

# INTRODUCING SECO

Cooperation between the civil society and the public sector with the aim of successful utilization of international development assistance



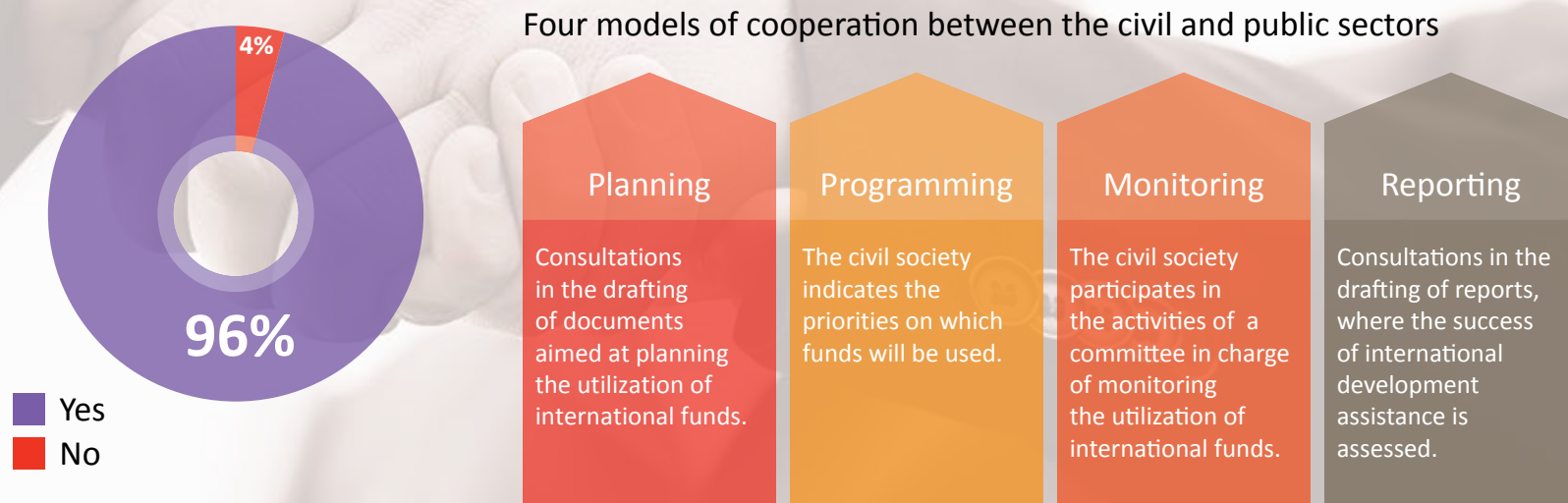
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# 1. What is SECO?

SECO is a mechanism of civil society-public sector cooperation in the planning and utilization of international development assistance funds. It is not intended for negotiations with the European Union.

**96%** of civil society organizations believe that they need to cooperate with the public administration in the planning and realization of projects financed from international funds.



The SECO mechanism was created in 2011, at the initiative of the European Integration Office.

## 2. Why is it important?

The SECO mechanism exists in order to ensure a better utilization of international development assistance funds.

### Funds are available to Serbia

Since 2000, Serbia has received more than 2 billion euros from EU funds.

Serbia can take part in all of EU's 21 programs.

As an EU candidate country, Serbia can use 200 million euros per year from EU funds.

Serbia has to be prepared for using these funds and for drafting projects.

### Cooperation between the civil and public sectors

Acting together, they can promote the utilization of EU funds.

Acting together, they can come up with specific projects.

Acting together, they can speed up the EU accession process.

This is why the SECO mechanism has been established.

### Successful utilization of funds

SECO makes it possible to improve the planning of the use of funds.

SECO makes it possible jointly to determine priorities.

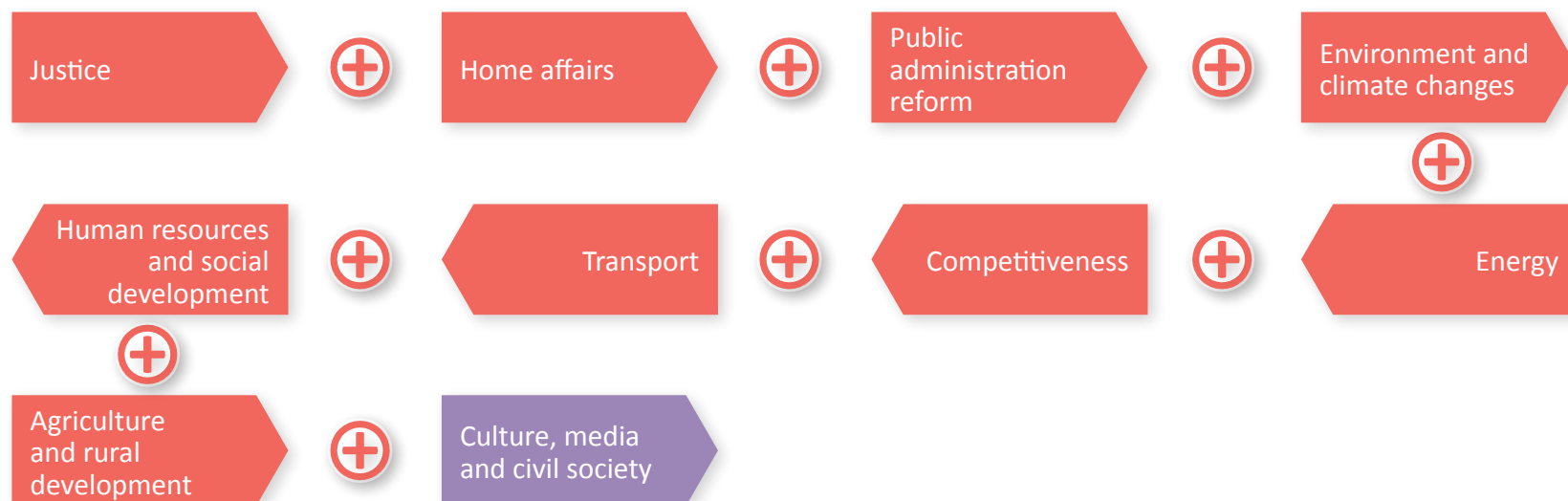
SECO makes it possible to monitor the realization of projects.

Through SECO, the civil society can assess the success of utilization of funds.

### 3. Which areas does it cover?

The SECO mechanism has enabled cooperation between civil society organizations and the public administration on 10 different areas.

**53%** of civil society organizations believe that cooperation with the public administration is most sorely needed in the development of civil society, media and culture, and human resources as well as in the judiciary and home affairs.



The topics have been defined in the 2014-2017/2020 National Priorities for International Assistance (NAD), on the basis of which 9 sectors and 1 thematic area (culture, media and civil society) have been established.

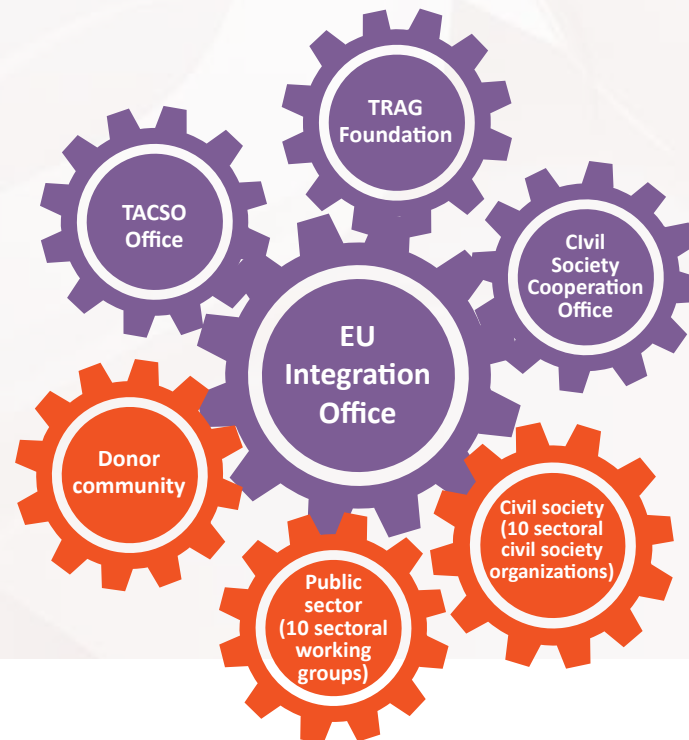
## 4. Who are its participants?

So far, 418 civil society organizations from all over Serbia have participated in the SECO mechanism. The EU Integration Office coordinates cooperation between the civil society and the public sector.

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In the SECO mechanism, civil society organizations are divided according to areas into 10 sectoral civil society organizations. Each SECO has between 3 and 5 organizations, one of which is leading and coordinating activities.

### Who are the players in the SECO mechanism?



## 5. How does it work?

Cooperation between the civil society and the public sector takes place through: consultations and participation in the work of sectoral working groups where ideas for the expenditure of funds and joint training are commented.

**66%** of civil society organizations believe that their main task in cooperation with the public sector is to determine priorities for providing support for international development assistance.





## 6. What has been done?

The biggest achievement of the SECO mechanism is the creation of a possibility for including the civil society in the process of planning and programming the use of international development assistance to Serbia.






## Civil society on changes resulting from SECO



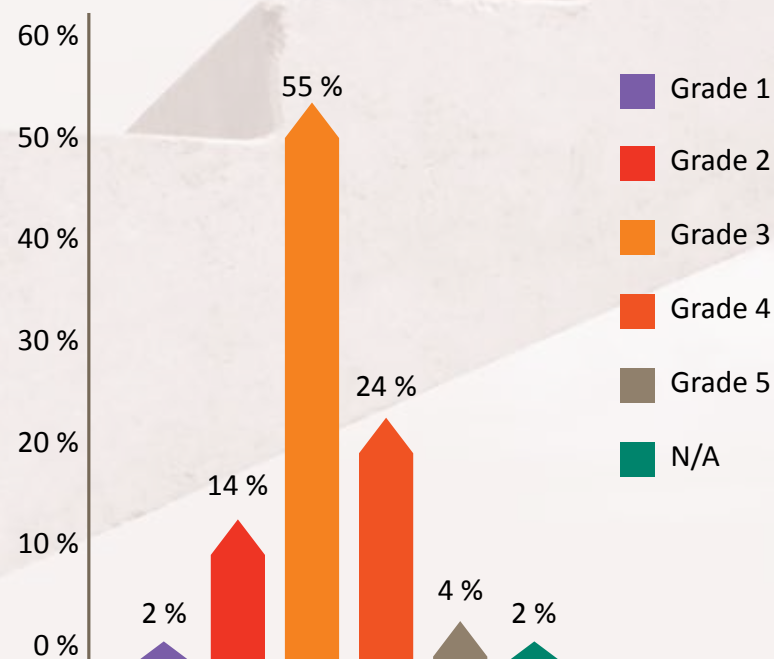
## 7. What are the challenges?

The awareness of ministry representatives needs to be raised regarding the importance of participation of civil society organizations in the programming and monitoring of international development assistance.

**47%** of civil society organizations believe that the two biggest challenges for SECO are: the ministries' insufficient awareness of the importance of the civil sector in the utilization of international funds and the limited capacity of the civil sector.

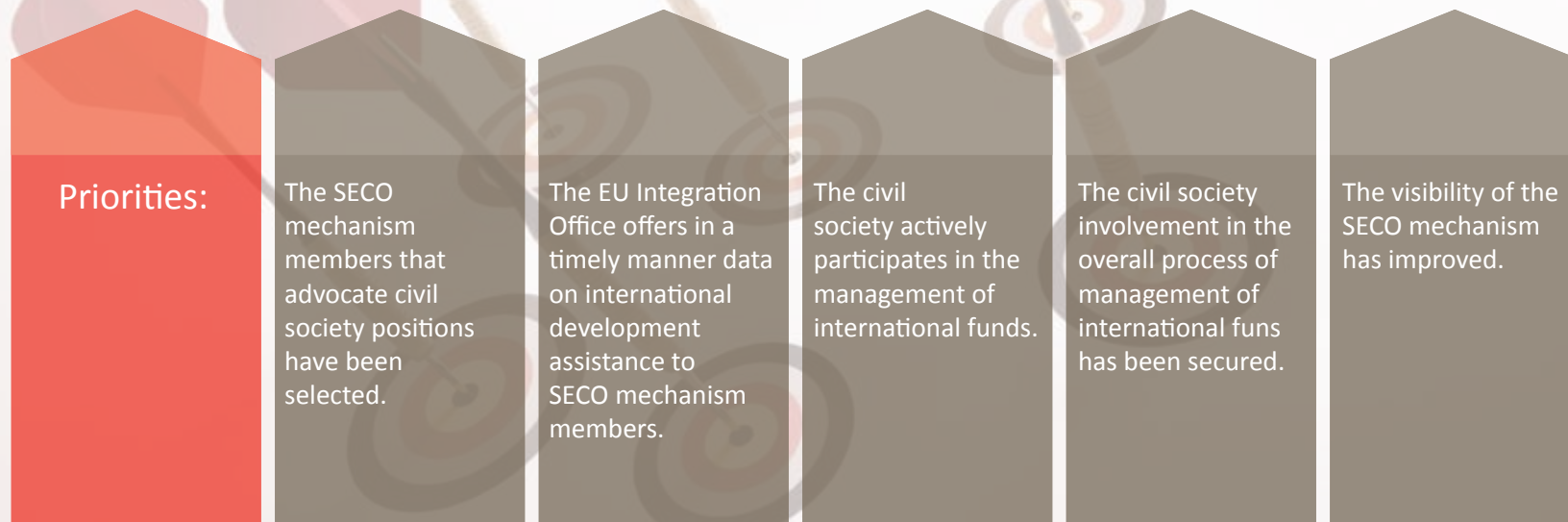
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- Inability to implement the activity plan within deadline as a result of external effects.
  - The capacity of the civil society is limited, which is why its participation is insufficient.
  - There is not enough time for a good evaluation of documents on the expenditure of funds.
  - There is no information on whether civil society comments have been reviewed or adopted.
  - The consultative mechanism has not been sufficiently recognized by the public.
  - The number of active civil society organizations needs to be increased, especially at the local level.
  - The influence of the civil society is limited.

**55%** of civil society organizations believe that the SECO mechanism results are good despite a large number of challenges.



## 8. What are its goals and priorities?

The goal of the SECO mechanism is a long-term partnership between the public and civil sectors in the field of planning, programming, monitoring and reporting on international development assistance.



## 9. Glossary

- **Sectoral approach** is a process aimed at developing consistent public policies and strategies and it defines the way in which the government, donors and other key players collaborate within a particular sector. It is characterized by a practical approach to planning and management that strengthens connections between sectoral policies, activities and results.
- **A sectoral civil society organization** is a consortium of civil society organizations made up of between 3 and 5 organizations, one of which represents the leader. A network of civil society organizations is created around each consortium. It participates in cooperation with the public sector in the planning and utilization of international development assistance funds.
- **Sectoral working groups for programming and monitoring EU funds and international development assistance** are situated at the public administration and they are in charge of reviewing the utilization of pre-accession funds and other international development assistance.
- **Programming** is a process of determination of needs and goals within individual policies, definition of activities, procedures and time frames in the procedure of preparation and selection of programs and projects.
- **The instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA)** is an EU financial support mechanism which should prepare candidate countries and potential candidates for the utilization of EU structural funds when they become full-fledged members.
- **National priorities for international assistance (NAD) for the 2014-2017 period, with forecasts until the year 2020** is the first document for the planning of international assistance which contains indicators and sets the annual and medium-term goals that can be checked and used for the assessment of reform progress. The document defines 9 sectors (justice, internal affairs, public administration reform, competitiveness, energy, environment and climate changes, transport, human resources and social development, agriculture and rural development) and 1 thematic area (culture, media and civil society) within which the civil society and the public sector cooperate in connection with the planning of utilization of international development assistance.

## 10. Contacts

Webpage of the SECO mechanism

[www.cdspredlaze.org.rs](http://www.cdspredlaze.org.rs)

EU Integration Office

[www.seio.gov.rs](http://www.seio.gov.rs)

Office for Cooperation with Civil Society

[civilnodrustvo.gov.rs](http://civilnodrustvo.gov.rs)

TRAG foundation

[www.tragfondacija.org](http://www.tragfondacija.org)

TACSO

[www.tacso.org](http://www.tacso.org)

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