



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 29.11.2011
C(2011) 8630 final

ENGLISH VERSION ONLY

ANNEX TO

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 29.11.2011

**amending Decision C(2011)1842 on the Annual Action Programme 2011 for the
European Instrument for the promotion of Democracy and Human Rights**

ANNEX – AMENDMENT 1 TO THE EIDHR AAP 2011

Annex 12 Action Fiche 12 – EIDHR 2011 AAP

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	EU-Russia Civil Society Forum		
Total cost	EUR 400 000		
Method/ Management mode	Project approach – Centralised		
DAC-code, if applicable	15150	Sector	Democratic participation and civil society

2. Rationale

2.1. Sector context

Strategic framework

The final text of the Budget 2011 includes a special allocation for the implementation of the European Parliament Pilot Project Civil Society Forum EU-Russia. The aim of this EU-Russia Civil Society Forum is to establish regular and systematic contacts between civil society and non-governmental organisations in Russia and counterparts in the EU Member States. The forum will give the European and Russian civil society actors an opportunity to make their voice heard on topics of common interest. Forum meetings should be held on the fringes of the bi-annual EU-Russia summits. The pilot project is intended to enhance a bottom-up approach in European and Russian policy processes.

Although Russian civil society has continued to strengthen in recent years and a larger number of non state actors have emerged in Russia, it is generally accepted that the vast majority of them are still underdeveloped in terms of their organisational and operational capacities and therefore have a weak influence on public life.

Collaboration between the state authorities and civil society organizations is also underdeveloped and it has not yet reached a state where the local authorities are systematically funding non state actors to deliver services. Local authorities also tend to expect non state actors to provide education and training, for example, without any cost to the local authorities and continue to fail to budget for training and staff development – particularly in the social sector.

Assistance and funding available for civil society

International donor funding, which has helped Russian civil society in this sector to reach its current state, has significantly decreased in the last 5 years and has not yet been replaced by other sources of funding.

Increasing numbers of private Russian trusts and foundations are set up by the very wealthy or by highly visible public figures. In the future, they may begin to fill some of the funding gaps, but are at an early stage of development and their donor agenda is not very developmental or strategic, but is rather focused on direct support. Many of these private trusts are funding, for example, expensive operations for children with various illnesses. This appeals to a very basic instinct to help and obviously does help specific children, but does not encourage systemic reforms to the health system as a whole, nor does it strengthen civil society.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) was put onto the agenda from about 2006/7 by then President Putin and growing numbers of corporate entities have CSR strategies; they tend to be the international/global corporations based in Moscow. Russian businesses are only now starting to develop CSR and are also at very early stages with very basic donor agendas and high levels of mistrust of civil society organisations. Most Russian corporates either prefer to donate gifts in kind, or establish highly specialised trusts/foundations.

The Russian Government considers civil society to be 'socially significant' and there has been a recent legislative initiative to ensure federal funding for 'socially significant non-governmental organisations'. However funding has not yet been allocated and the regulatory framework to support this kind of funding is still emerging – some regions have such a framework, others have not even begun to develop one.

Human rights non state actors (NSAs) are less favored and the boundaries between human rights and social NSAs tend to be blurred meaning that all NSAs, unless they have been singled out as 'socially significant' and in receipt of state favors, are at risk at all times of possible attack from the Government. Instances have been reported of NSAs being raided by the Federal Security Service (FSB), the tax authorities and other arms of law enforcement on charges which have not proved to be based on fact. NSAs which are dependent largely on State funding are viewed as compromised in terms of their ability to play a role in advocacy and to take a rights-based approach to their programmes.

2.2. Complementary actions: existing mechanism/programmes of collaboration between Russian and European civil society organisations

The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum will anchor on past and ongoing work supporting collaboration between European and Russian civil society organisations, including the following programmes:

- The **EIDHR programme** has been implemented in Russia since 1997, with an annual budget of EUR 1.2 million. Starting from 2011 the annual EIDHR budget is increased to EUR 3. Grants have been given to a series of Russian NGOs following annual Calls for Proposals. Each year around 13 new projects addressing a number of human and political rights issues in Russia start implementation. Some of them include support for a Russia-wide coalition acting in a specific area (e.g. conscripts' rights, defence of human right defenders, etc.)

- In 2007-2009 in the framework of the EIDHR a project aimed at strengthening of the basis for civil society dialogue and democratic discourse through the development of nation-wide networking structure “**All-Russia Civic Congress**” was implemented by a network of Russian flagship NGOs headed by the oldest Russian NGO, Moscow Helsinki Group. The project was targeted on work with public organizations, union leaders, political activists, party leaders, academics, representatives of arts and culture, journalists, and members of the All-Russia Civic Congress. The Civic Congress became a central platform for debates and exchange of ideas, able to mobilise the country’s best intellectual resources. The structure continues to be active organising country-wide public campaigns, annual meetings of human rights NGOs, for example, to commemorate the Russian Constitution Day, 12 December and other events. The Congress website continues to be an active platform of communication (www.civitas.ru).
- An **IBPP** (Institutional Building Partnership Programme) civil society programme was successfully implemented in Russia during the period 2000-2009 with an annual budget of EUR 3 – 5 million. Grants were given to Russian and European NGOs for joint projects targeting social and economic and cultural rights issues in Russia following annual Calls for Proposals. Recent projects under the programme are currently ongoing, while EU funding for this programme has been phased out as of 2010. The IBPP Programme, both social and cultural windows, was specifically targeted at promoting and deepening networking of Russian and EU NGOs.
- In 2011 the gap left by the IBPP civil society programme has been partially closed by putting aside earmarked funds for Russia under the thematic programme on **Non State Actors**. This programme is now tailor-made for the needs of Russia. New projects following the first local call for proposals in mid 2011 are expected to start at the beginning of 2012.
- In 2010 funds were put aside under the Baltic Sea Initiative for a specific Call for Proposals targeting **Non State Actors and Local Authorities in the Baltic Sea region** within the 4 priorities of the Northern Dimension (transport and logistics, energy efficiency, health and social issues and culture).
- In both new programmes (Non-State Actors thematic budget line and the Baltic Sea programmes) special emphasis will be put on the networking and capacity building elements of each project.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The **overall objective** of this action is to enhance regular and systematic contacts between civil society and NGOs in Russia with counterparts in the EU. The Forum should give European and Russian civil society actors an opportunity to raise their voice on topics of common interest and in that perspective, should held meetings in the fringe of the of the bi-annual EU-Russia summits.

The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum will serve as an institutional platform for regular, systematic and sustainable contacts between Russian and European NGOs. It should strengthen the existing networks developed by the NGO community individually and with EU-provided support.

The **specific objectives** of the project are:

- To contribute to the strengthening of an **EU-Russia civil society forum** on the basis of a bottom up approach that will be composed of independent non-state actors (NSAs).
- To increase exchange of information and policy dialogue between EU and Russian NSAs related to **topics of common interest** (e.g. human rights, promotion of the rule of law, strengthening the legal environment, inter-ethnic tolerance, environment protection, promotion of rights of the child, social inclusion).
- To **strengthen the institutional capacity of involved NGOs** to enable them to be more proactive; to strengthen cooperation and exchange of best practices in fund raising, lobbying, public campaigns between European and Russian NGOs, advocacy, including in particular towards EU-Russia relations and structures, notably in respect of the Partnership for Modernisation and the Common Spaces dialogues.

The project is intended to foster a **bottom-up approach** based on the initiative and coordination of civil society actors themselves in order to enhance their voice and ownership in European and Russian policy processes. Therefore, the action will bring together leading sustainable NGOs of Russia and EU as well as local level grass root organisations and activists.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The strengthening of a vibrant partnership among the EU and Russian NGOs that adequately represent the civil society community on both sides, both geographically and thematically.

The selected partnership should present a methodology that encompasses various activities implemented regionally and with a thematic approach, such as:

- Facilitating contact, consultation and discussion between different stakeholders;
- Drafting of policy or legislation recommendations;
- Development and maintaining of communication and information dissemination channels (websites, bulletins, public debates, etc), dissemination of information, monitoring activities, publications, and public awareness raising;
- Capacity building (strengthening networks, training, etc);
- Advocacy, including vis-à-vis legislative and regional structures and taking into account the EU-Russia Partnership for Modernisation;
- Involvement and encouragement of community groups or initiatives;
- Organisation of conferences, workshops and seminars as part of the networking of NGOs;

This is an indicative and not exhaustive list and it will be up to the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum to define its activities as part of a bottom up approach.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The project could face the following potential risks: insufficient political will; insufficient commitment and support from local actors including national and regional; bureaucratic/structural/organisational difficulties.

The project itself, designed as a partnership between European and Russian Civil Society, is an attempt to mitigate the difficulties encountered by the Civil Society.

3.4. Crosscutting issues

All the topics of common interest that are human rights, promotion of the rule of law, strengthening the legal environment, inter-ethnic tolerance, environment protection, promotion of rights of the child, social inclusion

3.5. Stakeholders

State and local authorities, non state actors, legislatures, courts, national institutions, civil society, regional and international organisations.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

Centralised management

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

1) Contracts

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

2) Specific rules for grants

The essential selection and award criteria for the award of grants are laid down in the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions. They are established in accordance with the principles set out in [Title VI 'Grants' of the Financial Regulation applicable to the General Budget].

4.3. Budget and calendar

Estimated total cost :		EUR 400 000
------------------------	--	-------------

This Action will be financed from budget line 190406.

The activities are scheduled to start at the end of 2011 with an indicative duration of at least 18 months but will not exceed 24 months.

4.4. Performance monitoring

Monitoring will be done by reference to standard procedures. Project monitoring and evaluation will be based on periodic assessment of progress on specified projects results and project objectives.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

The Action will be evaluated and audited according to standard procedures.

4.6. Communication and visibility

Visibility of EU-funded action will be in accordance with the EU Visibility Guidelines. Close cooperation with the EU Delegation in Moscow will be ensured and reference to the EU contribution will be made in all events organised under the project.