

Notes for the statement

AICESIS Workshop to share experiences “Good everyday working practices in ESCs and similar institutions: measuring their impact and added value”

Luxembourg, 3 March 2017

Dear Mr. President,

Dear colleagues,

1. In its daily functioning the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation applies several criteria to **assess the impact and the added value** of its activities in various fields of action.

2. One of the main functions of the Civic Chamber is to hold **expert examinations of draft federal constitutional laws**, draft federal laws, draft laws and regulations of the Government of the Russian Federation, constituent entities of the Russian Federation and local self-government bodies. The Civic Chamber issues opinions on a variety of subjects to authorities, thus acting as a bridge between the RF's decision-making institutions and RF citizens. That is why we conduct analysis of the quantity of our recommendations and opinions taken into consideration by decision-makers on issues of a great public and social importance.

3. Starting from 2014 the Civic Chamber has conducted **expert examination of more than 150 draft laws on various issues**. Only in 2016 more than 50 laws were considered within the framework of “zero readings” – at the stage of preparation of draft document for introduction to the Parliament. In particular, we pointed out 20 draft laws of a particular importance for our country and society that passed examination in the Civic Chamber in 2014-2016, including several legislative initiatives on NGOs regulation in Russia. We could also stress 4 major laws that was not supported by the Civic Chamber because of possible negative effects and consequently rejected by the Parliament. Moreover, during the mentioned period we noted 19 draft laws, which were seriously amended following Chamber’s examination. Thanks to this, for instance, we managed to introduce some facilitations for NGOs in Russia, correct legislation on debt collection from citizens, etc., which had a broad positive impact.

4. Quantitative approach to assess the added value of activities of the Civic Chamber could be applied to other fields of our action, such as support of **civil initiatives and NGOs’ projects, citizens appeals**. Every year the Civic Chamber helps to implement hundreds of civil initiatives of a social importance across the

country, and this number is growing. Every year the Chamber and its members receive from 25 to 35 thousand of citizens' appeals asking for assistance in practical problems of interaction with public authorities. In many cases members of the Civic Chamber manage to resolve the existing problems of concrete people and NGOs, the share of which is also one of criteria of our success.

5. Besides, it is obvious that quantitative criteria is not sufficient to measure the **general impact of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on the development of civil society in Russia**, system of public control, civil activity and culture in general, participatory democracy, building bridges between the society and the government.

6. More than ten years of work of the Civic Chamber resulted in emergence, shaping and evolution of the **system of public control (or public oversight) in the Russian Federation**, which has several components. Adoption of the Federal Law 'On Basic Principles of Public Oversight in the Russian Federation' in July 2014 became a significant milestone and recognition of the Civic Chamber performance efficiency. The Federal Law establishes the legal framework for organising and carrying out public oversight, its goals and objectives, principles and forms, as well as procedures and methods for determining and disclosing its results. The Law stipulates the right of citizens and public organisations to engage in carrying out public oversight, and sets forth subjects and objects of public oversight, their legal status, rights and responsibilities, and forms of cooperation. Public oversight is being increasingly approached as a platform for dialogue between civil society and public authorities. By encouraging search for solution to social problems public oversight provides rise of both civil activism and social responsibility.

7. Another important point concerns **Public councils within ministries and agencies, permanent advisory and consultative bodies of public oversight**. They are designed to ensure cooperation between citizens of Russia and bodies of federal, regional and local power to take into account the requirements and interests of citizens, to protect their rights and freedoms in developing and implementing state policy. Public councils are aimed at monitoring activities of federal executive authorities, including public procurement. Public councils have been established at 53 federal bodies of power (e.a. Federal Security Service, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Affairs). In 2015 the Civic Chamber and Russian Governmental Expert Council introduced a new procedure for establishment of councils, with 75% of public councils members to be nominated by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and the rest 25% by the Russian Governmental

Expert Council. Such proportion provides a reasonable balance between representatives of civic organisations and expert community.

8. Regarding the expert examination of draft laws, in 2014 the Civic Chamber tried a new approach to expert examination - the **so called 'zero readings'** of draft normative legal acts as a part of improvement of lawmaking process. In other words, 'zero readings' mean public participation not only in the assessment of prepared draft documents, but also contribution to the creation of draft documents, i.e. discussion of conceptual basis, formulation of basic ideas. 'Zero readings' encourage open dialogue between civil society and authorities. Accepted by society, 'zero readings' became a regular fixture of the Civic Chamber.

9. **To sum up**, in order to evaluate our impact, we need to conduct broad and thorough analysis of the evolution of the Russian civil society and the system of public control.