

SOCIAL ACTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

DANIELA ȘOITU¹
CONȚIU-TIBERIU ȘOITU²

Abstract

Romania membership of the European Union, since 2007, produced significant internal and external changes, in relations with neighborhood states – including The Republic of Moldova. The study underlines social resorts of actions manifested by civil society organizations in Romania and Moldova during last years. Our study highlights the theoretical springs of social involvement, of social action and illustrates financial policies that support social action and civil society at European level. Recent assessments and public debates draw attention to the national capacity to apply for and use European funds. Political, economic and administrative solutions have various forms. In setting the agenda are involved also potential funding recipients from civil society organizations. Emile Durkheim's (2002) idea according to which the social action is determined by external compulsion that influence the individual can be found in the way the civil society implicates in accord to the financing criteria. Beyond these dimensions, values and norms that guide civil society from both states in these times of crisis may be the subject of future research.

Keywords: *social action, civil society, Romania, Republic of Moldova, cross-border cooperation, European influences.*

Introduction

The study of the civil society has become an object of interest in the past years. The development and the evolution of this new dimension have local, regional, national and transnational particularities. Usually, the concepts, relations, roles, connexions with the economical and political fields, historical and geographical perspectives are analysed, but not so much on the dot actions as the one we are trying to point out in this article. The civil society – its meaning, purpose and role – can be analysed not only from a local point of view but also transnational, global one. The actors involved in these analyses build and sustain sometimes different approaches: while the international relations and political sciences specialists prefer the normative theories of democracy, the European Union (EU) institutions put the civil society (organized one) in the context of the

¹“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Bd. Carol I nr 11, 700506, Iași; 0722 837241; danielag@uaic.ro

²“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Iași, Bd. Carol I nr 11, 700506, Iași; 0721 233210; soitucontiu@yahoo.com

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European government. The confusions amplify when we identify, at European level, at least two conceptions regarding the structure of civil society: one of which sees civil society as composed of civil society organisations articulating and representing the interests of a constituency, the other locates civil society in the sphere of social interaction (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat, 2009, p. 11).

The study that we have realised between 2006 and 2009³ consisted in exploratory and modular research activities on the nowadays and potential impact of civil society on the development of new forms of political, economical and socio – cultural cooperation in the “new European neighbourhood”. We investigated the influence of the new geopolitical contexts – the extension of the European Union – on the civil society cooperation from the member states (Romania) and their regional neighbours (the Republic of Moldova). The three important directions of the research were: a contextual and partly a geopolitical one, another one focalised on the development of the interest communities organised as forms of the civil society, and a third one on the perceiving of EU’s role in general and of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)’s role in particular. The answers to the 82 basic interviews (40 in Romania and 42 in the Republic of Moldova) and 45 in-depth interviews (21 in Romania and 24 in the Republic of Moldova) and of the participants at two local seminaries (one local seminar in Romania, Iasi, 21st March, 2008, and another one in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, 11th April, 2008) together with the specific documentation are the main source of interpreted and analysed data in previous articles (Șoitu & Șoitu, 2009; Șoitu & Șoitu 2010).

In this article, the focus on the conceptual framework of social action and civil society, in the context of the political and financial instruments that influenced the cooperation.

The concept of “social action” is one of the most dynamic and at the same time the most analysed in the system of the social sciences concepts. Starting from the parents of sociology, continuing through explanations and details, the social action has overcome the meaning of social behaviours, being completed by the interactive dimension (social interaction, social contacts and social relations).

The social practice was conceptualized (Marx) starting from the material, productive one. Max Weber brings in first plan the value criteria, internal ones of the subject; while E. Durkheim sustains that the social action is determined by the external compulsions that influence the individual. Parsons (1957) developed the theory of social systems and the general theory of action, emphasizing the elements of normative values and unit-act (actor, aim, situation) (Netedu, 2010).

³ This study starts from the activity carried on between May 2006 – September 2009, on the content of the objectives of the research project type FP6, STREP, called EUDIMENSIONS: *Local Dimensions of a Wider European Neighborhood: Developing Political Community through Practices and Discourses of Cross-Border Co-operation* (Research Project PC6, STREP, Priority 7, 4.2.1. New visions, new neighborhood. CIT-CT-2005-028804).

For a comprehensive approach, the social action is a willing, conscious one, made by models, norms, purposes and the individual's aspirations, but in concordance with society's values. The final objective of the social action is to get and have material and cultural values accepted by the society. One of the main conditions of realising a social action is the individual's social integration in systems, relations and structures in which he can manifest and which he can influence. The multiple influences – individual, in group and in structures – proves the existence of an interaction, a communication, a system of information's transmission and receiving and of other social symbols. The psychological manifestation is closely connected to the social, exterior one, and consists in creativity, adaptation in taking, interpretation and assigning meanings to the actions and concepts used. The reciprocity of these manifestations sustains the social action.

In practice, in some situations, the social action became synonym to the social intervention or to the “social assistance” (in France *The Family's and Social Action's Code* adopted in 1938 has been replaced with the new *Code of the Social Action and of the Family* from 2000, that contains the main legislation in the field of social assistance). According to this perspective, the social action consists in the means through which a society acts on itself in order to maintain the cohesion using the law or regulations and using actions regarding the help of fragile people and groups in their life environment in order to get and maintain their autonomy and in order to adapt to social environment.⁴

The conceptual influences come from the French connection (in this case) or the English one. A virtual search, in English, of the meanings of the social action show another dimension: a deep implication, voluntary implication, both individual and organizational of the civil society in supporting some social cases, of some people and groups that need help and ask for it. (www.socialaction.dk, www.saction.com, www.socialaction.org, globaljsam.ning.com etc.).

The perspectives from which the civil society can be analysed are many. From these, we retain the relation between macro indicators (economical development, connections with the global resources and structures) and micro indicators (the interest for political life, for participation in collective activities), between participation and representation in the relation with the state, then the presence and the use of local resources, national and global, followed by personal implication (Petrova, 2007, pp. 1277-1305).

In the context of the changes at the EU level, some analyses go further following the potential of democratization of the civil society from three perspectives: (1) controversies regarding the participation by civil society as an alternative, more inclusive venue compared to liberal or representative democratic

⁴ Starting from these meanings, in some states the social action represents the object of activity of some national commissions (Sierra Leone: National Commission for social action / NaCSA) or of some ministries (in Congo, Burkina Faso and other African states).

processes; (2) the civic and cosmopolitan promises of trans national civil society vis-à-vis the perceived perils associated with “uncivil society”; (3) the comparison of top down activated vs. bottom up mobilizing types of civil society (Trenz, 2009, p. 36).

On the other side, the emergence of the non governmental organizations in the past decades, as actors of the civil society (some would say 40 years, respectively 20 years for the former communist countries) is given to the changes that the governments were forced to make as effect of globalization (Lehman, 2007, p. 654).

The analyses don't stop at the present times: there are authors that created a model of the trajectory of the non governmental organizations in the next two centuries, when „the category of people who had been previously marginalised disappears, and the major roles of NGOs are to ensure cultural diversity and develop civil labour” (Kenny, 2007, p.186).

The history of the syntagma “civil society” in the EU's legislation is shorter than on decade, being present in the first European document only in 2000 (*Treaty of Nice*). The role of the civil society has ever since been more and more important, being stated in many European documents. The European Economical and Social Committee and the European Commission are very active in clarifying and promoting the civil society in the relations with the European institutions⁵. These actions have been taken by the European Parliament too.

The Liaison Group with European Civil Society Organisations and Networks, created, in 2004, by the Committee consists – near by ten members of the Economic and Social Committee, by fourteen representatives of organized civil society, one for each of the sectors of civil society identified as important: *development, youth, gender equality, education and training, family life, organizations and associations promoting the European idea, consumers' policy, service providers, cooperative movement, health insurance and social protection, arts and culture, European citizenship, protection and integration of handicapped persons, rural development.*

The expression ‘civil society’ it is used even in the official documents produced by the European Union's various bodies vaguely, or at any rate unclearly.

The civil society in the vision of the European Economical and Social Committee is: "a collective term for all types of social action, by individuals or

⁵ The Committee is a consultative body which performs three main tasks:

- (a) advising the three major institutions (European Parliament, Council and Commission);
- (b) enabling civil society organizations in the Union to make a greater commitment to, and have a greater involvement in, the European venture, at both national and European levels, and to help bring Europe closer to its citizens;
- (c) strengthening the role of civil society organizations in non-EU countries or blocs (or groups of countries) where it has established and developed ongoing relations, backed up by a structured dialogue, with civil society organisations, especially the social partners, and to promote the creation of consultative structures along similar lines to the EESC (EESC 2004: 9).

groups that do not emanate from the state and are not run by it. What is particular to the concept of civil society is its dynamic nature, the fact that it denotes both situation and action. The participatory model of civil society also provides an opportunity to strengthen confidence in the democratic system so that a more favorable climate for reform and innovation can develop" (EESC 1999: 5).

Analysing this definition, we identify a very close connection of the terms *civil society* and *social action* – with the specification that these activities are not carried on by the state and don't come from it. This definition is accompanied by specification that the essential elements of civil society are: *pluralism, autonomy, solidarity, visibility, participation, education, responsibility, and subsidiarity* (EESC 1999: 7).

To be pointed out firstly is that, whilst the above definition refers to action by both groups and individuals, all the European Union's official acts, statements and documents place the emphasis on "organised civil society", by which is meant all organizational structures whose members serve the general interest through a democratic method based on dialogue and consensus, thus mediating between the public authorities and citizens. The implication is therefore that only those civil society organisations that are sufficiently structured and effectively representative of significant components of European society can contribute to the building of Europe.

In this regard, cited as *actors of organized civil society* are the following:

- (a) the so-called labor-market players, i.e. the social partners;
- (b) organizations representing social and economic players, which are not social partners in the strict sense of the term;
- (c) non-governmental organizations;
- (d) community-based organizations, i.e. organizations set up within society at grassroots level which pursue member-oriented objectives, e.g. youth organizations, family associations and all organizations through which citizens participate in local and municipal life;
- (e) religious communities (EESC 1999: 8).

At an organisational level, in order to give an example, the widest European network that focuses on our object of study is *The Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform)*⁶ as the alliance of representative European federations and

⁶ The members of the Social Platform represent thousands of organisations, associations and other voluntary groups at local, regional, national and European level representing the interests of a wide range of civil society. These include organisations of women, older people, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed, people affected by poverty, gays and lesbians, young people, children and families. Member organisations also include those campaigning on issues such as social justice, homelessness, life-long learning, health and reproductive rights and racism. The Social Platform channels the concerns of European citizens who have come together in these organisations throughout the Union on issues of common interest. It also ensures a wide circulation of information on EU activities and policies to its members at the national level. (<http://www.socialplatform.org/AboutUs.asp?DocID=8144>).

networks of non-governmental organisations active in the social sector (<http://www.socialplatform.org/>). One of the purposes of this organization, that has thousands of other organizations, is to support NGOs to become legitimate partners in public debates regarding the European society, including with the institutions of the European Union. The activity of this platform has convinced many networks, federations, associations and groups to become members. From Romania and The Republic of Moldova many organizations are, indirectly, part of the big European networks⁷.

The European Social Action Network (ESAN, www.esan.eu) is a platform that has its beginnings in France and has organizations from 14 countries (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, United Kingdom), and has as objectives the following:

- a) To bring to the attention of European policy makers (at the Parliament and the Commission) contributions based on the expertise of its members;
- b) To develop co-operation between social organisations for peoples' benefit;
- c) To give information concerning community policies and programmes;
- d) To act as a logistical base to look for transnational partners;
- e) To assist in the drafting of European grant applications.

⁷ AGE - The European Older People's Platform; ATD Fourth World International Movement ; Autism Europe; Caritas Europa; Combined European Bureau for Social Development (CEBSD); Confederation of Family Organisations in the EU (COFACE); Eurochild; Eurodiaconia; European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN); European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA); European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD); European Blind Union (EBU); European Children's Network (Euronet); European Confederation of Workers' Co-operatives, Social Cooperatives and Participative Enterpriss (CECOP); European Consumer Debt Network (ECDN); European Council for Non-Profit Organisations (CEDAG); European Disability Forum (EDF) ; European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA); European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG); European Federation of Unpaid Parents and Carers at Home (FEFAF); European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS); European Network Against Racism (ENAR); European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR); European Public Health Alliance (EPHA); European Region of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW); European Social Action Network (ESAN); European Women's Lobby (EWL); European Youth Forum (YFJ); International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW); Mental Health Europe (MHE); Solidar; The European Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disability and their Families (Inclusion Europe); The European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA-Europe); The European Volunteer Centre (CEV); The International Federation of the Christian Associations of Italian Workers (FAI); Workability Europe; World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

From all these points only one is explicitly concerned with the cooperation between NGOs⁸.

One of the civil society's roles, which is shown in the European documents is that of creating connections between state and citizens, but also between the European institutions and citizens. Along with these specifications, the civil society seems to be in the best position to establish close relations between the citizens of the member states, to create cultural and identity connections between them, but also between EU's citizens and the neighbouring states. It is also emphasized that European civil society, by acting as a meeting point for the highly diverse dynamics that have traversed Europe (and elsewhere), may enable a balance to be struck between the opposing risks of unbridled individualism (which threatens the West) and authoritarian collectivism (the experience of Eastern Europe) (EESC 1999: 5).

Thus, the civil society's development, then the cooperation of those in Romania and the Republic of Moldova has also been encouraged by the European funds. The pre-accession process of Romania, the European neighbourhood policies (ENP), and, since 2009, *The Eastern Partnership* (EaP) represent phases and processes with impact on the civil society's involvement.

EU investment in civil society's action and cooperation

Various documents produced by the European institutions emphasise the role of civil society in enabling applicant states to fulfil some of the conditions – social, political, cultural and economic – for joining the European Union (Caselli 2006) and then for the society's democratization.

In Romania, the Ministry of Public Finance, through the Central Finance and Phare Contracts and Civil Society Development Foundation have launched a new Request for proposals and projects worthing over 2.2 million euros, EU funded through *The Transition Facility 2007/19343.01.11 – The Consolidation of the civil society support in fighting corruption*.

The general objective of the programme aims at improving the reaction of the civil society regarding corruption especially through increasing the NGO's involvement in preventing and fighting corruption at national, regional and local level. It also aims at promoting integrity and ethics, transparency, accountability and good government. The NGOs that submit projects can receive a reimbursement up to 90% from the requested money (a minimum of ten thousand and maximum a hundred thousand euros).

⁸ From Romania joined: APEL – The Formation – Professional Integration Service and FONPC – The Federation of the Non Governmental Organizations for Child Protection. FONPC was the beneficiary of a project (*Equal Chances in a Broader Europe. Strengthening the role of Bulgarian and Romanian Third Sector*, May 2006 – December 2007) with the purpose of developing the CSOs' potential, improvement of the quality and purposes of social services.

For cross-border cooperation between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and Phare CBC are followed now by the operational cross-border cooperation programme among Romania - Moldova - Ukraine as a part of the framework provided by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The main documents required by EU funding for developing CSO, in Romania as well as in The Republic of Moldova are: Phare CBC-Tacis, IPA (The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance), ENPI (The European neighbourhood policy instruments), The Republic of Moldova – EU Action Plan, The Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF), ICE (the Central European Initiative), The Eastern Partnership.

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

For cross-border cooperation between Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), combines the cohesion policy objectives with those of external relations. In this sense, the following priority objectives were taken into account: the development of economic, social and environment activities in border areas; solving mutual issues in the domain of environment, public health, fighting organized crime; ensuring safe and operational borders; cooperation in the areas of law and administration; promotion of activities of the "People to People" type.

Phare CBC programmes

Even if Phare CBC was a pre-accession financial instrument, it was also used after 2007 either through projects that received financing before 2007 and had been implemented after 2007, or through financing opportunities that announced after 2007.

The Cooperation Cross-border Phare Programmes (CBC) finance projects that aim at the cooperation across borders. Before Romania's EU accession, the CBC Phare programmes have been carried on with Bulgaria and Hungary, according to the priorities established for each border, registered in the common documents of programming. During 2004-2006, within "Wider Europe" initiative, Phare financed for Romania neighbourhood programmes with The Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro, Ukraine.

The general aims of the projects financed by Phare CBC was: to promote cooperation between the border regions of countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the adjacent regions from the neighbors countries, and thus help the border regions in Central and Eastern Europe find solutions to their development issues; to promote the creation and development of cooperation networks between both sides of the border and to establish connections between these networks and the more developed networks of the Community.

The Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Moldova 2005 (RO2005/017-537.01.01 and RO2005/017-537.01.02) had, as priorities in the eligible counties on

the border region of Romania (Botosani, Galati, Iasi and Vaslui): the economic and social development and People to people actions.

The first priority⁹ seeks to integrate the relationship between the pillars of infrastructure, human resources and economic promotion as they each relate to the overall development of the region, and their contribution toward the quality of life within the eligible area. The second one, by Joint Small Project Fund, looks for improving cross-border cooperation at the local level between the two countries and supporting the further development of economic potential of the eligible regions.

According to those interviewed by us, the possibility that CSOs have to influence collaboration is limited by the fact that they must adapt to the regional and national context, to policies, strategies and programmes negotiated / accepted / established at a wider level, most usually the EU (Șoitu& Șoitu, 2009). Priorities were set and projects were funded in important domains: border safety and security, infrastructure development, social services development, environment protection, education, culture, promoting economic cooperation etc. These funding lines have encouraged and even caused the organisations to look for partners on the other side of the border (Șoitu& Șoitu, 2010).

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)

The ENP strategy consisted in bilateral action plans, reviewed yearly, containing lists of actions for each neighbour, as well as for the EU. These actions aim to harmonise the laws and the norms and to ensure a gradual transition towards the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. Therefore, the ENP is not an instrument of the enlargement process, but rather a distinct mechanism. Even though the EU communicates in numerous ways that the ENP is not an alternative to the partner countries' joining the EU¹⁰, it is in no way a promise or guarantee for a future admission. The ENP was criticised for the lack of financial resources, especially since the ENPI had been the only one available after the TACIS and MEDA programmes stop or after other thematic instruments cease to exist.

The next operational cross-border cooperation programme among Romania - Moldova - Ukraine is part of the framework provided by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Strategic Document concerning cross-border cooperation between 2007 and 2013 provides a list of states and of areas eligible for ENPI funding, as well as their grouping in common programmes: Romania carry out cross-border cooperation activities funded through the ENPI with the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine as part of a trilateral

⁹ The first priority have the following measures: 1.1 Environment and nature protection, 1.2 Territorial and border management, 1.3 Local Economic Development, 1.4 Tourism, 1.5 Education and Social Services.

¹⁰ What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?, available at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm

programme. From Romania are eligible area 6 counties: Suceava, Botoșani, Iași, Vaslui, Galați, Tulcea, from Moldova: entire territory and from Ukraine 2 Regions: Cernovtsky, Odessa. Total budget of the programme is EUR 126 mil., of which FEDR Romania – EUR 63.359 mil.

When the first call for proposals and projects has been launched by the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Housing, on the 1st July, the amount was the following: 30 million Euros for the first two priorities: *For a more competitive economy in the border area*, respectively *Environment and preparing for emergency situations*, plus 5 million Euros for the third priority: *The cooperation such as “people to people”*. Comparing to CBC Phare priorities, one can notice the new priorities: economical, environmental protection and action in emergency situations.

The contracts that NGOs can establish are, actually subordinated to the third priority, dedicated to exchanges of experience and training sessions, through the two measures: 3.1 *Local and regional governance, support for the civil society and local communities*, respectively, 3.2 *Educational, social and cultural exchanges*. The aim of *people to people cooperation* is that of “promoting a greater interaction between the existing people and communities along the border”.¹¹

In addition to the ENPI, partner countries can profit from the funds from the Governance Facility (maximum € 50 million annually for all ENP countries) and from the Cross Border Cooperation that brings together regions of EU Member States and ENPI partner countries sharing a common land or sea border. In 2008 the CBC East adds up to approximately € 25,6 million.

The Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF)

The Neighbourhood Investment Facility operates with pooled grant resources of the Community and Member States, which are used to leverage International Financial Institutions loan financing. NIF focuses on the priority sectors Energy, Environment and Transport, but support may also be provided for SMEs and Social Sector development. There are projects ongoing ranging from Energy Transmission System, Technical assistance for Improvement of Water and Sanitation Systems, to the Modernisation Project at Chisinau Airport. In 2008 the NIF has allocated almost €70 million to projects in the East.

Officially launched in May 2008, the NIF was created under the aegis of Commissioner Mrs Ferrero-Waldner in order to strengthen Community and Member States' grant support for lending operations carried out by European multilateral and bilateral development finance institutions in ENP partner countries.

The initiative has focused constantly on providing assistance to the member states in the region in their reform process required for EU membership or countries which have already signed an ENP Action Plan with the EU: i.e.

¹¹ <http://cbc.mie.ro/Moldova/gen/main.php>

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Occupied Territories, Tunisia and Ukraine.

On a case by case basis other neighbouring countries may also benefit from NIF grant support, in particular in case of projects of cross border or regional nature to which the EU attaches particular interest.

The Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF), as a key instrument of the intensified European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), will benefit in 2009 from a €70 million contribution by the European Commission. These resources will allow neighbouring partner countries to leverage increased funding for major investment projects in areas such as energy, transport and environment, and also SME development and the social sector. The Commission provides, through the NIF, grant support for lending operations of European Development Finance institutions in these countries. Out of the €700 million that the Commission intends to allocate to the NIF for the period 2007-2013, €170 million have now been made available for the financing of eligible projects (€50 million approved in 2007, €50 million in 2008 and an additional €70 million this year).¹²

The 15 projects approved by NIF in its first year of operation (2008) have a total grant contribution of €71 million. In addition to improvement of basic infrastructures the NIF also provided support to some major investments in the environment sector, directly or indirectly tackling common environmental challenges.

The assistance package of €40mio will fund several programmes in different areas such as the strengthening of culture policies and civil society, support of SME networks, border management, air quality governance and disaster preparedness. All the projects to be financed with this programme will have a regional scope as they each will each benefit at least two of the seven partner states along the Eastern border of the EU (Russia, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia).¹³

The Central European Initiative (ICE)

ICE supports regional cooperation at economic and political level in a broad geographic area: from Ukraine and Belarus in the East to Italy and Austria in the West.

Eastern Partnership (EaP)

In the last 15 years there have been radical changes at the Eastern EU's borders. Since the conclusion of the partnership and cooperation agreements between EU and the Eastern partners, the successive enlargements have increased the geographical proximity while the reforms supported by ENP led to a closer political and economical relation of these countries to EU. EU assumes an enhanced responsibility regarding its partners in order to support them in

¹² IP/09/1164 Date: 20/07/2009

¹³ IP/09/1084 Date: 03/07/2009

surpassing the economic and political challenges that they face and in order to support their aspirations of establishing closer connections. The European Council – 19–20th June 2008 – has invited The Commission to prepare a proposal for an “Eastern Partnership”, emphasising the necessity of a different approach, meant to respect the unique and coherent character of the European neighbourhood policy¹⁴.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) has been launched as an answer for ENP’s critics. The addressability of this partnership is, this time much closer to the EU’s eastern border: Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Within the Eastern Partnership, The European Commission has held four thematic platforms: a) democracy, good governing and stability; b) economical integration and convergence with sector policies of EU; c) energy security and d) contacts between people.

Total assistance for the six Eastern neighbours will gradually grow from € 450 million in 2008 to € 785 million in 2013. This will mean allocating a supplementary envelope of € 350 million in addition to the planned resources for the period 2010-2013. Moreover €250 million that was already allocated to the ENP regional east programme to initiatives relevant for the implementation of the Eastern will be refocus on EaP. The total amount for implementing this new initiative is €600 million.

Despite these existing funds, some CSO representatives consider the funding so far insufficient compared to the potential the NGO-s in the area have in all domains.

Discussions on the social actions of the civil society from Romania and from the Republic of Moldova at cross-border level

Now, the cross – border cooperation between Romania and the Republic of Moldova takes into consideration the following domains: commercial, cultural, social and educational, political (of parties sharing the same political orientation), environment protection, infrastructure development and resource exchanges, securing the borders and the free circulation of citizens, local public administration and regional development networks (Euroregions), harmonisation of legislation, know-how : exchange of practices and experience (CSO as a “watch dog”).

Cross-border cooperation is encouraged by the presence of bilateral, national and international documents that establish priorities, strategies (local, regional, national, trans-national) and allocate resources.

The main actors influencing these cross-border practices are at different levels:

¹⁴ Commission of the European Communities, 2008, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and The Council. Eastern Partnership*. Sec(2008) 2974, Brussels

- Trans-national/international: NATO, the USA, the UN and its institutions etc.;
- European: the EU and its institutions, OSCE;
- national: president, government, parliament, parties, the church, state-owned and private-owned companies, CSO;
- in the immediate neighbourhood/regional: Russia, Ukraine;
- local: government, CSO.

Some civil society representatives mention the existence of the border as a possible obstacle for collaboration, but say at the same time that in professional circles there is no exclusion, and, on the contrary, there is respect and support for developing partnerships.

"Romania's status as a member of the EU has both a positive and a negative impact in the relation with the Republic of Moldova. On the one hand, Romania has gained (involuntarily) the image of the «gingerbread», with all the benefits and the opportunities for development, new opportunities for collaboration have appeared, as well as funding instruments, and on the other hand the EU membership imposes more restrictions that limit cooperation."¹⁵

Collaboration is achieved within certain institutional frameworks, which need to take into account rules, principles, processes, contexts. The desire to have partnerships across the river Prut is marked, for any of the civil society representatives by a certain mercantilism, by extraneous objectives and priorities, whose relation to the local issues is sought, without difficulty, later on. This situation is partially a result of the multitude of problems facing the communities neighbouring the river Prut, recognized as some of the poorest in Europe. Thus, it may be difficult to establish priorities in regional development: what is more important? Workforce migration towards other countries? The increased unemployment levels? Youth's problems concerning social adjustment and integration? Developing the infrastructure? Refurbishing the buildings of health and education institutions? Investment in agriculture? In the tertiary sector? Attracting education, health, farming, economics specialists in every village, irrespective of size? Environmental issues? Political and civic education issues? The minimum living standard? Securing the border?

Some aspects seem to matter to people who are not concerned with the daily grocery budget, with basic needs, to those who can think further and who bear the administrative responsibility of an entire territory.

This could be one of the reasons for which nongovernmental organisations focus on the regional and local priorities mentioned in various applicants' guides, depending on the donor.

Some of the local needs are side by side with the domains that drive regional development: decreasing unemployment in parallel with the modernisation of

¹⁵ N.R., "Contact" Centre, Chișinău, in-depth interview, February 2008

infrastructure; fighting organised crime in parallel with the development of the civic spirit; eliminating human trafficking in parallel with ensuring and respecting individual freedom (Șoitu & Șoitu 2010); decreasing the levels of school abandonment in parallel with actions for the involvement and educating the young; securing the borders in parallel with environment research (vegetation and fauna in the area of the river Prut), with preventing and mitigating risk situations etc.

Within *The Neighbourhood programme Romania, The Republic of Moldova Phare CBC 2005*, at the level of the three Euro regions (*Upper Prut, Siret-Prut-Nistru and Lower Danube*) 62 projects have been financed: 37 for the first priority, *Economical and social development*, and 25 for *People to People actions*. Fourteen of those 62 projects (a proportion of 22,5%) may be considered as having a social aim. The types of the financed actions start from the desire of creating cross-border networks for children's social assistance until the outlining of a strategy of economical and social development of an Euro region (Siret-Prut-Nistru). Deepening the analysis, half (7) of them have, as a main applicant a NGO, the rest being local and county authorities. Compared to Phare CBC 2004, when 47 projects were contracted to grant, of which 10 had as a main objective a social and a socio-medical one, the proportion is similar (21,27%). One again, the ten projects in question are distributed to five local authorities and five NGOs.

But, there are differences regarding the type of measure in which the applicant CSOs have integrated, thus, benefiting by appropriate amounts between (162721 and 41000 euros in Phare CBC 2005, but between 257116.50 euros and 35752 euros in Phare CBC 2004). Surprising is that, in the first round (Phare CBC 2004) out of 1057633.73 euros finally meant to social projects almost 58% (57,97%, respectively 613131.5 euros) were for the NGOs. Their enthusiasm has dropped in Phare CBC 2005, where even though there were more projects, the proportion of the amounts meant to the NGOs interested in social and socio-medical objectives at Romanian border with The Republic of Moldova was of only 34,77% (610872 euros) in all. There is a difference in proportion inconvenient for CSOs, but comparing the amounts allocated, it has been ascertained that in Phare CBC 2004 it has been given only an amount of 2259.5 euros more.

The CSOs now have a competitor – the local authorities – that is also interested in running projects and identifying viable partners as well.

In general, partnerships are formed in order to carry out a project, which has to meet some requirements in order to receive funding, and one of these requirements is to have a partner across the border.

One of the reasons for the project partners expressing preferences, is the success of the project, depending on its specificity.¹⁶ Cross-border partnerships

¹⁶ *Simple projects* have a cross-border effect, taking place mostly or exclusively on one side of the border but for the benefit of both partners.; *In Complementary projects* an activity on one side of the border is accompanied by a similar activity on the other side. *In integrated projects* partners on either side of the border contribute different elements to a single project.

between the CSOs are established according to the project objective and on the organisations' ability to work together, to project objectives and acquired experience.

Conclusions

Coming back to the definitions of the social actions and taking in consideration the projects that have been financed at the Romania and The Republic of Moldova border through Phare CBC, we identify an interest for the intervention type of social action, focalised on disadvantageous categories: children, children with Down syndrome, older people, young people who study, human trafficking victims, substance abusers (anti smoking campaign for young people), families in risk situations. Complementary to these there were requests for investments in creating specialized centres, resource centres, formation and complying with quality standards in social services.

E. Durkheim's idea according to which the social action is determined by external compulsion that influence the individual can be found in the way the civil society implicates in accord to the financing criteria. Here can be mentioned the development of the fields recognized in the experience of some non governmental organizations and in others case in the diversification of the activities in order to comply with the applications' criteria.

Another significant conclusion underlines the role of civil society actions when the politics are not friendly or varies. At local level, in both countries, the CSOs should be empowered and involved in regional networks for assessing and fulfilling people developmental needs. The civil society seems to be in the best position to establish close relations between the citizens of the member states, to create cultural and identity connections between them, but also between EU's citizens and the neighbouring states.

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