of NGOs is called the independent sector.

Social innovation is a cross-sectoral mindset in creating and implementing new initiatives. Social innovation involves solutions that are creative and creative of new values, in order to solve society's problems; these solutions have a long-term effect, create new relationships, improve cooperation, and increase people's wellbeing.

Sources:

*The programme for civil society, "A Strong Civil Society" 2021–2024