

Development strategy of the Viribus Unitis Foundation 2015 - 2020

Nowy Sącz

2015-05-01

Summary

The Viribus Unitis Foundation for Regional Development (VUF) is a Polish civil society organization operating in Europe and Asia. We have been particularly active in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Serbia, and Montenegro. In the next five years (2015-2020) we wish to establish a fully operational branches of the VUF in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Serbia empowering disadvantaged groups in these countries. Therefore, hereby strategy will serve as a guidance to achieve that aim.

Background

The Viribus Unitis Foundation (VUF) of Regional Development was established in 2010 by three entrepreneurs and colleagues who wished to work in the non-governmental sector. Over the time the VUF has specialized in the promotion of human rights and democratic values. In addition, our organization has been particularly active in the area of social inclusion and participation of the disadvantaged groups. Our major beneficiaries include the deaf, ethnic minorities (e.g. Gypsies), elderly, and unemployed. The relative proportion of our activities dedicated to each group has been shown on figure 1.

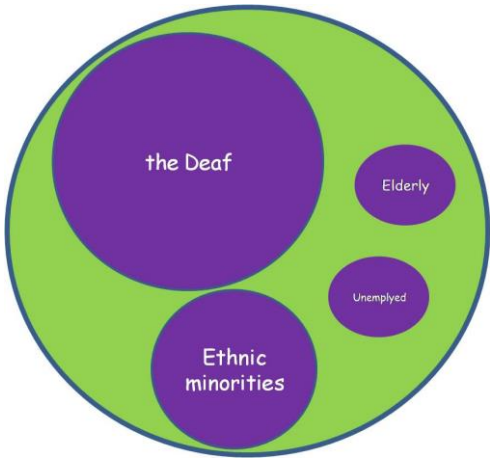


Figure 1. Relative proportion of our time and daily activities dedicated to each beneficiary group by the VUF

The VUF has been financed by the national (Polish) and international funding bodies. On behalf of the Polish authorities the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is a major source of our funding. We have been also partially funded by the Stefan Batory Foundation and the Polish children and Youth Foundation. Internationally, we have been extensively funded by the International Visegrad Fund, the Europe for Citizens Programme, and EEA Grants, figure 2.



Figure 2. the key funding providers for the VUF

Our major achievements include publishing of a report about watchdog civil society organization (SCOs) from Poland and Europe¹, extensive networking with other European CSOs, and establishment of an informal network of CSOs from Poland and Georgia. Just recently, we have set up the Association of Balkan Development in Serbia.

Identity of organization

Mission

Empowerment of the disadvantaged groups is of a primary mission for our organization.

Values

Our core values are *solidarity*, *tolerance*, and *equality*. We have been also driven by a strong moral obligation of making effort to give back the world what Poland was provided by foreign CSOs when our country was ruled by the totalitarian governments before 1990.

Vision

We aim to be an international CSO operating in the Eurasia (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Poland and the Balkan Countries e.g. Serbia) with a strong record on the projects dedicated to the deaf, unemployed, ethnic minorities, and promotion of human rights. We wish to develop and strengthen our capacity to be able to conduct international projects with multiple partners upon various political attitude towards CSO in the Eurasia.

¹ <http://www.viribus.org/images/pliki/raport.pdf> [access: 20.04.2015]

Strategy process

The strategy has been developed by the key members of the staff in the VUF: Jakub Józefiak, Krzysztof Poreba, Łukasz Sus, Wojciech Żurowicz, and Łukasz Kołodziej. To make analysis up to date and useful we have conducted extensive research using PESTEL (table 1) and SWOT (table 2) tools.

Table 1 Analysis of the key areas defining activities of the VUF in the futures

Political	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries of the Caucasus region and Balkans may experience political turmoil resulting from a competitive interest of the EU, USA, and Russia • Governments of the Western countries make effort to spread democratic values, human rights and actively promote independent third sector in the developing countries • There may be a gap between political declarations and available funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be an increasing pressure on Polish funds available for CSOs • The EU will favor projects with multiple partners involved and of international scope of action • To mitigate reduced funding opportunities SCOs will have to make effort to diversify sources of their funding
Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International experiences with the development of CSOs show that parallel to the capacity building of the third sector more people is attracted to SCOs as volunteers, collaborators, and full time employees • Globalization will further contribute to high inequality and increasing poverty creating opportunities for CSOs to operate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various activities and projects can be conducted online without necessity to be permanently present in the country of interest • Technological improvements in the online translation (e.g. google translator) will make international communication easier and cheaper
Environmental	Legal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change will make a negative impact on the socioeconomic status of the disadvantaged groups • Increasing popularity of the environmentalism will also promote the role of CSOs in alleviation of poverty in the developing countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries of the Balkan and Caucasus regions may pass legislation promoting SCOs and facilitating activities of CSOs • EU may introduce policies and legal acts encouraging CSO from EU to conduct projects in the developing countries

Table 2 Dealing with challenged faced by the Viribus Unitis Foundation

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly educated and motivated members of the staff • Experience in national and international project management • Office well equipped and owner of the office • Good networking skills and ability of making long term partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal procedures rely heavily on personal communication rather than on the codified mode of action • The proposals drafted and submitted for consideration by the funding bodies have been poorly reviewed in the contexts of the long term strategy • The collaboration between members of the staff could be stronger
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive attitude of the governments from developing countries towards CSOs • Dedicated funds for capacity building of NGOs operating in the Balkan countries and the region of Caucasus • Local activists in the regions of our interest have been keen to collaborate with foreign CSOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political turmoil in the Balkan countries and/or in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan • Economic crisis in the Euro zone may influence the availability of the funds for CSOs • Unknown legal regulations effecting functioning of the CSOs in Europe upon ratification of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the USA

Strategic priorities

In the next five years we would like to achieve the following strategic aims (summarized figure 3, page 7):

- 1) To establish and develop fully operational branches of the VUF in Serbia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan
- 2) To act as a multiplier of good practices among CSOs in the regions of Balkan and Caucasus
- 3) To become a recognizable provider of support for our target groups
- 4) To keep our current status and operational capacity in Poland

To achieve these strategic objectives we have decided to implement the following measures:

- 1) Organized an office for grant management and international affairs
- 2) Started registration of the Association of Balkan Development in Serbia
- 3) Develop an informal network of organizations in Georgia and Poland as an umbrella organization for voluntary CSOs operating in these two countries
- 4) Prioritized our international activities over national and local granting schemes

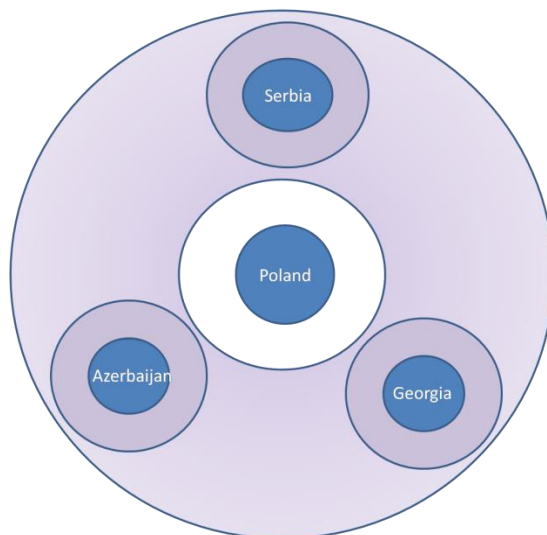


Figure 3. Strategic aims of the VUF in Eurasia

In the next five years we wish to establish fully operational branches of the VUF in Azerbaijan and Serbia. Our activities will influence on the stakeholders in these countries (violet colour) and entire regions (blue colour). At the same time we aim to stay very active in Poland.

Implication of the strategy

Implementation of our strategy implies the VUF must improve on international grant management, especially on fundraising and management of the scarce resources available for VUF. We have to keep our organization well staffed and working as a team. Thus, priority should be given for team building activities. The VUF should also improve on the functioning of her office for grant management and international affairs. It may be difficult to achieve the full operational activity of that office unless somebody would be specifically hired to monitor upcoming grant calls and drafting grant proposals of good quality.

-Accepted-

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