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Developing an Effective Civic
Engagement Policy with the
World Bank, European Bank for
Reconstruction and Development and
Russian Executive Authorities

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Abstract

In Russia, civil society organizations and civil society, in general, are often perceived by the authorities as being a "black box". In order to increase the efficiency of social and economic reforms by taking into consideration the interests of different social/interest-based groups, it is necessary for both international institutions and the Russian authorities to initiate a well thought-through civic engagement policy. Such an engagement would not only obtain feedback from society, it would help in minimizing political mistakes. On the part of civil groups, there is the requirement that co-operation with the state and international actors be more effective and organized. This policy paper explores various policy options to enhance civic engagement in Russia, critically considering the approaches of the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The conclusions and recommendations are based on the values of participatory democracy taking into account different social interests and seeking to provide for social justice, public participation and the guarantee of human rights.

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The views contained inside remain solely those of the author who may be contacted at proskuryakova@policy.hu. For a fuller account of this policy research project, please visit <http://www.policy.hu/proskuryakova>.

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Executive Summary

Civil society organizations and civil society, in general, in Russia are often perceived by authorities as being a “black box”. More precisely, the problem lies (1) in the limited character of feedback with different social groups; (2) there is not enough clarity regarding the role and importance of the “third sector” in societal development; (3) there is no clear understanding of the different forms of interaction with a variety of civil society organizations at the level of federal ministries and governmental agencies, and also at a regional level; (4) laws and regulatory acts in the area of civil society engagement are not always matched by practice; (5) forms of protest as a way of participation in the public domain predominate over other forms of taking part (for example, protest voting, protest actions); and the latter leads to the political apathy of citizens (for example, giving a low turnout at elections) [1].

A well thought-through and effective civic engagement policy is necessary for international institutions and competent authorities to increase the efficiency of social and economic reforms and national projects by taking into consideration the interests of different social/interest-based groups, while obtaining feedback from society with regard to minimizing political mistakes. There also needs to be development of effective cooperation with civil society organizations.

The present policy paper and the research behind it, done within the framework of the International Policy Fellowships of the Open Society Institute, touches upon policy options to help implementation of an efficient civic engagement policy in Russia coming from the World bank (WB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) – i.e. international financial institutions (IFIs) that play an important role in global economic governance. These institutions have come up with comprehensive policy documents concerning civic engagement aiming at successful implementation of structural reforms and concrete projects, things undertaken with their financial and consultative support [2]. Both formal and informal civic engagement policies of the WB and EBRD seek to make civic engagement principles open and clear, to contribute to better public awareness, understanding and public support for concrete strategies related to economic development and reforms, as well as serve as means of feedback for implementers and politicians.

International financial institutions, the Government of the Russian Federation and civil society organizations are working to solve common problems and respond to the new challenges, ones that require a comprehensive cross-sectoral approach, cooperation among various governmental (federal ministries and agencies of the RF, regional executive authorities), supra-national (the WB, EBRD and others) and non-governmental (civil society organizations) institutions. Civil society organizations are among those concerned with and working to find solutions to modern challenges with regard to the social and economic development of Russia.

Civic engagement is occurring both with a view to raising the efficiency of social and economic reforms and national programs and with a view to identifying common national values for consolidation of society and to give legitimacy to authorities. Conclusions here are based on arguing for the *values of participatory democracy*, based on powers of authority and legitimacy, which take into account different social interests and seek to provide for social justice, public participation and a guarantee of human rights.

- The most desirable policy option is formalization and institutionalization of the civic engagement process (for example, in the form of a concept of “public contract/compact”), based on clear, open and understandable criteria and being shared by all actors.
- After a document on civic engagement has been adopted, it should become obligatory for all administrators and officials of any organization/ministry to act upon it, and circumvention or delays will therefore be treated as unacceptable.
- It is recommended that officials do specific educational programs and training (within the framework of formal and additional education programs) to learn how to better implement civic engagement policy.
- All levels of an institution/ministry should take part in the development and implementation of civic engagement policies.
- The principle of openness should be observed in the development and introduction of amendments (reviewing, changes and updates) of civic engagement policy documents.
- Civic engagement policies should be linked to and/or mainstreamed into other key policy documents of an institution/ ministry.
- Civic engagement events should be organized in such a way that all different stakeholders and interest groups are represented.
- Special budget and other resources should be previewed as regards planning, preparation and execution civic engagement activities.

1 Civil Society and Forms of Civic Engagement in Russia

1.1 *Why Engage with Civil Society?*

Russian civil society organizations (CSOs) are an active and indispensable part of Russian civil society. CSOs, providing services to the population, including grassroots and unregistered organizations too, are, being so numerous, often closer to the population than other types and levels of authority. Non-governmental research organizations undertake professional and cost-intensive analyses of acute social and economic problems, often attracting alternative (non-budget) sources of funding here. Educational NGOs are more sensitive to the demands of the labor market than are traditional, state, higher educational establishments; and this in turn can raise the qualifications of different specialists, including that of civil servants. Watchdog organizations do much work in civic education - and draw attention to acute pressing social matters [3].

According to the World Bank's paper entitled "Issues and Options for Improving Engagement between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations" (draft from 24 October 2003; final version March 2005), prepared by the Bank's Civil Society Team, "CSOs have become more influential actors in public policy and in development efforts". Such changes have been facilitated by the globalization process, including persons' easier access to telecommunication technologies, societal changes and a stepped up economic integration. Civil society organizations have become important actors in the global market when it comes to financing development; they also have greater influence on public policy at both global and national levels, and are responsible for major aspects of the operations of social services and the implementing of country cross-border initiatives.

According to the UNDP Global Human Development Report 2004, it is necessary to make services aimed at poor and marginalized people *usable*, to one should take into consideration their opinions and also *engage* civil society via various forms of civic engagement as an inherent element of public policy. Civic engagement is an important instrument through which to get better service provision and to speed up progress as regards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) [4].

Other intergovernmental organizations also admit the need to actively interact with CSOs not only in general but with more specific matters, which points to an acknowledging of the great, 'expert' knowledge of CSOs. For instance, the G8 Group recommends interacting with NGOs - such as Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which, together with the local communities, play key roles on the ground - in order to eliminate gaps in the system of information dissemination (with regard to an effective system of early warning on global geophysical natural phenomena); other recommendations were that one should cooperate with wider circles of civil society and eliminate barriers to public participation with regard to the application of carbon dioxide storage technologies [within the framework of the Forum on Carbon Dioxide Reduction]; encourage the organizing of public hearings and forms of civic education, based on principles of tolerance; also, to strengthen an increased understanding between cultures. One of the first tasks here is working with civil society so as to get a clear and complete public rejection of terrorism [5].

According to data from the State Committee for RF Statistics, the number of registered non-governmental, non-commercial organizations as of 1 January 2002 was 600 000. According to different estimates, though, at least *as many* civil society groups operate in Russia's regions without official registration as do legal entities. It should be noted that many unregistered civil society organizations and groups do work of social importance, and are needed by local populations. An important function of such grassroots organizations is their work with marginalized groups in the population, scope for which is great in Russia (for example, the poor, single parents, the homeless, street children, victims of domestic violence, etc.).

One of the most comprehensive studies of civil society in the World – Civil Society Index (CSI) was developed and made use of by the World Alliance for Citizens Participation (CIVICUS). In Russia, the CSI arose from a St. Petersburg Center "Strategy", and it used the following to define civil society (as developed by the project's National Advisory Board): "Civil Society is an arena located for the most part outside the family, state and marketplace, at which people voluntarily interact for the promotion of their own, public interests and the common good".

In this definition, a separation of civil society from the state is reinforced by putting political parties *outside* the civil society framework, as civil society does not seek to occupy any political positions in official state bodies or make politics their professional activity.

As regards the “political activity” of civil society organizations, we need to understand whether we are talking about *politics* or *policy* (for both words are the same in the Russian language). Politics/policy can be presented via the uniting of three interlinked aspects: 1) as a sphere of public life, social sub-system, performing functions of achieving a balance between public and private interests, achieving goals of public importance; 2) as one of the many types of activity of social actors, their collective and individual behavior; 3) as a type of social relation, between individuals, small groups and bigger entities; or it could be 4) a political course, a consciously chosen social strategy [6]. It is within a *wider* understanding of politics/policy that the majority of Russian citizens do “political activities”.

Opinions differ on the extent to which Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) influence public opinion and attitudes in local communities. Whatever its advocacy positions, the ability of a CSO to influence public opinion depends on its capacities and resources (human, financial, etc.), the external environment in its area of operations (legislative climate, relations with authorities, etc.), the size of its membership and/or number of beneficiaries, the organization’s visibility and information activities. In other words, the ability of a CSO to influence public opinion exists, though the degree of such influence will depend on a complex number of factors and can be adequately assessed only on a case-by-case basis.

An important condition of civic engagement is that participating civil society organizations will *themselves* observe the democratic principles of their *own* operations. There is the study of J.A.Scholte, Director of the Center for the Study of Regionalization and Globalization at Warwick University (UK) entitled “Democratizing the Global Economy - The Role of Civil Society” indicating this on behalf of CSOs. These include ensuring the necessary knowledge and competence of persons to deal with specific issues; dealing with challenges to offer equal opportunities of involvement to all people, regardless of age, class, beliefs, nationality, race, gender and other social categories; and maximizing one’s own visibility – thus, one’s own answerability/accountability to stakeholders and wider society.

Different forms of civic engagement are available to international organizations and national decision-makers. These include, first of all, 1) consultations with civil society to sound out the views of different social actors and stakeholders on issues of key importance for international institutions and national authorities; and the creation of 2) consultative bodies for this. The latter might be standing councils with regular meetings

had on current and pending programs/projects undertaken by institutions/ministries - and they should be based upon clearly defined criteria for the selection and replacing of its members, democratic mechanisms of coordination and decision-making, and accountability to different social groups. Other forms of civic engagement would include 3) public opinion research on pressing societal matters (most such data is gathered by a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations) [7]; and 4) independent expertise, that is, outside experts invited to monitor project implementation and final post-project evaluation. Such public expertise can verify that a project is taking on board recommendations made in the course of consultations with civil society and other stakeholders.

International organizations and Russian officials will also be able to organize 5) formal public hearings following on from individual or public consultations on projects - for example, audits of project results could be put forward for discussion. In such public hearings the roles played by executive and legislative authorities will be of particular value. Finally, there is 6) information dissemination to raise public awareness and make an institution/agency's work understandable to citizens. Information on an international institution's work should be disseminated not only by the institution itself but also by CSOs that specialize in monitoring and analyzing the work of IFIs. Finally, 7) on the issue of funding, there are mechanisms existing here, including sub-contracting agreements, grant agreements (договор целевого финансирования, пожертвования), indirect funding via a foundation created with the support of an international institution or via an independent foundation; or a grant agreement with between the federal or a regional government and CSOs. Grant or charity funding should have strict reports made in their regard (for Russian control agencies, the grant providers, etc) – and it must be impossible to treat charity funding as a means of gaining monetary profit or turn it into a “dubious” activity.

The listing of CE forms above is, of course, not comprehensive and does not cover all existing CE types. Nevertheless, the listed forms give us an understanding of the key CE categories having the participation of IFIs. The WB and EBRD has developed quality policy documents that serve to regulate interactions with CS – and there has been some progress with regard to the implementing of such policy documents in Russia.

1.2 Civic Engagement Policy of the Russian Executive Authorities

The most likely strategic approaches via which to develop and implement a CE policy in line with the current approach of the Russian executive authorities are:

- Sustaining interactions with CS (for example, keeping the existing CE mechanism), which can only be based on the current political situation and the addressing of specific political goals had by various ministries and regions.
- Streamlining and widening CE policies and practices (e.g. via adoption of a suitable concept for CE, or agreeing on a “societal concord”), this being based upon concrete cases of successful interaction that have proved their efficiency in Russia; clear requirements, and open criteria as regards formulation, development, maintenance and the implementation of linked policies.

Today, CSOs in Russia already exist - and if external blocks or limitations disappear, they could to a greater degree become “good, absolutely irreplaceable partners for the state in being able to deal with the most acute problems, e.g. they “could become good partners in fighting HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, homelessness, could give assistance in the social rehabilitation of disabled persons, develop territorial self-governance” (etc.) [8].

An important step towards recognizing the importance of CSOs in Russia was the Civic Forum of 2001, the largest gathering of CSOs, who expressed interest in any interaction with authorities. The practice of conducting Forums was continued in 2002 in Toliatti, and, in 2003, in Nizhni Novgorod – this being a “Russian Forum” – and they had the active participation of the private sector.

The RF Law “On Creation of the Civic Chamber” was initiated by the President of the RF, to which he first referred on 13 September 2004: “...such a chamber should become a place for bringing together the civic expertise of key state decision-makers, and ... come up with legislation touching upon the developmental perspectives of the whole country, and it should have national importance” [9].

However, as with the majority of Russian consultative bodies, it cannot be a law that will define the importance of such a Civic Chamber but, rather, the personalities of its members, the representation of Russia’s regions, the degree of independence they have, and the political processes within the Chamber’s actual work. It is also important that the Chamber does not have a monopoly in public control but contributes to the creation of a mechanism of public control *at all levels* – from municipal to federal. Furthermore, in the work of the Chamber it is important to escape the lobbying of interests of particular CSO sectors and their target groups [10].

From public opinion polls of the beginning of 2005 (and this is still the case) we can see that a majority of people did not understand the objectives behind the creation of or the main functions of a Civic Chamber: around 70% of people said they did not understand it - while only 12% understood or approved the idea to create such a Chamber. Clearly, work to raise public awareness is required, which could be combined with the “real work” practices of the Chamber (which could, in turn, then prove its independence from authorities, representation and point to its ‘expert’ potential).

Before the official announcement of the plans to create the Civic Chamber of the RF, the Council on Civil Society Development and Human Rights under the auspices of the President of the RF met, the former being created on the basis of the Commission on Human Rights, also under the auspices of by the RF President, and via the Presidential Decree of 6 November 2004 #1417 [11]. Only eight months later, on 20 July 2005, the first meeting of the President and Council members occurred. The Council holds regular meetings and deals with matters of social importance, and has a special focus on providing feedback on cross-sectoral interaction between society and its authorities. Key factors in such work, which partly overlap with functions of the Civic Chamber, should be public expertise and public control [12]. At the 20 July meeting, the President put four issues on the agenda: informing citizens about reforms implemented by authorities, creation of the Civic Chamber, development of the NGO sector, and the development of a multi-party approach to human rights provisions.

At the meeting, Putin raised the issue of interactions between state bodies and CSOs. The RF President stressed that “special efforts should be made to build the financial basis for the independent operations of human rights organizations, and on providing grants for such work. Also, it is impossible to allow for any *direct* funding of political activity in Russia” [13]. In this reading, the term “political activity” (*politicheskaya deyatel'nost*) may be understood in two ways: both as a means of influencing political-electoral processes in the country (the English word “politics”); and as a wish to influence authorities in order to increase transparency for and their accountability to society, advocating societal interests in general and also those of particular social groups (the English word “policy”). The activities of civil society groups, also known as public policy, are an important component of the work of CSOs - not only in Russia, but in all other democratic states. Furthermore, a separate category of CSOs defines public policy as a key direction for their work. Centers for public policy are non-commercial, non-governmental organizations, working both in the area of

analysis/research and also in the sphere of their practical implementation. The link between theory and practice actively promoted by centers for public policy shows such centers' important communicative functions; and more active and more successful are the centers for public policy (CPP) when it comes to their having a communicative function. "Publicity", as a characteristic of CPP, derives from their name, and it pre-supposes openness of the centers' work to *all* stakeholders and social groups and pro-active information dissemination regarding its own work for different target groups [14]. Other important functions of the CPP include: research, educational, creativity/innovation, and implementation [15].

At present, a number of ministries and governmental agencies, as well as Committees of the State Duma of the RF, are looking at opportunities for creating civic consultative and expert councils. Furthermore, interested authorities are able to see special forms of internal and external interaction with their own public relations specialists at both federal and regional levels (including interdepartmental groupings of public relations specialists, consultative mechanisms, coming via expert councils, standing seminars, etc.)

Among such CE forms that include state authorities, the following are worth mentioning:

- Council by the President of the RF on Civil Society Development and Human Rights;
- (1) Interdepartmental group of public relations specialists, (2) Consultative Council for Subjects of the RF on International and Foreign Economic Relations, (3) Consultative Mechanism on the Involvement of CSOs in Preparations for the G8 Summit (St. Petersburg, 2006); and (4) the Russian Civil Society Committee on Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the UN. All came from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs;
- Civic Council for the Federal Anti-Monopoly Agency;
- Expert Council for the Committee for Education and Science of the State Duma;
- Standing methodological seminar "Monitoring of Legislation and Law-enforcement Practices", from the Commission of the Council of Federation on Methodologies for the Enforcement of Constitutional Powers, of the Council of Federation.

Provided such councils operate openly, have clear and understandable criteria via which to do their work, including professional qualifications and a balanced representation of representatives, such structures will be able to raise the efficiency of any authority's work.

Worth mentioning are quasi-mechanisms related to public participation, i.e. which occur from time to time. This includes interactions with CSOs, bodies created and fully funded by the authorities (quasi-CSOs). Funding for such CSOs comes from self-

standing and/or dependent grant-providers, etc. These mechanisms of “civic engagement” are not only more or less ineffective – they also use up more financial, human and other resources than do lone CSOs. Moreover, this might cause a number of non-predictable and negative results (the taking over of existing forms of inter-sectoral dialogue, protest campaigns, publications in Western media, etc.).

Practice shows us that the use of CE quasi-mechanisms as well as CE usage to resolve certain political issues are most likely to lead to the following:

- The taking over and non-acceptance of social and economic reforms with different social groupings;
- Stepped up protests among different social groups of the population (for example, demonstrations and marches; other forms of protest; strikes, protest voting);
- Drops in citizens’ (political) activism (i.e. active citizenship) in general; political apathy (e.g. a low turnout at elections);
- Absence of feedback from the population and population groups with regard to gaps, mistakes and malfunctioning elements of various governmental reforms;
- As a consequence of absent feedback, major expenses for fine-tuning and reformulation of legislation and reforms – things that could have been avoided via introduction of CE practice at an early stage of the developing of statutes/reforms;
- Boycotting and non-acceptance by key CS actors of a number of political initiatives regarding CE, as initiated by authorities;
- Under conditions of domestic suppression, continual appeals of CS actors to influential public opinion actors (foreign media, international organizations, etc.).

1.3 Social and Economic Matters in Russia, and IFI Investments

As of end of the year 2003, the World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and International Development Agency) portfolio in the Russian Federation encompassed 33 projects and 3 grants, constituting \$9.7 billion of net obligations of the World Bank to the Government of the Russian Federation.

Russia became a shareholder and a member of International Finance Corporation (IFC) in 1993. As of June 1, 2005, IFC has invested around USD 2 billion of its own funds and syndicated over USD 200 million in more than 100 projects across a variety of sectors, and its committed portfolio stands at USD 1,404 million. At present, Russia is the first largest country as regards IFC exposure. Recently, IFC significantly increased its commitment to Russia, investing \$486 million in FY04 and nearly USD 450 million in FY03. A growing part of these investments is in Russian owned companies - a strong vote of confidence in Russia’s private sector and a signal to other investors. To support Russia’s efforts to diversify its economy, IFC has also stepped up investments in the real sector, becoming a leading investor in Russia’s private

infrastructure, forestry and IT. IFC investments in Russia are spread across the country's most important sectors, including banking, leasing, housing finance, mining, agri-business, pulp and paper operations, construction materials, oil and gas, telecommunications, information technologies, aviation, retail, and health care.

As of 31 August 2005, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) had approved 228 investment projects in Russia for the total amount of 6,526 bln. EURO. In parallel with its own funding, EBRD has additionally attracted 11.6 bln. EURO. 81 percent of all investments were made in the private sector. In 2004, EBRD investments in Russian reached 1.24 bln; while overall disbursements reached 853 mln. EURO. Total commitments of the Bank reached 5.9 bln EURO. In Russia there has been no sovereign-based lending since 2004, and the majority of projects approved in 2004 were in the production sphere. 25 percent of all EBRD investments are made in Russia. On average, the Bank invests in Russia 1.2 bln EURO a year.

Poverty reduction concerns and the most acute issues to do with social and economic development have been a priority for the WB and EBRD in Russia since 1991. Fighting poverty and speeding up the social and economic development of Russia have been highlighted, since 2003, by President Putin as being priorities for Russia's development. According to the EBRD, "The Russian Federation – Transition Report Update" [16] for 2003 states that, as of the year 2000, 23.8 percent of the Russian population were living in poverty. The Report also portrays the negative dynamics of a number of social indicators in the RF from 1995 through 2003. At the same time, income inequalities for different social groups in Russia, using a Jinni coefficient (statistic inequality measurement), showed an increase from 47.1 in 1995 to 52.1 in 2001. Data from the State Committee on Statistics testify to the negative development of human capital in the 1990s [17] [18]. At a time of limited state funding of the social welfare sphere, important roles (as regards solutions) have now shifted to CSOs, such as the All-Russia Union of Disabled Persons, self-help groups, credit unions, etc.

A pressing problem for Russia today is the rapid spread of socially infectious diseases: TB, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually-transmitted infectious diseases; and there has been a spread of ARV drug usage. Thus, by the end of 2004, the official number of HIV cases registered in the RF since its appearance had reached over 340 000 [19]. However, the real number of cases is actually much higher: people estimate that the number of those living with HIV/AIDS in the RF, as of 2003, stands at 860 000 (420

000–1 400 000) [20]. The greatest share of the new HIV-infections is that of young people. Each year, over three quarters of new HIV-infections are diagnosed for people aged 15-29 years [21]. The disease in Russia affects a large number of young people using ARV drugs [22]. Russian and international CSOs, including European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD), the NAN Foundation and Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS (TPAA), all make a significant contribution to fighting HIV/AIDS through introducing innovative methods to fight such diseases and they do attract alternative sources of funding.

Average life expectancy in Russia has decreased, and average life expectancy among men has dropped to 57.3 years. According to a joint Analytical report on Violence in Russia issued by the Ministry of Healthcare of the RF and the World Health Organization (7 July 2003), the annual suicide rate in Russia is 3 times more than for Western Europe. Another matter of importance in Russia is home violence: according to research data, around 70 percent of women are subject to violence at a certain time of their life [23]. Resolving such problems is a job for CSOs, for example, the Foundation for the Support of Civic Initiatives “FOCUS”, Center “Anna” (No to Violence Association), the Consortium of Women’s NGOs; and these also operate with regional authorities and intergovernmental organizations (UNIFEM, UNDP, etc.).

1.4 Key Civic Engagement Elements with the World Bank in Russia

According to the WB data, around 70% of the Bank’s projects, approved since 2000, preview various opportunities for civic engagement.

Members of the WB Board of Directors were broadly supportive of analytical research undertaken for the WB paper “Issues and Options for Improving Engagement between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations”, and they have also learned key lessons and recognized certain issues emerging in the past few years via the Bank’s experiences of engaging CSOs in doing specific field operations. There is also the process of policy dialogue, including the outlined 10-point action plan, aimed at improving the Bank’s engagement with CSOs.

The following action plan provisions are relevant at the national level, and one might hope they will be implemented in Russia:

- Piloting a new Bank-wide monitoring and evaluation system for civic engagement.
- Conducting a review of Bank funds available for civil society engagement in operations and policy dialogue, and exploring possible realignments or restructuring.

- Reviewing the Bank's procurement framework with a view to facilitating collaboration with CSOs.
- Instituting an integrated learning program for capacity-building for CSOs on how to work effectively with the Bank and its member governments.

As of 2003, the Bank's structure comprised 120 specialists on interaction with civil society to cover the whole range of CE issues and to provide for all the Bank's obligations in this sphere. As a rule, these persons are social scientists and public relations specialists who have the necessary qualifications to interact with civil society. Specialists in social and environmental sustainability operate in different Bank departments and country offices (for example, in the IFC this is true for 60 percent of such specialists).

CE recommendations could be found in at least 15 operational policies of the Bank and as regards operational directives. The recent reports of the International Development Agency (IDA) and World Development Reports for 2000 and 2004 cover a number of approaches to CE, being integrated into the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) [24]. Comprehensive documentation on CE developed by the WB requires extensive studying by Russian executive authorities in order to build on this experience. Formal WB papers on public consultations are already in demand at the highest level. For example, heads of G8 states, given the results of the 8 July 2005 Summit in Gleneagles, wished to suggest that the WB develops and implements, based on best practices and in consultation with the governments of host countries and local communities, guiding principles to steer its investments into climate-sensitive sectors so as to see what impact climate risks may have and what the possibilities are for managing these risks more efficiently. Also, it was decided to suggest that other multilateral and bilateral agencies working with development issues approve the guiding principles of the WB or develop and implement similar guiding principles [25].

In 1998 the WB issued the paper "The Bank's Relations with NGOs: Issues and Directions", which gives an overview of relations between the WB and CS from 1981 through 1998. The document, not being an official Bank document, was reviewed and adopted by the WB's Board of Directors in August 1998. Making a comparison with similar research carried out by CSOs in Russia, it is suggested that Russian executive authorities organize tender competitions for research on CE matters, the outcome of which would be taken into consideration later in the development and implementation of comprehensive social and economic, sectoral development strategies.

An overview of the Bank's relations with CSOs at a later (recent) stage from 1998 to 2003 occurs in the paper "Issues and Options for Improving Engagement Between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations", whose first draft was issued on 24 October 2003. In March 2005, the paper was finalized and looked at by the Board of Directors. The document introduces three categories of WB interaction with CS: (1) facilitation, (2) dialogue and (3) partnership and consultation. A multitude of CE forms ideally should be previewed at all stages of a project, and should be implemented with the financial support of the WB. Below, are some examples of WB-CE practices in Russia.

A number of informal meetings with CSOs were carried out by the WB Country Director in Russia and the WB Vice-President for the ECA region. The meetings were organized as one-time informal events (for example, lunches). In the course of such meetings, CSOs had an opportunity to express their concerns on a number of issues to which they would like to draw WB's attention. Among these issues of concern are: legislation unfavorable to Russian NGOs, the facilitation of dialogue with the authorities, environmental matters, etc. And when high-ranking officials of members of the Board of Directors make business trips to countries of operation, their working schedule will usually imply meeting with CSOs.

In December 2002, the Russian office of the World Bank for the first time brought together a Civil Society Consultative Council. At the beginning, the Council was for the most part composed of Moscow-based CSOs. By the end of 2004, participants in Council meetings came from Barnaul, Novokuznetsk and Novossibirsk organizations. Moreover, the Council had representation from various CS sectors, including credit unions, gender groups, research centers, national and ethnic minorities' groups, and organizations of people with special needs. It is obvious that chances for Russia's regions and CS sectors to take part in such meetings should be extended.

The Council does not have a permanent membership (i.e. which may vary depending on the issues on the agenda). Each time, around 15 CSO representatives attend the meetings, which makes the Council composition quite flexible.

The biggest consultations with stakeholders (CSOs, business groups, etc.) occurred with implementation of the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for the years 2003-2005. Consultations were organized in Russia's regions in the summer of 2003. Unfortunately, for this CAS term the Bank did not preview opportunities for consultations before the CAS was approved at the Board of Directors, when there still

existed a possibility to take into consideration comments received and to incorporate them within the text of the strategy.

The World Bank actively disseminates information about its own activities, and it contributed to information awareness. However, most of this work is concentrated at the global and regional (ECA) levels. Events at the ECA level include monthly newsletters, in Russian and English, as well as weekly information updates (at a global level), press reviews of the WB in general and with specific themes (новости, например, по вопросам сокращения бедности, исследованиям и др.), electronic newsletters by country and by region, and electronic newsletters on the Bank's partnerships, initiatives and global programs. The WB's staff called together the Civil Society Group (at regional and departmental levels) and the Civil Society Team (at the global level); it also prepares newsletters on key issues outside their work.

A separate part of the WB's portal is devoted to CE matters and gives reference to WB publications and studies, announcements of CS consultations, lists of the WB's civil society staff at all levels, links to the web-sites of CSOs specializing in monitoring the WB, including those that take a critical stand with regard to WB operations.

Taking note of the obligatory maintenance and updating of web-sites and other e-resources by the Russian ministries and agencies, it is advisable that similar information resources with interactive options for dialogue with civil society are also developed.

Despite the serious efforts of the WB to organize efficient interaction with CS, several Russian CSOs, members and experts are concerned that there is an absence of well thought-through regional priorities, methods of interacting with the regions (not only their capitals) and limited means for attracting local experts. Many emerging conflicts or disputable issues from sub-contractors – project executors (private sector organizations) tend to take up much time until a decision from a higher-ranking authority is arrived at.

It may be concluded that the potential for interaction with Russian CSOs is not being fully realized by the WB in Russia: a complex hierarchy of decision-making and great bureaucracy (recognized by Russian CSOs) are seriously hampering interaction between CSOs and the Bank. One can see here a need for more active public awareness, in particular in the provision of information to grassroots organizations, about the Bank's operations in Russia. This could be done, for example, via electronic information updates of the WB Russia Country Office. In addition, a compiling of short

reports should be resorted to (including summaries of comments received and prospects for their consideration) more widely at the end of WB meetings and civil society consultations in Russia. Issues that are central for CE events could be better worked through if additional time and resources were to be devoted to preliminary developments related to issues. Thus, at CE events the WB would have an opportunity not only to facilitate opinion exchanges but also contribute to a search for solutions to pressing problems.

Educational and information programs on the WB in Russia can be organized by the research and educational centers that specialize in global economic issues. Most likely, there is also a need to provide comprehensive educational programs for journalists on the essence of WB and other IFIs work in Russia (as current publications are, at best, not suitable for this).

However, it should be noted that a well spelled out CE policy in relation to the WB faces a number of challenges as regards its implementation in Russia, which not only lowers the quality of its policies but also lowers the quality of resultant projects and reforms. Among these challenges one could list regular examples of the incompatibility of policy and practice. For example, Russian authorities that are partners in the implementation of WB projects at times only *formally* follow recommendations (i.e. invite co-opted organizations, publish information in newspapers with little circulation, etc.). Cases abound when certain Russian bodies of executive authorities force IFIs to interact with quasi-NGOs. In some cases, the WB's rules for CE go against dis-enabling Russian legislation. Furthermore, a number of Russian legislative acts, sectoral norms and Russian legislation practices contradict the exemplar practices pertaining to CE activities. These inconsistencies should be minimized via development of Russian legislative norms, specifically in relation to cumbersome and complicated budgetary limitations and prohibitions that apply to all CSOs operating in Russia; and there should be the use of open mechanisms for public discussion.

With mistakes caused by difficulties in CE policy implementation, Russian citizens would, as a rule, blame the Russian authorities and make an appeal to IFIs and other intergovernmental bodies (UN, European Court on Human Rights, Council of Europe, foreign national authorities, etc.).

1.5 Key elements of the Civic Engagement of EBRD in Russia

EBRD does not have a separate document devoted to CE. CE principles are integrated into sectoral and strategy policy papers in countries where the Bank operates. Certain CE principles were published in the EBRD Public Information Policy (PIP) in September 1997. All Bank obligations to ensure the transparency of its operations are based on PIP and on the Rules of Procedure on the Establishment of the Independent Recourse Mechanism (IRM), created in 2004. Both of these documents and a number other key policy documents were translated into Russian and placed on the Bank's web-site. In the course of formulating country strategies, EBRD previews the e-consultation process, something being organized at its official web-site. People and CSOs are able to learn about any Bank project from its Project Summary Document (PSD), which contains a brief project description, its goals, key financial indicators and an outline of an environmental impact assessment.

The institutional structure of EBRD does not preview specialists, i.e. persons responsible for CE in EBRD country offices. Only two specialists, an administrator and a consultant, are directly put to work on civic engagement issues at the EBRD headquarters in London - in the Communications Department, Outreach and NGO Relations Unit. There, specialists provide for an effective means of information exchange on CE matters between country offices and the Bank's headquarters. Outreach and the NGO Relations Unit are responsible for gathering and processing comments obtained in the course of consultations with civil society on Bank policies and strategy papers, as well as other information requested from CSOs addressed to EBRD, and which should not remain unanswered. Taking into account the number of countries witnessing Bank operations, with all of them requiring implementation of CE principles and actions, one can imagine the great volume of work of these specialists. So the overall number of CE issues and projects, in general, would increase if the EBRD introduced new positions for CE specialists in its country offices.

Key stakeholders and interacting parties for EBRD are local communities, non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions, bilateral and multilateral environmental organizations and other bodies, including national and sub-national authorities and businesses.

In 2005, EBRD for the first time prepared and disseminated a special NGO Newsletter, which came in two of the Bank's official languages – Russian and English. This newsletter is one of a series of information resources, which include EBRD News

updates, e-consultations with civil society via the EBRD web-site, an NGO Dialogues mailing list (available to NGOs only upon request and with registration of an NGO by the EBRD staff) and NGO updates (also available to the public). Due special attention is the worthy intention of EBRD to create separate web-sites for each country of its operations, in the local languages.

Useful advice for NGOs, also located at the EBRD web-site in 2005, is a brief overview of the Bank's rationale as regards working with NGOs. Such advice covers concrete opportunities/mechanisms for CSOs to become actively engaged with the Bank. As in the WB, when EBRD senior managers or members of the Board of Directors travel to another country of operations, their working agenda will generally include a meeting with CSOs.

In selecting from among CSO candidates for participation in Bank events (such as annual meetings or consultations with CS), EBRD, like the WB, relies on its country offices. Nonetheless, unlike the WB country offices, EBRD, unfortunately, does not have specialists responsible for operations with the CS. The key criterion for selection of participants is the existence of a direct connection with issues being discussed within the organization's areas of activity, previous experience of interaction with the Bank, etc.

As with the WB, in parallel with the official program for the annual meeting, EBRD will arrange for a special agenda and for meetings with CSOs taking part in the event as observers. In formulating such a 'side program', the Bank will make an effort to cover a maximum number of topics of interest to participants.

At certain formal and informal meetings of EBRD administrators with CSOs, an NGO Outreach Relations Manager would take notes and prepare minutes of such meetings, which will be later disseminated, for comments, among all participants, including CSOs, disregarding whether such minutes are an *internal* Bank's document [26].

EBRD organizes and hold consultations with CS on projects that require environmental impact assessments (EIA). CE activities with regard to projects that are done with the financial support of the EBRD in Russia, are mostly linked to environmental and nature protection matters – and they take place at the project stage concerned with environmental procedures. First consultations with a company-contractor, according to EBRD procedures (likewise with IFC), happen at the very early stage of a project called scoping meetings. Practices, given comments and concerns

received in the course of consultations from CSOs and local communities are taken into account might be referred to as model practice, and could well be replicated by Russian executive authorities in implementing budget-funded projects as well as affecting environmental legislation as a key requirement for commercial companies to take into consideration.

A difficult project for EBRD in Russia in terms of CE became the projects of oil and gas industry development, "Sakhalin" (especially "Sakhalin-2"). Judging by the number of stakeholders, contradicting interests and CS protest actions, "Sakhalin-2" can be compared with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline construction project [27]. EBRD developed "Sakhalin Oblast Action Plan" (April 2004), which was placed on EBRD's web-site.

Watchdog CSOs, monitoring the work of IFIs, such as CEE Bankwatch [28], claim that oil and gas companies working in Sakhalin Oblast since 1994 are causing irreversible damage to the endangered Western Gray Whales species, the marine environment of the region and the traditional lifestyle of thousands of local fishermen. According to NGO-members of the "Sakhalin Environmental Watch" coalition, most dangerous are plans to construct two 800-km oil and gas pipelines in seismic regions, with the tentative support of EBRD. Russian and international CS organizations joined forces in a coalition, and have resorted to a number of measures to advocate their position and the interests of the local population (including formal and informal meetings with EBRD officials and Russian authorities, whilst also suggesting a number of changes that could be accepted by companies implementing the project).

In spite of all these interaction difficulties even with large-scale and important projects, EBRD considers CE to be of crucial importance. The reason for such a position is that open information exchange and dialogue with CSO and local communities helps the Bank have a better effect on the region and for itself: that is, more effective project implementation, including cutting down on financial costs, avoiding various risks, achieving mutual understandings between companies, authorities and local communities, avoiding unwanted delays in project implementation in the long run, etc.

Russian EBRD offices as well as Bank office in other countries do not publish large amounts of information materials on the Bank's work for wide public dissemination, as the Bank does not see such a need. With regard to concrete projects, though,

responsible companies-contractors and Russian authorities will undertake development and dissemination, as well as do translations of project documents for stakeholders.

If required, for example at the final project stage or after a project's completion, the Bank will organize public hearings with the participation of interested CSOs from the project region.

1.6 Recommendations for the Development and Implementation of an Effective Civic Engagement Policy

First of all, CE Policy should be formalized and institutionalized, as well as based on clear and understandable criteria. Individual human approaches and informal dialogues should take place and be indispensable in CE activities outside Russia's capitals and regional centers; while the importance of *formal* procedures not be underestimated.

Secondly, after CE documents have been adopted, they should become *obligatory* as regards *implementation* by employees of an organization/agency *at all levels*. Circumvention or delays should not occur.

Third, if necessary, employees of an organization/agency may set up special educational programs and training on the best way to implement CE policies.

Fourth, all departments and units of an organization/agency or interdepartmental groups should take part in the development and implementation of any CE policy.

Fifth, a principle of openness should be present in developments and when introducing changes (reviews, amendments, etc.) to documents regulating CE policy.

Sixth, CE policy should be linked to or integrated into the key policy documents of any organization/agency (for example, corporate policy and strategy, such as EBRD Country Strategies, WB Country Assistance Strategy; mid-term development programs of the Ministry for Economic Development and Trade, etc.).

Seventh, CE activities should be organized in such a way that all stakeholders are represented (also taking into account a person's age and gender, social and geographic differences/balance etc.). All participants should be treated as equal and may freely express their opinions and positions. In cases of clashes of interest of multiple stakeholders, an additional weighting will be given to local community groups (i.e. affected groups) as their opinion could have a long-lasting effect on the project's outcome, especially with regard to delays.

Eighth, a special budget and other resources should be previewed with regard to planning, preparation and the implementation of CE projects. For example, for the functioning of the Civic Chamber of the RF, a separate budget line was looked at.

1.7 Tips for Setting up Civic Engagement Mechanisms for IFIs and Russian Officials

Via the interaction strategy regarding the WB, as developed by Russian NGOs in 2002, the following necessary forms of CE (also relevant to NGO engagements with EBRD) were outlined:

Organizing social meetings of CSOs for the development of common positions and suggestions with regard to projects, funded by IFIs in Russia.

Taking part in CS consultations on a number of pressing issues; making efforts to develop a consolidated position for interested social groups and local communities concerning strategic papers, programs and projects - funded by IFIs in Russia.

In order for suggestions to be able to lead to amendments in official documents and for project implementation plans to be taken into consideration, they should be introduced at the project development stage (for example, the aforementioned CS consultations should take place at an early stage, for example in the form of 'scoping' meetings).

Civil society's resorting to and making use of the (independent) expertise seen in strategies, programs and projects with this being funded by IFIs; holding social and gender-based audits, and making use of other types of CS expertise.

Gathering public opinion data on serious issues linked to the implementing of strategic documents, projects and programs, funded by IFIs in Russia.

Cooperating with already existing consultative bodies at national, regional and global levels, such as: the ECA region NGO Working Group on interactions with the WB, a Joint Facilitation Committee, the WB's External Gender Consultative Group, etc.

Organizing information campaigns via joining the efforts and resources of CSOs and IFIs on matters of mutual interest.

IFIs could be more active in awareness-raising and information dissemination in cooperation with CS network organizations, including using the mass media, general principles of work and policies, as well as via the implementation of concrete projects.

IFIs will be able to create ad hoc expert groups in the areas of their own activity using the mechanisms of wide public participation in CE projects. For example, the

participation in CE projects of different stakeholders, including those that traditionally have limited opportunities, such as: youth, local (grassroots) organizations, etc.

IFIs and executive authorities could arrange for an independent appraisal of its grant programs, including getting feedback from grant recipients and evaluations from projects-winners of grant competitions. Thus, international organizations and authorities could raise the effectiveness of their grant programs considerably, even those with a relatively small grant budget; and they could keep tabs on possible corrupt practices in the course of grant competitions and project execution. In the course of grant-seeking competitions, it is important that an independent expert council/board (or other independent body) is formed to make the final decision(s) when choosing winners. Furthermore, announcement of the grant competition and grant-related documentation should be standardized – and should include a text of the grant agreement, the principles of expert council composition, rules for reporting, project evaluation (auditing), as well as other relevant information (all being freely available to public).

International organizations and national decision-makers can decide to organize and should regularly update CSOs' own databases, or make use of existing databases. In any case, it would be useful to request a selection of organizations and contact information by sector/region in NGO support centers or via national/regional umbrella organizations.

It is not very effective to conclude an agreement to organize CE 'events' with commercial companies as commercial sub-contractors in many cases have difficulties finding a common language, both with CSOs and the authorities. It would be of greater use to attract professionally expert CSOs as mediators to hold consultations with CS and dialogues with IFIs, authorities, business and CSOs (for example, the Russian Regional Resource Center, CEE Bankwatch, etc.).

Translation of any project documentation into Russian is an absolute necessity, and it should be double-checked for the accuracy of terminology.

Structural units of international organizations evaluating their own work should be able to accept for consideration complaints on the part of CSOs within countries of operation.

2 The Organization of Civic Engagement events

At meetings with CS, a Moderator will possess a pre-defined list of presenters and interventions, and procedures for compiling such a list should be clear to all participants. CSO participants should be informed in advance on such procedures. Another option is to have procedure discussed at the beginning of the meeting/event. International organizations that aim to launch a more active consultative CS process may do so with a leading role being played by their country office, in addition to e-consultations.

At a CE event, it may well be possible to select two co-moderators, one of which will be from among CSOs and the other would represent the authorities or an international organization. Co-moderators might change each session, giving a possibility of moderating meetings for different CS organizations. If the agenda of the meeting is agreed in advance with international agencies/authorities, the process will be open and transparent. Meeting co-moderators should observe neutrality in relation to issues being discussed; while CSO representatives overseeing such a meeting need to be connected with both independent organizations monitoring the work of authorities/IFIs and partner organizations of the authorities/IFIs (for example sub-contractors).

A chance for CSOs to influence the agenda will be good practice. However, it is not advisable that one CSO or a group of CSOs monopolizes any process. A solution here could be a decision to invite *a number of* competent and strong international CSOs who could lead the agenda both thematically and time-wise.

During meetings it is important to adhere to time schedules for the interventions of participants. All CSO participants should have equal time allotted for any interventions or comments/questions, disregarding the seeming importance of an issue.

3 Evaluation and Analysis of Work Undertaken

It is worth developing and disseminating an evaluation questionnaire for participants in order to get feedback on levels of satisfaction with an 'event' and to identify any weak spots in logistics or in content. Participants should be reminded of the importance of filling in forms, and the agenda should allow time for this.

It is most likely that active information dissemination and awareness will be required of CSOs from various regions and networks when it comes to the possibility of taking

part in an annual meeting or other event open to CSO participation and organized by an international agency; public hearings should be organized by national authorities; and grant programs of international agencies and authorities should be outlined. In selecting the candidates for participation in events (when the number of participants is limited) priority should be given to organizations having professional analytical/expert knowledge or to organizations representing the interests of larger social groupings (with a big membership, a wide network of partners within and outside the country, who are members of a national or international network, provide assistance to a great number of beneficiaries from their target group, etc).

List of acronyms

CE - Civic Engagement

CE - Central and Eastern Europe region

CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizens Participation, international civil society umbrella organization

CPP - Center for Public Policy

CS - Civil society

CSI - Civil Society Index, international project of CIVICUS

CSO - Civil society organization

EBRD - European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

ECA - Europe and Central Asia region (in the WB classification this includes Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Turkey and South-East Europe)

EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

IBRD - International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, part of the World Bank Group

IDA - International Development Agency, part of the World Bank Group

IFC - International Finance Corporation, part of the World Bank Group

IFI - International financial institutions

IRM - Independent Recourse Mechanism, part of EBRD

MDGs - Millennium Development Goals

NGO - Non-governmental organization

OSI - Open Society Institute

RF - Russian Federation

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

WB - The World Bank Group. The present paper looks at 3 out of the 5 institutions of the World Bank Group – IBRD, WBI and IFC.

WHO - World Health Organization

WBI - World Bank Institute, part of the World Bank Group

Endnotes

[1] According to the USAID Democracy Initiatives Final Survey Report for Russia (2003-2004) there is a link between a 'dis-enabling' of the external environment, in which CSOs operate and decreases in political activity in Russia's cities: Moscow, St.Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Novossibirsk, Samara, Chelyabinsk, Rostov-on-Don, Perm, Saratov, Khabarovsk, Irkutsk and Tomsk.

[2] An excellent rationale for the inclusion of civic engagement in global economic governance can be found in "Democratizing the Global Economy. The Role of Civil Society", a study based on interviews with over 200 civil society organizations in seven countries, including Russia, and written by Jan Aart Scholte, Director of the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick [<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/> - Research -Projects].<>

[3] For more details on the structure and role of NGOs and civil society groups see USAID NGO Sustainability Index for Russia, CIVICUS Civil Society Index for Russia.

[4] Issues and Options for Improving Engagement Between the World Bank and Civil Society Organizations. The World Bank, draft from 24 October 2003, and final version: March 2005<>

[5] Final documents, adopted at the G8 Summit, Gleneagles, Great Britain, 8 July 2005/ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the RF, 11 July 2005./ www.mid.ru/

[6] Politologia. Ed. by A. Мельвилъ and a group of authors. Moscow, MGIMO RF, 2004.

[7] Comprehensive research into Russian CSOs (results of which have open access) in 2005 were carried out by USAID (NGO Sustainability Index, etc.) and the World Alliance for Citizens' Participation together with the St.Petersburg "Strategy" Center, State University-Higher School of Economic and coalition "We, Citizens!" (Civil Society Index). Further, similar research has been done by the National Project Institute (INP) and CAF-Russia.

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[15] Санкт-Петербург, г. Пушкин, 14-15 сентября 2004 г.

[16] Report "Russian Federation – Transition Report Update". Официальный сайт Европейского банка реконструкции и развития <http://www.ebrd.org/>

[17] See Proskuryakova L. Changing Security Agenda in Russia and Europe's North. The New Role for Cross-Sectoral Interactions in New Security as Challenges to Peace Research. St.Petersburg University Press, 2004.

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[22] See Special Report on HIV/AIDS prevention, December 2005 / UNAIDS
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