

Promoting civil participation
in democratic decision-making in Ukraine
Council of Europe project



Government structures promoting civil participation and cooperation with NGOs in policy making

Comparative analysis

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INTRODUCTION

The comparative analysis presents examples of governmental organizational structures responsible for promoting government-NGO cooperation and stakeholder engagement in policy making in general. The questions it answers for each of the selected countries are:

1. Is there a designated national authority (an institution, a structural unit within the government) that is responsible for implementing standards for interaction with NGOs and involvement of citizens in decision-making and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect?
 - 1.1. When was the authority established?
 - 1.2. What are its functions in relation to interaction with NGOs and civil participation in decision-making?
 - 1.3. What is the structure, who heads the authority?
2. Are there structural units or specific persons within ministries or departments that are responsible for the engagement of NGOs and public consultations?
 - 2.1. Are these units responsible for this area of work only?
 - 2.2. Are these units typical for all ministries/departments?
 - 2.3. Is this system of units coherent, coordinated (is the model the same for all ministries)?
 - 2.4. What is the structure of the unit and the (approximate) number of staff members?
3. Are there special networks and platforms for interaction with NGOs that were created or promoted by the government?
 - 3.1. Which government body ensures their activity?
 - 3.2. What are the tasks of the platform(s)?
 - 3.3. How can NGOs get involved, what are the advantages?

In Western Europe, specific “central” governmental units, departments or agencies that would be responsible for fostering the development of NGOs and their cooperation with the government and in the decision-making there are quite rare. The reason may be found in the long and well-established tradition of organized civil society and government cooperation with stakeholders. Accordingly, there is no special need for a central coordination of government-NGO relations. Managing of such cooperation is usually the responsibility of individual ministries. A rare exception is the UK.

The situation is different in the Eastern Europe, where due to historical reasons (socialist histories in the period 1945-90) both civil society and government-NGO relations are underdeveloped. For the last twenty years, there has therefore been a trend towards the establishment of central government units responsible for promoting the development of NGOs and government-NGO relations in policy making.

This has in many cases been encouraged by the European Union and various international/inter-governmental organizations.

It should also be noted at the outset that in European countries the responsibility for strengthening civil participation and the responsibility for strengthening the state-NGO relations are often assigned to different central bodies. As a consequence, even in countries where there are special units/authorities responsible for strengthening governmental cooperation with NGOs in policy making, these units are at the same time usually not responsible for civil participation as such, as this responsibility is usually assigned to various “better regulation” units, department or agencies.

The analysis covers six European countries. Three are EU members (Croatia, Estonia, Slovenia), two are EU candidates (Serbia and Albania), and the UK is included as the European country with the longest tradition of systematic strengthening of civil participation and cooperation between NGOs and the government. Given that the analysis is prepared to assist the Ukrainian administration, the analysis deliberately included those countries (with the exception of the UK), where “modern” civil society development, government cooperation with CSO and civil participation are relatively young “phenomena” and only started in the 1990s, as in Ukraine.

ALBANIA

- 1. Is there a designated national authority (an institution, a structural unit within the government) that is responsible for implementing standards for interaction with NGOs and involvement of citizens in decision-making and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect?**

The role of fostering civil participation and cooperation with NGOs and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect is in Albania divided between the Office of the Prime Minister¹ (OPM) (and its departments) and the Agency for the Support of Civil Society².

1.1. When was the authority established?

The Agency for the Support of Civil Society, that operates as an independent “central budgetary public entity”, was established in 2009, with the Law Nr. 10 093 from 9. 3. 2009.

The Office of the Prime Minister is a ministerial level executive agency within the Government of Albania.

1.2. What are its functions in relation to interaction with NGOs and civil participation in decision-making?

According to its founding law and statutes the Agency for the Support of Civil Society is responsible for “encouraging the sustainable development of civil society and the creation of favourable conditions for civic initiatives for the good of and in the interest of the public”. Accordingly, the agency’s tasks include:

- to encourage the cooperation with non-profit organisations, who have the object of their work the role of fighting against the corruption, against trafficking of human being and her victims, against domestic violence and the violence against children as well.
- encouragement of the public in volunteerism activity and participation in community development as well.
- to promote and strengthen the sustainability of non-profit organisations
- development of inter-sector and international cooperation with civil society organization.
- to increase the role and influence of public and civil society organization. dh)
- development of civic initiatives and engagement in non-profit organizations.
- to increase the influence of civil society in policy and decision making.³

However, the agency has no direct role in the implementation or the supervision of the Law No. 146/2014 on Notification and Public Consultation⁴ which is the base legislation for civil participation in decision-making in Albania. The central quality control of civil participation is namely not regulated in any way by the Law on Public Notification and Consultation. The law only foresees a central compliance mechanism by stipulating that »(if) a stakeholder thinks that a public body has violated its right to information and public consultation (...), the stakeholder may appeal (...) to the Commissioner on the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data, within 30 days from the date of the approval of the act.” Hence, the Commissioner’s role in quality control can only take

¹ <http://www.kryeministria.al/>

² <http://www.amshc.gov.al/web/index-en.php>

³ Statute of the Agency for the Support of Civil Society, Art. 5, http://www.amshc.gov.al/web/doc/ligjore/Statuti_i_AMSHC-english.pdf

⁴ https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8099/file/Albania_law_notification_public_consultation_2014_en.pdf

place retrospectively and on the basis of an appeal. On its own, it cannot initiate any review of the public consultation procedures.

However, even if the central quality control of public consultations is not addressed by the law, the provisions of Governmental Rules of Procedures require from ministries to consult their draft policies and regulation, and task the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers (CoM) to check whether the ministries uphold the procedural rules set by Governmental Rules of Procedure for policy development. The quality control of public consultation is hence the responsibility of the Secretary General of CoM. At the operational level, according to the PM Order 93/2012, the quality control of public consultation of strategic documents falls under the Department for Development and Good Governance. For draft regulations (laws and bylaws) the responsible authority (i.e. department or unit of the OPM) is however not set.

1.3. What is the structure, who heads the authority?

The Agency for the support of civil society is headed by the Executive Director, appointed by the Agency's Supervisory Board. The supervisory board is appointed by the Council of Ministers. It has 9 members, 4 representing the Government and 5 representing civil society organisations.

The Department for Development and Good Governance of the Office of the Prime minister is led by the General Director. Internally, civil participation falls within the scope of its Development Policy and Good Governance Unit, that is headed by a Director.

2. Are there structural units or specific persons within ministries or departments that are responsible for the engagement of NGOs and public consultations?

Yes, according to the Law on Public Notification and Consultation from 2014 every ministry and other non-central public institution (i.e. each public body that develops regulations and policies) needs to appoint a coordinator for public notification and coordination⁵. According to the law, the coordinator is tasked with "general coordination and administration of the work for the purposes of guaranteeing the right for public notification and consultation, set forth in this law."⁶

2.1. Are these units responsible for this area of work only?

No, coordinators for public notification and coordination are as per rule also tasked with other duties. Their range is quite diverse. Some are members of policy teams, other work in communication departments, some in archives, etc.

2.2. Are these units typical for all ministries/departments?

Yes, according to the law they need to be appointed at every institution that develops regulations and policies.

2.3. Is this system of units coherent, coordinated (is the model the same for all ministries)?

The network of coordinators is informally coordinated by the Development Policy and Good Governance Unit of the Department for Development and Good Governance of the OPM.

⁵ Idem, Art. 10.

⁶ Ibid.

2.4. What is the structure of the units and the number of staff members?

There is one person per institution appointed as the coordinator for public notification and coordination.

3. Are there special networks and platforms for interaction with NGOs that were created or promoted by the government?

In 2015, a National Council for Civil Society⁷ (NCCS) was established with the Law no. 119/2015 "On the Establishment and Functioning of the National Council for Civil Society"⁸.

3.1. Which government body ensures their activity?

The work of the NCCS is (according to the law) assisted and supported by the Agency for the Support of Civil Society.

3.2. What are the tasks of the platform(s)?

The responsibilities of the NCCS are:

- "1. Advises the Council of Ministers on establishment of state policies to promote sustainable development of civil society.
2. Proposes to the Council of Ministers the principal programs to promote sustainable development of civil society and the inclusion of this sector on issues related to the economic and social reforms, European integration, respect of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and strengthening democracy and the rule of law in the country.
3. Advises the Council of Ministers on legislative improvements that affect the development of civil society in Albania and their inclusion in public decision making.
4. Provides recommendations on public policies related to or affecting the activities and development of civil society organizations, and their involvement in the inter-sectoral cooperation.
5. Expresses opinions to the Council of Ministers and to the ASCS on the planning of priorities regarding the distribution of public funds, in support to the programs and projects of civil society organizations, as well as in support of the annual reports analysis of ministries and other governmental agencies for financed projects and programs.
6. Offers suggestions to the Council of Ministers for the setting of priorities regarding European Union funds or other international institutions funds for Albania that affect the development of civil society."

3.3. How can NGOs get involved, what are the advantages?

NCCS consists of 27 members, of which 13 are representatives of public institutions, 13 are representatives of CSOs, and 1 represents the business community and is the member of the National Economic Council.

The representatives of the CSOs are elected independently by the CSOs themselves. The law stipulates "that CSOs choose as their representatives in the NCCS, four representatives for each of the following sectors of civil society:

- a. Democratization, rule of law, human rights and integration into the EU;

⁷ http://www.amshc.gov.al/kkshc/?page_id=131&lang=en

⁸ http://www.amshc.gov.al/web/doc/ligjore/LIGJ_Nr._10093_date_9.3.2009-english.pdf

- b. Economic, territorial and environmental development;
- c. Welfare, social services, health protection and life quality improvement."

CROATIA

1. **Is there a designated national authority (an institution, a structural unit within the government) that is responsible for implementing standards for interaction with NGOs and involvement of citizens in decision-making and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect?**

Croatia has a specialised body tasked with developing and promoting cooperation of the Croatian Government with NGOs, namely the Office for Cooperation with NGOs, an expert unit of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The Office coordinates the work of ministries, central state offices, Croatian Government offices and state administrative organizations, as well as administrative bodies at local level in connection with monitoring and improving their cooperation with the non-governmental sector in Croatia.⁹

Until 2019, the Office was the main authority in charge of the implementation of standards of civil participation in decision-making. In 2019 this area was moved to the competence of the Government's Office for Legislation.

An important role is also played by the Information Commissioner (IC), who is responsible for the implementation of the Right to Access to Information Act (RAIA), which, among other things, defines the obligation for government bodies to implement consultation with the public in the process of preparation of laws and other regulations. The IC conducts regular inspections of government bodies in relation to the implementation of the RAIA and can as a result take measures, for example prohibit actions government bodies that are in breach of RAIA. Citizen may file a complaint to the IC if a public consultation was not implemented when it should have been or was not implemented according to the rules.¹⁰

1.1. When was the authority established?

The Office for Cooperation with NGOs was established in 1998. The Office for Legislation was established in 2011.

1.2. What are its functions in relation to interaction with NGOs and civil participation in decision-making?

The Office for NGOs implements various activities that support NGOs and promote cooperation with the Government – it prepares and monitors the implementation of the *National Strategy for Creating an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development*, coordinates the work of the public administration to harmonize the policy and standards for funding of CSO, offers expert support to government in relation to CSOs, including cooperation with CSOs and their inclusion in decision-making, it also builds capacities and supports CSO (in the form of trainings, consultations) etc.

Until 2019, while still in charge of implementation of standards on public consultations, the Office for NGOs also issued Guidelines on the implementation of the *Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in Procedures of Adopting Laws, Other Regulations and Acts*, which was adopted in 2009, it prepared tools for public officials (e.g. manuals and forms for public consultations) and offered guidance and support to public officials in this area. Since the adoption of the Code on consultations, some of the key tasks of the Office for NGOs were:

⁹ <https://udruga.gov.hr/about-us/86>

¹⁰ <https://www.pristupinfo.hr/djelokrug/inspekcijski-nadzor/?lang=en>

- the development of a systematic training program for appointed consultation coordinators in government bodies and offices,
- regular monitoring of the implementation of the Code on Consultation and preparation of annual reports (includes detailed annual reports on the implementation),
- development and improvement of the central national internet portal for public consultation (e-Savjetovanja).

In mid-2019, these tasks were moved to the Government's Office for Legislation.

1.3. What is the structure, who heads the authority?

The Office for NGOs is headed by a director and has three departments (Department for Strategic planning, programming and informing; Department for implementation of EU programmes and international cooperation and Department for financial management and quality). The Office for Legislation is also headed by a director and is divided into 6 units.

2. Are there structural units or specific persons within ministries or departments that are responsible for the engagement of NGOs and public consultations?

Croatia has a system of consultation coordinators in place within the government. These are individual persons in ministries and government offices who were trained in the implementation of standards for public consultations. Consultation coordinators must have key information on all current legislative proposals of their department/office, as well as the process of consultations regarding those proposals, and are constantly accessible to the public as well as the competent body drafting the law or other regulations for questions and support regarding public consultations.

2.1. Are these units responsible for this area of work only?

Yes.

2.2. Are these units typical for all ministries/departments?

Yes. The system of coordinators for consultations in government bodies in Croatia was introduced with the adoption of the Code on consultations in 2009, which required that all central government bodies appoint a consultation coordinator.

2.3. Is this system of units coherent, coordinated (is the model the same for all ministries)?

Yes. The Office for Legislation (and previously the Office for NGOs) acts as the coordinator or the network of consultation coordinators and ensures training and support of the coordinators as well as maintains active communication with them, provides information and support, organizes annual meetings etc.

2.4. What is the structure of such a unit and the (approximate) number of staff members?

According to the Code on consultation each governmental body is required to appoint 1 coordinator.

3. Are there special networks and platforms for interaction with NGOs that were created or promoted by the government?

In 2009, the Government established a special Council for Civil Society Development¹¹, an advisory body to the Government, which works towards developing cooperation between civil society and the Government. The Council has 37 members out of which 17 representatives of relevant state administrative bodies and the Croatian Government offices, 14 representatives of non-governmental, non-profit organizations, 3 representatives of civil society from foundations, trade unions and employers' associations and 3 representatives of national associations of local and regional self-governance.¹²

3.1. Which government body ensures its activity?

The Council is logistically and administratively assisted by the Office for NGOs.

3.2. What are the tasks of the platform?

Some of the main tasks of the Council are:

- participation in the continuous monitoring and analysis of public policy that relates to and/or influences the development of civil society in the Republic of Croatia and cross-sectoral cooperation;
- giving opinions to the Government of the Republic of Croatia on draft regulations affecting the development of civil society in the Republic of Croatia and in organizing appropriate ways of involving and participating civil society organizations in discussions on regulations, strategies and programs;
- co-operation in the planning of the priorities of national programs for granting financial support to projects and programs of civil society organizations from state budget funds, and analysis of annual reports of ministries and offices of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on funded projects and programs of civil society organizations;
- participating in the programming and prioritization of the use of EU funds;
- performing tasks in accordance with the National strategy for creating and enabling environment for civil society;
- nomination and election of representatives of civil society organizations to committees, advisory or working bodies at the request of government bodies, government offices and other public authorities.

3.3. How can NGOs get involved, what are the advantages?

There is an open procedure for the selection of members of the Council. All NGOs can participate by nominating their candidate and/or voting in an election carried out by the Office for NGOs. The procedure is important for NGOs in order to democratically select the best candidates to represent NGOs in different areas of operation, but there are no particular advantages for NGOs nominating the candidate, as the elected candidates should represent all NGOs in their area of operation.

¹¹ <https://udruga.gov.hr/savjet-za-razvoj-civilnoga-drustva/120>

¹² <https://udruga.gov.hr/the-council-for-the-civil-society-development/163>

ESTONIA

- 1. Is there a designated national authority (an institution, a structural unit within the government) that is responsible for implementing standards for interaction with NGOs and involvement of citizens in decision-making and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect?**

The Government Office promotes stakeholder involvement in decision-making across the government, including by organising trainings and coordinating a network of public consultation advisors across ministries.

The Ministry of the Interior is tasked with analysing, planning and coordinating state policy in the field of civil society, including ensuring more effective cooperation between state structures, local governments and NGOs. This includes the implementation of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (EKAK) and subsequent strategies for the development of CSOs, which include measures for the promotion of cooperation between the government and NGOs.

1.1. When was the authority established?

Over the years, several units and individual officials within the Government Office have been in charge of tasks related to promotion of civil participation. The current program of coordination of stakeholder consultations advisors has been operating since 2007.

The Ministry of the Interior has also implemented its work related to inclusion of CSOs in decision making within different departments. It has been in charge of strategic development of civil society based the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept since its establishment in 2002 and has been running the Joint Committee on EKAK (a special advisory body which promotes inclusion of NGOs in decision-making) since 2003.

1.2. What are its functions in relation to interaction with NGOs and civil participation in decision-making?

The Government Office is in charge of various task in support of the functioning of the government, but also plays the most active role in the promotion of public consultation standards; it does so by coordinating and supporting public consultation advisors at ministries and departments, organizing trainings and by monitoring and preparing reports on the implementation of public consultations.

The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the preparation and implementation of strategic documents, namely the Civil Society Development Plan, which includes goals and measures connected to participation in decision-making and cooperation between government and NGOs. It mainly promotes involvement of NGOs in decision-making by supporting and coordinating the work of the Joint committee for the implementation of EKAK, which advocates for better cooperation and participation of the NGO sector and the public in decision-making processes.

1.3. What is the structure, who heads the authority?

The Government Office consists of nine different units and is headed by the Secretary of State.

There have been several units dealing with the area of development of Civil Society, previously the Minister for Regional Affairs, now the Civil Society and Adaptation Policy Department which is led by the Undersecretary for Population, Civil Society and Family Policy.

2. Are there structural units or specific persons within ministries or departments that are responsible for the engagement of NGOs and public consultations?

Since 2007, every ministry has an appointed stakeholder consultation coordinator/advisor. Some ministries hire specialised staff for the implementation of public consultations /stakeholder engagement, especially when crucial legislation and strategic documents are to be adopted.

2.1. Are these units responsible for this area of work only?

No, stakeholder consultation advisers are different persons/officials at the ministries, which perform other tasks within the ministry, but go through special training in stakeholder engagement and are the go to person for all policy-makers in the Ministry.

2.2. Are these units typical for all ministries/departments?

Stakeholder consultation advisers are in all ministries.

The practice of forming additional teams / employing additional advisors for public consultations is not typical for all ministries.

2.3. Is this system of units coherent, coordinated (is the model the same for all ministries)?

The network of stakeholder consultation advisers is coordinated by the Government Office, which trains consultation advisers, holds regular meetings (a few times a year) and offers them support in the implementation of tasks regarding public consultations. The level of commitment and expertise, however, may vary, as the network is focused on support and different types of officials are appointed in different ministries.

2.4. What is the structure of the units and the number of staff members?

There is one person per ministry appointed as a stakeholder consultation adviser.

3. Are there special networks and platforms for interaction with NGOs that were created or promoted by the government?

There is a Joint Committee for the implementation of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept.¹³ It is composed of representatives of each ministry and NGOs from different fields. Committee has various tasks related to implementation of EKAK, including regarding for participation and involvement of NGOs in decision-making.

3.1. Which government body ensures its activity?

The Ministry of the Interior.

¹³ <https://www.siseministeerium.ee/et/eesmark-tegevused/kodanikuuhiskond/eesti-kodanikuuhiskonna-arengu-kontseptsioon>

3.2. How can NGOs get involved, what are the advantages?

The number of representatives in the Joint Committee is fixed, they are representatives of different networks of CSOs in different areas of operation. NGO can engage with the committee and representatives and can receive support from the committee.

SERBIA

- 1. Is there a designated national authority (an institution, a structural unit within the government) that is responsible for implementing standards for interaction with NGOs and involvement of citizens in decision-making and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect?**

The responsibility for the support and development of civil dialogue between government institutions and civil society organisations is in Serbia in the hands of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, a unit of the Government.

1.1. When was the authority established?

The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society was established in 2010.

1.2. What are its functions in relation to interaction with NGOs and civil participation in decision-making?

The Office is tasked with establishing and implementing standards and procedures for the inclusion of NGOs at all levels of decision making.¹⁴ It intervenes with government authorities regarding issues affecting civil society organisations with the purpose of ensuring quality communication and better understanding between the public administration and NGOs, with the ultimate purpose of creating a support environment for the functioning of NGOs. It also offers support to NGOs by providing information on funding opportunities, open public consultations, organizing trainings, gives them legal advice etc.¹⁵

1.3. What is the structure, who heads the authority?

The Office is headed by a Director, who is appointed by the Government for a period of five years. The Office has three units – the Unit for planning and creation of a support environment for the development of civil society, the Group for international cooperation and European integration and the Group for legal and financial affairs.

- 2. Are there structural units or specific persons within ministries or departments that are responsible for the engagement of NGOs and public consultations?**

There are no such designated units or person at the ministerial level.

- 3. Are there special networks and platforms for interaction with NGOs that were created or promoted by the government?**

An example of such a special platform/network is the SEKO mechanism (Sectoral Civic Society Organisations mechanism) that was established in order to improve the efficiency of programming and use of development funds and the promotion of constructive dialogue between the state and civil society.

3.1. Which government body ensures its activity?

¹⁴ <http://www.civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/office/about-us/about-us.105.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/pocetna/najcesca-pitanja.157.html>

The Office for European Integrations initiated the network and is the main coordinator, while the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society gives support to CSOs in SEKO, e.g. by organising trainings for CSOs to improve their capacities for participation. The European Union provides additional support for the functioning of the mechanism through the project "Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations" (TACSO Serbia) and the TRAG Foundation.

3.2. What are the tasks of the platform?

SEKO mechanism is a mechanism for consultations divided into sectors (some of the sectors are Rule of Law, Public Administration Reform, Environment and Energy, Agriculture and Rural Development, etc.). The mechanism promotes communication and cooperation between ministries and various government offices and NGOs, forming a network of organizations around SEKO, establishing and implementing mechanisms for communication and information flow within the network of organizations around SEKO, participation in consultations in the decision-making processes and monitoring of programmes on its agenda. It addresses challenges such as short consultation deadlines, inadequate awareness among ministries of the importance of NGO involvement when it comes to using international funds, lack of interest and/or human and financial resources in NGOs to participate in decision-making, promotion inclusion of local CSOs, etc. In 2016, the Office for European Integrations signed a Memorandum with the nine leading SEKO NGOs which formalized their ongoing cooperation and common activities.

3.3. How can NGOs get involved, what are the advantages?

Each sector is represented by three to five NGOs in that area of operation, and one main leading organisation. These organisations are selected through a call for applications published by the Office for European Integrations. Each sector also has a number of member organisations NGOs, which can apply to SEKO any time by submitting an application to the representative of the sector. Member NGOs participate in the meetings of the sectoral working groups, submit recommendations during the preparation of the sectoral planning documents for the programming of funds, as well as other relevant strategic documents.¹⁶

¹⁶ <http://www.mei.gov.rs/srl/vesti/719/189/335/detaljnije/rezultati-objavljenog-poziva-za-prijavu-za-odabir-sektorskih-organizacija-civilnog-druiscaron-tva-seko-od-26-maja-2014-godine-i-12-avgusta-2014-godine/>

SLOVENIA

- 1. Is there a designated national authority (an institution, a structural unit within the government) that is responsible for implementing standards for interaction with NGOs and involvement of citizens in decision-making and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect?**

Main tasks related to promoting participation of NGOs and citizens in decision-making processes are divided between two units of the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA), namely the Office for Non-Governmental Organisations and the Administrative Burden Reduction and Better Regulation Unit.

1.1. When was the authority established?

The Office for NGOs was established in 2009.

The Administrative Burden Reduction and Better Regulation Unit exists from 2004.

1.2. What are its functions in relation to interaction with NGOs and civil participation in decision-making?

The mission of the Administrative Burden Reduction and Better Regulation Unit is the improvement of the quality of regulations in various ways, including through promotion of stakeholder engagement in decision-making. In this regard, it has over the years commissioned the preparation of various civil participation manuals, guidelines for public officials as well as trainings for public officials.¹⁷

The Office for NGOs facilitates the State's cooperation with non-governmental organisations in preparation of policies and regulations, mainly by implementing measures under the Strategy for the Development of Non-Governmental Organisations and Volunteering, building capacities of NGOs for advocacy and participation (e.g. through financing) and by offering professional and technical support to the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Promotion of the Development of Volunteering, volunteer and non-governmental organisations, a consultative body consisting of representatives of NGOs and ministries.¹⁸

1.3. What is the structure, who heads the authority?

Both units are headed by the Head of the Unit and are not divided into further sub-units.

- 2. Are there structural units or specific persons within ministries or departments that are responsible for the engagement of NGOs and public consultations?**

There are no such structural units or persons within Slovenian government administration.

- 3. Are there special networks and platforms for interaction with NGOs that were created or initiated by the government?**

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.si/en/state-authorities/ministries/ministry-of-public-administration/about-the-ministry/administrative-burden-reduction-and-better-regulation-service/>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.si/en/state-authorities/ministries/ministry-of-public-administration/about-the-ministry/non-governmental-organisations-service/>

The Ministry of Public Administration initiated the formation of regional NGO hubs in 2008. There are 12 regional hubs currently working in all 12 statistical regions in Slovenia. There were also 10 thematic networks initiated by the Ministry of Public Administration in 2009, which connected NGOs from a specific area of operation, with an emphasis on advocacy of the interests of NGOs. Currently, three of these networks continue to be operating with the support of MPA's NGO Service, i.e. in fields of environment, spatial planning and volunteering. However, some other of these state networks also continue to operate (e.g. in the field of culture).

3.1. Which government body ensures its activity?

The Office for NGOs at the Ministry of Public Administration ensures the activity of regional hubs (through funding of their projects), and also used to support the thematic networks it initiated. Since the adoption of the Act on NGOs in 2018, the task of supporting thematic NGO networks has moved to the ministries which are responsible for relevant policy areas.

3.2. What are the tasks of the platform?

The tasks of regional hubs are to offer support to local NGOs in all areas of operation, advocate for the interest of NGOs and promote cooperation with local governments.

3.3. How can NGOs get involved, what are the advantages?

Hubs support all local NGOs in the geographical area they cover, they have various programmes in which NGOs can participate in various ways. Membership is not a condition to take part in these services.

Thematic networks are diverse in their way of operating, but also have open access to membership and services for NGOs in their area of operation.

UNITED KINGDOM

- 1. Is there a designated national authority (an institution, a structural unit within the government) that is responsible for implementing standards for interaction with NGOs and involvement of citizens in decision-making and coordinating the work of executive bodies in this respect?**

The Policy Lab is a team in the Cabinet Office that supports policy teams across the whole government in better, innovative policy making, including improvement in communication and engagement practices with stakeholders.¹⁹

The Office for Civil Society, currently a part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, is responsible for the implementation of the Civil Society Strategy, which includes various measures promoting cooperation between the national and local governments and civil society.²⁰

1.1. When was the authority established?

The Policy Lab was established in 2014.

The Office for Civil Society (before named the Office of the Third Sector) was established in 2006.

1.2. What are the functions in relation to interaction with NGOs and civil participation in decision-making?

The Policy Lab offers practical support to policy teams and promotes people-centred design approaches to policy making, helping policy-makers with tools and practical support in approaching the people they are trying to reach. They offer support to policy teams primarily on their request.

The Office for Civil Society is responsible for policy relating to young people, volunteers, charities, social enterprises and public service mutuals. Priority areas of their work are defined in the Civil Society Strategy, which covers many aspect of the development of civil society and its services to citizen. This includes promotion of the involvement of NGOs and citizens in decision-making and achieving policy goals in various areas. For example, the current Strategy includes measures such as convening a cross-government group to work with civil society to establish the principles of effective engagement in the policy making process, inclusion of representatives of NGOs in existing public sector groups, launching new programmes to pilot new participatory approaches etc.

1.3. What is the structure, who heads the authority?

Policy Lab is a team of nine designers, researchers and policy-makers, headed by the Head of Policy Lab.

The Office for Civil Society is headed by a Permanent Secretary and has over 100 of employees.

- 2. Are there structural units or specific persons within ministries or departments that are responsible for the engagement of NGOs and public consultations?**

¹⁹ <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/category/policy-lab/>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-strategy-building-a-future-that-works-for-everyone>

Currently, only individual policy teams are responsible for consultations, there is no system of designated units or individuals for coordination of public consultation practices at individual ministries/departments. There was a system of coordination consultants in place between 2008 and 2012, when all departments and ministries that accessed to the Code of Practice on Consultation had to have one during that period.

3. Are there special networks and platforms for interaction with NGOs that were created or promoted by the government?

Currently, there is no network established or promoted by the government to foster cooperation with NGOs, but there have been similar structures in the past. For example, the Civil Society Partnership Network of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (from 2014-2017), or the Office for Civil Society Advisory Body, formerly the Office of the Third Sector Advisory Body, which was a quasi-autonomous NGO (quango) that functioned between 2008 and 2011 and advised the government on the needs of charities and voluntary organisations. Forming of a cross-government group to work with civil society to establish the principles of effective engagement in the policy making process is planned in the According to the Civil Society Strategy from 2018.