



► TUSEV LOCAL CONSULTATION MEETING

01.11.2012

Minerva Han, Istanbul

Meeting Type	: TUSEV ISTANBUL LOCAL CONSULTATION MEETING
Date	: 01.11.2012
Place	: İstanbul, Turkey
TUSEV Representatives	: Zeynep Selen Yılmaz, Tevfik Basak Ersen, Liana Varon, Semanur Karaman

A Brief History of Civil Society-Public Sector Cooperation from the perspective of Participant CSOs

- 1961- The history of CSO Public Sector cooperation started with the State Planning Organization in 1961 as CSOs expressed opinions regarding public matters in the Joint Commission's meetings.
- 1991- Rio Conference was a turning point for CSO public sector dialogue due to the fact that the public sector realized the importance of CSOs in democratization processes. Turkish public officials realized the importance of CSOs as stakeholders via observing other country's CSO-public sector relations.
- 1996- The HABITAT conference brought civil society organizations and public institutions around the same table. The meeting created a suitable environment for discussions regarding civil society public sector dialogue and brought in the term "governance" to the affairs of CSO- public sector relations in Turkey.
- 1996 - The Susurluk process which made corrupt relations between government representatives, the mafia and the so called "deep state" evident, started a process where CSOs and the society in general expressed demands towards a more transparent regime. However, the

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process quickly turned into a polarization between the secular and the religious segments of the society.

- 1997- The February 28 process which is regarded as a postmodern military coup in Turkish political history targeted certain CSOs, as public institutions openly framed and antagonized CSO members and their activities. After the February 28 process, the public sector started perceiving CSOs as “government friendly” and/or “others” causing splits and segmentations among CSOs and their relationship with public institutions.
- 1999- The 1999 earthquake helped the public sector realize the importance of CSOs due to the public sector’s lack of ability to handle the post crises situation especially in disaster management.
- 2001- The 2001 economic crises was followed up by a series of reforms which aimed to sustain transparency and accountability in the financial sector. This demand has been voiced by CSOs since the Susurluk process and continued to be an important issue on their political agenda.
- 2002- The local governance reform made it mandatory to include CSOs and universities in the Advisory Committees of local governments. The establishment of city councils in 400 municipalities was welcomed but the councils do not work to their full potential as of date.
- 2005-2005- The Civil Society Public Sector Cooperation Project (SKIP) attempted to develop a code of conduct which would regulate Civil society public sector dialogue and facilitate their collaboration. However, the project did not fulfill its expected results due to lack of commitment and support from relevant public bodies including the Office of the Prime Minister.

Experiences of Participant CSOs Regarding Their Cooperation with Public Institutions

• Women’s Rights Organizations

90s→ Although there were no mechanisms or a framework to regulate CSO-public sector relations, women rights organizations could still communicate their demands and cooperate with public institutions through assertion and consistent advocacy.

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2002-2007 → This period witnessed groundbreaking legislative changes and achievements. Within this period women rights organizations communicated their demands in a more organized manner through platforms and as an end result “The Protection of the Family and the Anti-Violence Legislation Against Women” was passed. 2007 and after → The public sector created its “own” civil society. Civil society organizations are now perceived as two separate categories: “government friendly CSOs” and “others”. The government prefers to establish dialogue and cooperation with the first group and disregards the opinions and demands of the other.

Human Rights Organizations

Representatives of human rights organizations expressed that there is very little cooperation between them and the public sector. They stated that even when they cooperate with the government (as in the case of the preparation of the Anti-Discrimination Legislation) their opinions are taken into account up to a certain level. Once the legislation is transferred to the Office of the Prime Minister, the process loses its transparency and CSOs are not made aware about the fate of the finalized version of the legislation.

Youth Organizations

The representative from the youth organization expressed that in order to facilitate civil society public sector dialogue; CSOs should not only do advocacy work but also monitoring. Also, the youth organization representative expressed that they try to involve members of youth from different backgrounds (civil society, public and private sectors) in their activities to bring them together and create a more diverse environment.

CSOs which work on Lobbying & Effecting Legislative Processes and Establishing Dialogue among Different Parties

The participants of the local consultation meeting were not limited to rights based CSOs CSOs which do research and advocacy to create a more enabling environment for CSOs to take part in decision making mechanisms, CSOs which specialize in lobbying or establishing platforms for dialogue were also among participants. They stated that workshops, seminars and publications were produced to better inform actors of CSOs on how they can effectively take part in decision making and legislative processes. They

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also expressed that CSOs are not fully aware of the existing legislation and how they can effectively use different stages of legislation making during their advocacy efforts.

Recommendations of CSO Representatives to further CSO-Public Sector Dialogue

- Commissions within the Parliament should share information regarding all stages of legislation making with CSOs through the formation of e-groups.
- CSOs should meet more often to discuss the political context in Turkey and invest more time and effort in developing effective strategies to communicate their demands to public institutions.
- CSOs should benefit from social media to a greater extent. Also, CSOs should question if their organizational methods are no longer relevant and in fact archaic, through studying international best practices in using social media to mobilize masses.
- Civil society organizations should develop mechanism regarding monitoring and auditing the activities of public institutions.
- Civil society organizations should cooperate with international human rights organizations to attract international support to their causes.
- Civil society organizations should evaluate problems through taking into account not only the people they include in their organizational capacities, but also through the lenses of people they exclude.
- CSOs should engage more into lobbying activities to have an affect both on bureaucratic and legislative processes. *The Regulation on the Methods and Principles of Preparing Legislation* should be prioritized in the agendas of CSOs, since this regulation is the fundamental legal framework which shapes all levels of participation into legislation making mechanisms.

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