CSOs Network for Open Government Partnership

Principles and structure of the network

Introduction – What is Open Government Partnership?

Open Government Partnership (hereinafter OGP) is a voluntary international initiative aimed at providing specific commitments by governments to promote transparency, foster citizen participation, fight corruption and exploit new technologies to strengthen good governance.

OGP was initiated by 8 countries and 8 international organizations in 2011 as a joint partnership to promote transparency, accountability and participation of the authorities. Today, the initiative includes 79 member states and many civil society organizations.

To become part of the OGP initiative, candidate countries should support the Open Government Partnership Declaration, prepare two-year national action plans developed through public consultation, regularly report on progress, work with civil society to reach the agreed targets, and commit to independent reports on their progress through the independent reporting mechanism. The preparation of the OGP Action Plan should be inclusive, which means that various stakeholders, including state administration, civil society, local authorities, the business sector and the academic community, should contribute to the process.

The civil society sector accumulates enormous creative energy that should be used (pro)actively in the public sector by improving and fostering a culture of inclusion and respect for the rights of all citizens in the processes of policy-making and decision-making, laws and access to information.

A key-value based on OGP as an initiative is building partnerships between state institutions and citizens (civil and business sectors) through the creation and implementation of measures that will promote transparency, accountability and participation of public institutions.

The Republic of North Macedonia has been a member of the initiative since 2011 and has adopted four national action plans (in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018). The coordinator for OGP government activities is the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA). Action plans are prepared in consultation with CSOs. MISA submits and publishes calls for consultations, draft and final versions of national action plans (NAPs) and reports on the progress in their implementation, as well as the reports and findings of the Independent Reporting Mechanism on its website http://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/documents/open-government-partnership. Following the adoption of the current Fourth NAP 2018-2020, seven (7) working groups for the implementation of priorities have been established with representatives from CSOs, institutions, international organizations and academia.

Why establish a CSOs network and what will be its role?

The Open Government Partnership Civil Society Network is being formed on the eve of the preparation of the new (Fifth) National Action Plan, with the aim of more organized action and impact of CSOs on its creation, as well as encouraging and monitoring the implementation of the existing and future action plans.

The role of the network is to mobilize and coordinate civil society advocacy on OGP issues.

The network is an organized form of action on the OGP issue in the civil sector, i.e.:

> ➢ a network of active CSOs dedicated to encouraging authorities and other institutions to work better through increased transparency, participation and accountability
> ➢ an organized civic initiative that will lead, monitor and promote the process but at the same time go beyond the regular activities of the government and innovatively exert pressure.

This is an informal network, with a clear organizational structure and coordination.

Network goals

The main goal of the network is to coordinate and strengthen the voice of civil society organizations that advocate for the participation, openness and accountability of authorities.

The Network will strive to initiate, encourage, support, implement and monitor the OGP process and encourage authorities and other institutions to increase their transparency, accountability and openness to participation.

The Network will strive to establish a new structure for coordinating the OGP process in North Macedonia in line with international experience, with the aim to improve the communication of all parties involved and enhance the monitoring and evaluation of activities. The network will participate and contribute to establishing a new structure for coordinating and monitoring the development and implementation of the NAP.

The new structure should build on existing OGP practices and resources. The network should encourage and increase the stakeholders' commitment to NAP development through a process that involves all stakeholders, with the active participation of citizens and civil society.

Activities

The Network will participate in the preparation of the new action plan, as well as in creating, establishing and functioning of a formal OGP coordination and monitoring body in line with OGP Guidelines and Standards (Multistakeholder Forum, Management Committee or OGP Council), i.e. an organized and established model for the coordination and involvement of civil society, institutions and other stakeholders in the OGP development and implementation process.

The Network will contribute to creating a structure for consultation and coordination in the civil society and between government, civil society organizations, citizens and other stakeholders for designing, implementation, support, promotion and monitoring of OGP priorities and initiatives.

The Network will enable exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences of CSOs for building more functional public institutions.

Through its work and development, the Network will enable members to interconnect and upgrade individual open government initiatives (both on a local and national level), as well as create new projects through the Network as a platform.

Values

The core values of OGP and the network are contained in the *Open Government Partnership Declaration.*

The members of the Network individually and the Network as a whole share the core values of open government partnership:

- participation
- openness and
- accountability

The Network should maintain the spirit of civil society and provide space for open civic initiative.

The Network and its members do not engage in or support activities that promote and encourage hate speech, discrimination of any kind, and corruption.

The structure and existence of the Network should not depend on political, governmental and institutional changes.

Regarding the relationship with the authorities, the Network will have a combined approach: cooperation with the authorities in the creation and development of the NAP; and requiring the authorities and public institutions to be transparent and accountable and to enable citizens to participate in policy-making and decision-making processes.

Network members

- The network is open to participation of civil society organizations operating in different fields, and advocating for civic participation in public policy making, transparency and accountability of authorities.

- Network members should respect and enforce the same principles and rules that they expect of authorities and institutions: transparency, accountability, participation, gender equality, inclusion of marginalized groups, etc.

- Network members will participate in OGP meetings, will be on the OGP mailing list, contribute to OGP work, nominate OGP Council members.

Structure

The process of network formation is led by the Initiative Board comprised of 10 CSOs. The Initiative Board is a temporary body which will operate until the other network bodies are established.

Initiative Board members:

- Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (ESE), Skopje, Darko Antikj, coordinator of the program budget monitoring and analysis
- Association for Promotion and Development of Inclusive Society INCLUZIVA, Blagica Dimitrovska, president

- Center for Change Management (CUP); Martin Todevski, project manager
- Research, Communications and Development Association "Public", Klimentina Ilijevska, executive director
- Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC), Snežana Kamilovska Trpovska, project coordinator

- Center for Civil Communications CCC Skopje, German Filkov, president

- Foundation Open Society- Macedonia, Sunčica Kostovska-Petrovska, civil society consultant

- Reactor - Research in Action, Blažen Maleski, researcher

- Citizens' Association "Ljubeznost, Toni Stankovski, president

- Metamorphosis Foundation, Bardhyl Jashari, executive director

After establishing the Network, its structure will be defined. The Network will have its own Management Committee and Coordinator, with a defined mandate, role and manner of deciding.

There will be an opportunity for change and rotation in the structure for new members to be in line with new priorities and commitments in the action plan.

Management Committee:

Coordinator: