

Terms of Reference

Object of the contract: Study on alternative revenue streams and sustainability models for civil society organisations working on democracy strengthening

Project: Sida Contribution No. 17388 - "The Strategic Partnership Approach to a Conducive Environment (SPACE) Initiative"

1. Purpose

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is contracting a Consultant / Team of consultants / an Organisation / a Company (hereafter: the "Service Provider") to conduct a study on alternative revenue streams and sustainability models for civil society organisations working on democracy strengthening.

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is a non-profit organisation supporting democracy worldwide. It is a unique partnership comprising European democracy support organisations present in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America. EPD works inside and outside Europe as democracy is a universal aspiration and the contemporary challenges and opportunities for democracy are global in scope. More information about EPD is available at www.epd.eu.

2. Background information about the project

Across many regions, civil society organisations (CSOs) working on democracy, democratic governance, accountability and citizen participation are facing an increasingly constrained funding environment. Traditional sources of international development assistance are declining or shifting priorities, while domestic funding opportunities remain limited in many contexts. At the same time, political and regulatory pressures often restrict CSOs' access to funding or limit their ability to operate.

To remain effective and independent, many organisations are exploring new organisational and financial models that allow them to diversify their resource base and reduce dependence on traditional donor funding. These may include social enterprise approaches, service provision models, membership and community-based funding, philanthropy and diaspora engagement, as well as partnerships with private actors or digital fundraising approaches.

While a growing body of literature exists on financial sustainability and social enterprise in the non-profit sector, there is comparatively limited analysis focused specifically on CSOs working on democracy, governance and citizen participation, particularly in the ODA recipient countries. Organisations working in these fields often operate in politically sensitive environments and face additional constraints related to regulation, political pressure and reputational considerations when engaging with political actors or public institutions.

Within the framework of its grant programme supporting civic space and democratic participation, EPD seeks to commission an expert to review the current state of practice in alternative resource mobilisation and organisational sustainability for such organisations. The assignment will help inform the design of a grant stream aimed at strengthening the resilience and long-term sustainability of CSOs operating in challenging environments, and result in a practitioners oriented publication.

The research is commissioned in the framework of the Strategic Partnership Approach to a Conducive Environment Initiative, funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), which aims to foster a supportive environment for civil society organisations (CSOs) by enhancing civic space in democratising countries, promoting collaboration between CSOs and public/private actors, and developing sustainable funding models to bolster CSO resilience.

3. Objectives

The objective of this analysis is to provide an overview of existing knowledge, practices and tools related to alternative revenue streams and sustainability models for civil society organisations working on democracy, governance and citizen participation, with a particular focus on organisations operating in ODA recipient countries, in particular in countries undergoing democratic openings.

Based on this analysis, the Service Provider will develop practical recommendations to inform the design of a grant-making approach aimed at supporting CSOs to test and develop new organisational and financial models that strengthen their resilience and sustainability.

The assignment will consist of a structured review combining desk research, practitioner consultations and analytical synthesis.

3.1 Mapping of existing knowledge and resources

The Service Provider will conduct a review of existing literature and practical resources related to alternative revenue generation and sustainability models for CSOs engaging in democracy support activities.

The review should result in a structured overview of relevant studies, toolboxes and practical guidance materials that can serve as a reference for EPD and its partners.

3.2 Identification and analysis of alternative revenue models

Based on the literature review and available examples, the expert will identify and document a taxonomy of different approaches through which CSOs have sought to diversify their financial resources or strengthen their organisational sustainability, and make a case study of different models and analyse how they could be replicated in other contexts.

Possible models may include, among others, social enterprise or hybrid organisational models, fee-based services such as consultancy or training provision, membership-based or community funding approaches, philanthropic fundraising including engagement with high-net-worth individuals, diaspora engagement and transnational fundraising initiatives, corporate partnerships and broader private sector engagement, as well as digital fundraising and crowdfunding approaches. For each category, the analysis should consider the relevance for CSOs working on democracy, governance and citizen participation, the enabling conditions and contextual factors, the typical organisational capacities required, the potential risks and limitations, and examples of implementation where available.

3.3 Practitioner consultations

To complement the literature review, the expert may conduct a limited number of consultations with practitioners and experts. These consultations may include representatives of EPD member organisations, particularly those with experience supporting civil society organisations in politically sensitive environments, leaders of civil society organisations experimenting with alternative organisational or funding models in democratising ODA-recipient countries, experts working on civil society sustainability and resource mobilisation, and representatives of relevant donor initiatives or support programmes.

The consultations should help identify practical lessons, emerging trends and challenges faced by CSOs seeking to diversify their funding and organisational models.

3.4 Strategic guidance for grant design

Based on the analysis, the expert will develop recommendations that can inform the design of a grant scheme aimed at supporting experimentation with alternative organisational and revenue models.

This should include key academic and practitioner studies, as well as guidance documents, toolboxes and methodological resources, donor programmes supporting CSO sustainability and financial diversification, and relevant case studies and documented practices. Particular attention should be given to resources addressing CSOs working on democracy, democratic governance, accountability and citizen participation, organisations operating in politically sensitive contexts, and organisations in ODA-recipient countries.

The Service Provider should also propose an outline of sample guidelines that could be used for a call for proposals under such a grant stream.

4. Expected results

The assignment is expected to produce the following outputs.

4.1. Resource mapping (intermediate note)

A structured list of relevant studies, reports, toolboxes and programmes related to CSO sustainability and alternative funding models.

4.2. Analytical paper (main deliverable)

A concise analytical report presenting an overview of the current state of practice, a typology of alternative revenue models used by CSOs, and case studies illustrating a selection of these models with a global perspective. It should also outline key lessons learned and constraints, as well as the implications for CSOs working on democracy strengthening. A strong understanding of the specific challenges faced by CSOs in this sector, distinct from those encountered in other fields, will be essential.

Indicative length: approximately 20–30 pages. The format should be publishable to participate in the knowledge sharing in the field - specific instructions will be communicated to the selected tenderer.

4.3. Strategic recommendations for grant design

A short document outlining key design principles for a grant scheme on CSO resilience, suggested priority intervention areas, and illustrative eligibility and selection criteria.

5. Scope of service delivery

The assignment will be conducted over an approximate period of June 2026 to August 2026 (the final dates will be noted in the contract).

Throughout the assignment, the Service Provider is required to coordinate closely with EPD Programmes Manager and provide regular updates on progress. Coordination with other relevant stakeholders may also be necessary depending on the nature of activities.

6. Remuneration

The Service Provider will be remunerated with a maximum total fee of EUR 10,000.00 for the delivery of all outputs and deliverables specified in Section 4. The fee is inclusive of all applicable taxes and covers all services required to produce the agreed outputs.

7. Key qualification criteria

Prospective tenderers must meet the following administrative and professional requirements to be considered for this assignment:

- A proven track-record least 10 years of relevant professional experience in democracy support and civil society development;
- Experience in drafting research demonstrated by at least 3 analytical reports;
- Registered legal entity or ability to enter into contracts with EPD

8. Tendering procedure

8.1 Application Documents

Prospective tenderers are invited to submit the complete application package as separate documents as detailed below. Incomplete applications will not be considered. The tender package should include:

1. A **technical offer**, consisting of a CV of the expert(s) engaged in the tender and the filled in and signed [application form](#);
2. A **financial offer**, consisting of the total proposed fee for the delivery of all outputs and deliverables defined in Article 4.

8.2 Deadline and selection modalities

Candidates should submit the full application package via email to jobs@epd.eu, with the title of the object of the contract in the subject line, by Sunday, 14 June 2026, 23:59 CET. Any questions regarding the recruitment process must be submitted by Monday, 8 June 2026, 23:59 CET to the same email address. Shortlisted tenderers might be invited for an interview. The final selection will be confirmed by the Evaluation Committee.

8.3 Administrative Criteria

- The candidate fully meets all mandatory requirements specified in Section 7 (Key Qualification Criteria).
- The application package is complete, with both the Technical Offer and Financial Offer provided as separate, fully completed documents.
- The application has been submitted on or before the deadline indicated above, in accordance with the submission instructions provided in 8.2.

The Service Provider warrants that it is NOT:

- Bankrupt, subject to insolvency proceedings, or in an arrangement with creditors.
- Guilty of grave professional misconduct, fraud, corruption, or any illegal activity detrimental to Sweden's or Sida's interests.
- In breach of obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions.
- Listed on the European Union consolidated list of persons, groups and entities subject to EU restrictive measures, or on any applicable United Nations sanctions list.
- Engaged in activities involving terrorism, violent extremism, or undermining fundamental human rights (including SEAH - Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment).
- **By applying, the Service Provider certifies on its honour that none of these situations apply.**

7.4 Evaluation Criteria

The application packages will be evaluated using the criteria below:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Score</u>
Overall relevance the technical application	[40]

Soundness of the strategy and methodological approach	[25]
Previous experience in the field of democracy support and civil society development	[25]
Quality-price ratio	[10]
<u>Overall total score</u>	<u>100</u>

9. Data notice

EPD collects and treats your private data in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 i.e. hereby requests personal data only for procurement purposes, pursuing a legitimate interest in a reasonable way, and will delete them after it is judged no longer necessary to archive. Applications may need to be provided to the Funding Agency to ensure compliance with procurement rules. By applying, you authorise EPD to treat your personal data accordingly.