

## NFCS is...

a state financed civil society fund established in 2008 by Estonian Ministry of the Interior. Our aim is to build the capacity of Estonian CSOs and shape an environment that fosters civic action.

## WHAT DO WE DO?

- Annually we provide about €1m of smart funding for around 100 projects ranging from local initiatives to international cooperation. Information about all of the projects and grants is public on our website.
- Majority of our funds are distributed through open calls for capacity building projects (improving leadership, communication, social entrepreneurship skills, being better in advocacy, achieving impact, etc.)
- One of our focuses with grants is set on improving CSOs' international co-operation skills and exchanging civil society experiences around the world
- We have a special acceleration and funding programme NULA for innovative ideas with great impact on solving important societal problems in Estonia.
- We provide nationwide free counselling for CSOs through county development centers and put great focus on developing CSOs in other ways (trainings, experience sharing), aside from just funding.
- We endorse and support active citizenship and therefore fund the annual Estonian volunteers' recognition event and give out a substantial prize money for Estonian CSO of the year.
- We work closely together with the Ministry of the Interior and other partners active in developing civil society in Estonia.

## WHO DO WE SUPPORT?

CSOs that are at least 1 year old, act ethically in public interest and are not under the dominant influence of the state, local municipality or business organisations. Information about their activities and annual reports must be found online.

## HISTORY AND GENERAL INFORMATION

In the 90s, after the restoration of independence, funding for Estonian CSOs mostly came from the west. State funding was scarce and not for capacity building. By the end of 90s Estonia was evaluated as a democratic country and foreign support to our CSOs came largely to an end. The need to develop national measures for civil society growth emerged.

In 2002 the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept was devised, stating future goals, principles of cooperation and roles of public sector and CSOs. Establishing a national foundation was then proposed.

From its launch in 2008, NFCS has been the major organisation to carry out Estonian Civil Society Development Concept and the more precise 5-year governing documents - Civil Society Development Plans.



# DEVELOPING ESTONIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

GRANTS

COUNSELLING

OPEN CALLS

TRAININGS

INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION

## CONTACT

National Foundation of Civil Society  
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[kysk@kysk.ee](mailto:kysk@kysk.ee)

[www.kysk.ee/nfcs](http://www.kysk.ee/nfcs)

## HOW DO WE OPERATE?

We have a strict division of responsibilities in our organisational structure to ensure transparency, expertise and to avoid conflicts of interests.

### SUPERVISORY BOARD

Consisting of 5-7 representatives from public sector and civil society organisations, with the latter having majority of seats, the board plans and supervises NFCS' work, decides its budget and major grants.

### BUREAU

The bureau of 8 people deals with everyday work of NFCS: devising and administering grant programmes, monitoring the correct use of project funds and chasing grants' impact on CSOs (Civil Society Organisations), cooperating with other civil society developers, etc.

### PROJECT ASSESSORS

A team of 15 independent civil society experts who assess projects with a principle of 3 assessors for each project and by using a list of evaluation criteria previously decided by the supervisory board. This ensures objective and conflict-free proposals for funding. The final grant decisions are confirmed by either the executive director or the supervisory board.

### CONSULTANTS IN COUNTIES

NFCS coordinates CSO consultants in all of Estonia's 15 counties' development centers who provide free counselling throughout the lifecycle of CSOs and hold trainings on various important topics for CSOs. [www.makis.ee/en/](http://www.makis.ee/en/)

### CLOSE DAILY CONTACT WITH CSOS

We include our target group in drawing up conditions for grant applying, ask constantly for feedback (and give it about projects as well), also visit them. We are open to communication at any time to improve our approach and gain better results, to increase the impact of our support.

## OUR IMPACT

With our smart and outcome-oriented funding we have benefited the growth of lots of nation-wide and local CSOs who have become major contributors in public debate and legislation in their respective fields.

Over the years we have strengthened a great number of different capacities of organisations so they could become more effective in achieving their goals in the field they work in. Some examples include

- 20 organisation's donation systems – e.g. Estonian Refugee Council, Human Rights Centre.
- 40 organisation's communication systems – e.g. SOS Children's Village, e-Governance Academy.
- 50 organisation's leadership system – e.g. Estonian Environmental Law Center, Federation of Student Unions.

CSO's will to develop and become more capable is what matters, not their field of work. We have given support to many different organisations from very different fields - alternative schools, environmentalists, social service providers, youth organizations as well as umbrella organizations and networks.

Impact measurement is important to us as is being an open-minded and transparent donor. We have an outcome-oriented reporting system, we hold seminars where grant receivers share their experiences on reaching their goals. We also contact them 2 years after the project period.

## SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

In addition to capacity building funds and encouraging international co-operation, we put major focus on supporting bold, innovative and large-scale ideas of different type that contribute to the development of strong civil society. On the next page you can find only some good examples.



**Let's Do It!** is a civic led movement which began in Estonia during 2008 when 50,000 people gathered to clean up the entire country in just five hours. Throughout the years, NFCS has supported its growth towards an international movement, now with over 100 countries and 13 million participants. [www.letsdoitworld.org](http://www.letsdoitworld.org)



**Arvamusfestival - Festival of Opinion Culture**, funded by NFCS among others, is a large, self-evolving communitywide festival open to everyone. Its aim is to bring active and alert people together to discuss important issues in society. The format of the festival is imported from Sweden and its success has urged Latvians to follow our example. [www.arvamusfestival.ee/en](http://www.arvamusfestival.ee/en)



We have been one of the major contributors to the launch of social entrepreneurship in Estonia. In 2011 we supported the creation of **Estonian Social Enterprise Network** and since then we have worked side by side with them, developing the field. [www.sev.ee/en](http://www.sev.ee/en)



In 2016 **Topsisiring** or so-called 'cup circle' won our acceleration and funding programme NULA and is now changing the world. It aims to replace all the disposable cups at festivals and events for durable and washable drinking cups. [www.topsiring.ee](http://www.topsiring.ee)



CSO called **Minutes of Stillness** is one of the alumni of NULA programme. The aim of the organisation is to bring mindfulness and self-regulation skills such as the ability to focus and manage stress to all kindergartens and schools through the Estonian educational system. Almost 5,000 teachers have been trained on this topic. [www.vaikuseminutid.ee](http://www.vaikuseminutid.ee)