

Inclusive Strategic Policy-making: Examining Stakeholder Engagement in the Development of Slovenia's NGO Strategy

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Abstract: The paper will present the involvement of stakeholders in the preparation of the new strategy for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Slovenia 2024-2029. We will try to assess the procedural effectiveness and inclusivity of the stakeholder engagement process. Given the strategic importance of NGOs in promoting public interest across various domains—such as volunteering, governance, social services, education, and human rights—understanding the mechanisms by which they are included in policy making is crucial for ensuring their active and meaningful participation in (good) public governance. Key RQs will focus on the following topics: 1. Inclusivity of stakeholder engagement: To what extent does the strategy process ensure that a diverse range of NGOs, representing different areas of public interest, are involved? Are smaller, grassroots organizations given the same opportunities to participate as larger, more established NGOs? 2. Methods of consultation and participation: What mechanisms are used by the government to consult stakeholders? This could involve evaluating whether traditional forms of consultation (e.g., public hearings, written feedback) are being effectively supplemented by digital platforms, workshops, or round-table discussions to capture a broader spectrum of voices. 3. Transparency and Accountability: How transparent is the process of strategy formulation? Are the feedback and recommendations from NGOs documented and/or made publicly available? Examining the transparency of these processes can reveal whether stakeholder inputs genuinely influence public policy in shaping strategic documents or are merely symbolic. The methodological approach of this research, will be based on a mixed-methods approach and will combine qualitative interviews with key stakeholders (e.g., representatives from various NGOs, government officials) with a quantitative survey to capture a broader range of perspectives. Content analysis of both strategic policy documents (strategy 12018-2023 and 2024-2029) will help assess how stakeholder inputs are integrated into final strategic public policies. By focusing on the procedural aspects of stakeholder involvement, the research could identify gaps and propose recommendations for enhancing participatory governance, while the findings could have broader implications for understanding the role of NGOs in shaping strategic public policy in Slovenia and the CEE region.