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Key Insights

CSO Compass:

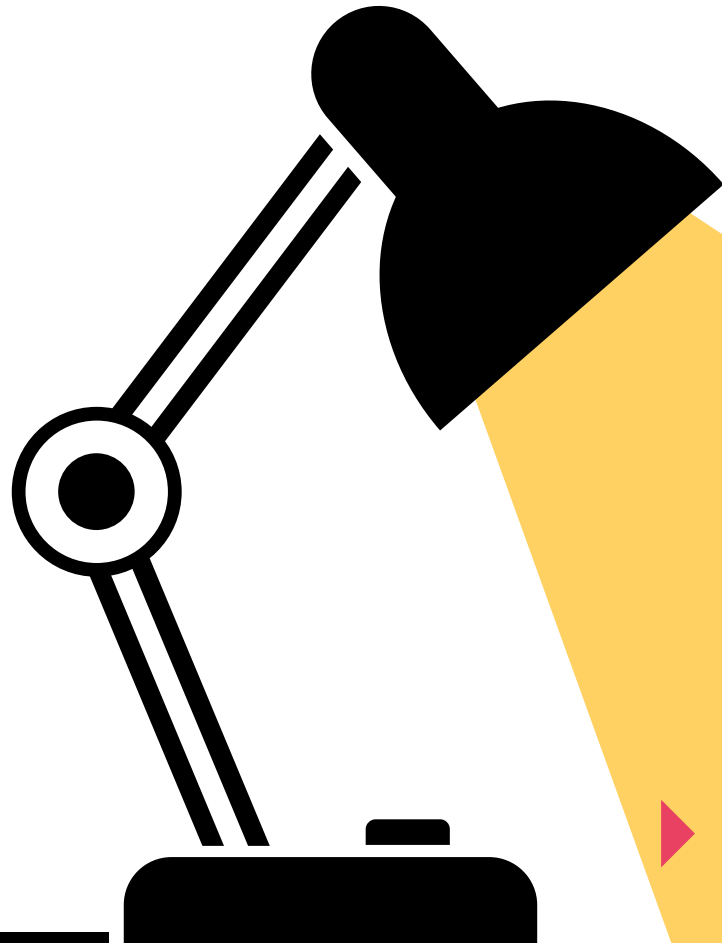
Unfolding
Moldovan Civil Society Organizations
Landscape

February 26th, 2025



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Country Director
People in Need

BACKGROUND



▶ **Government Open Data Portal: ~13000 CSOs to the 31st of December 2024**

▶ **OECD (2021)
Catalogue of the NGOs
75 Left, 39 Right Bank**

▶ **~1% of all CSOs**

▶ **UN Women (2023)
182 CSOs involved
in refugee response**

▶ **~1,5% of all CSOs**

▶ **HARTA ONG (live)
252 NGOs**

▶ **~2% of all CSOs**

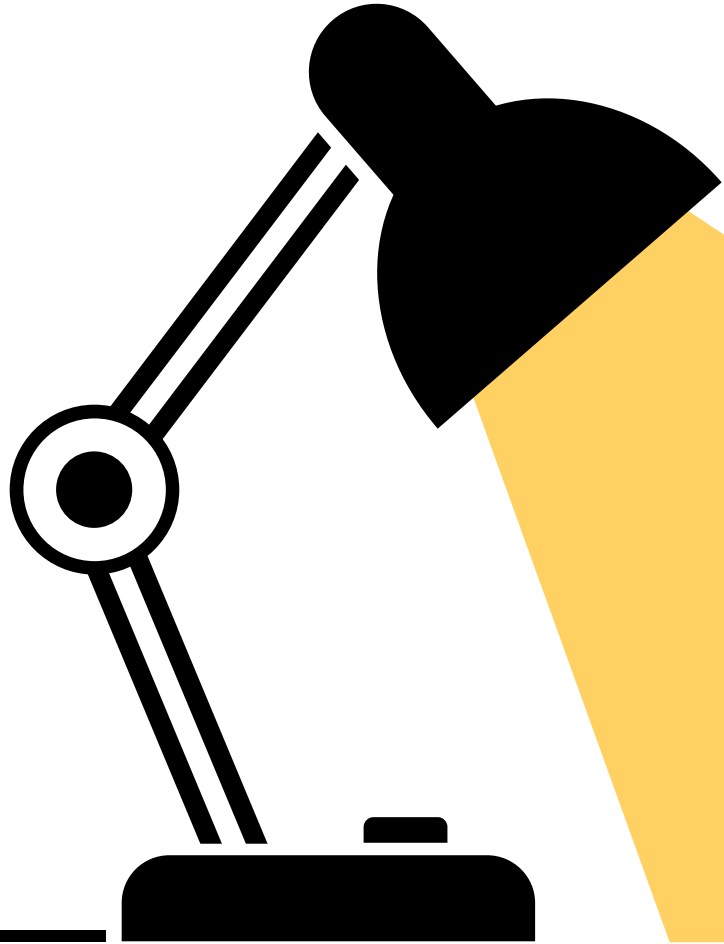
▶ **How many are “active”?**

▶ **PIN historically over 200 grantees**

▶ **63 active grants in 2023**

▶ **Identified overlaps
and recurrence**²

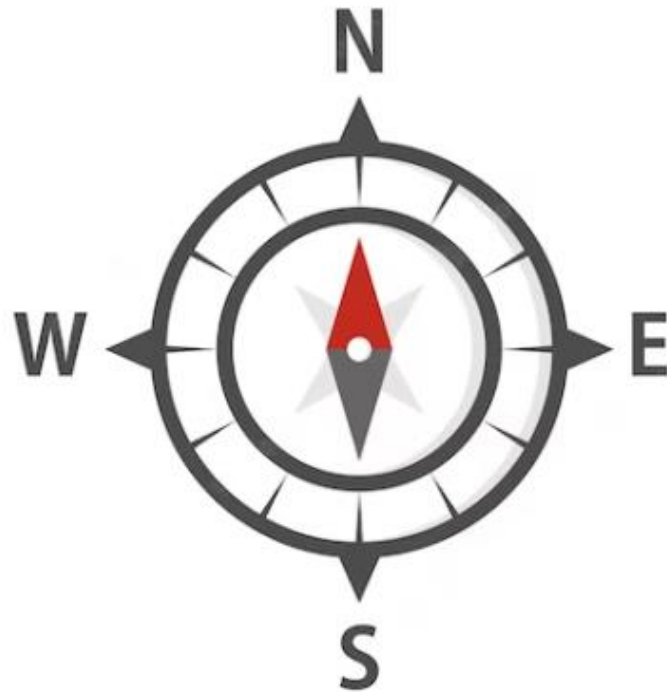
JUSTIFICATION



- ▶ **The lack of full picture in light of localisation agenda**
- ▶ Dispersed information – everybody has some piece of information
- ▶ **Duplicating efforts – many INGOs, UN, donors work with the same CSOs**
- ▶ Limited CSOs receiving foreign funds + always the same ones
- ▶ **Networking and cooperation between local CSOs vs. competition for funding**

**(1)
CSO
MAP**

**(2)
CSO STUDY**



**(3)
CSO
PLAN/
PLATFORM**

**CSO COMPASS
MOLDOVA**

and more...



1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries



2. Discovering CSOs Diversity



3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience



4. Setting the Next Landmarks



1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries: Definitions

European Union definition of CSOs “Civil society refers to **all forms of social action** carried out by individuals or groups who are **neither connected to nor managed by state authorities**. A civil society organisation is an organisational structure whose members **serve the general interest** through a **democratic process** and which plays the role of **mediator between public authorities and citizens**.”

OECD definition of CSOs: “**non-market and non-state organisations** outside of the family in which **people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain**. They cover a wide range of organisations that include membership-based CSOs, cause-based CSOs and service-oriented CSOs. Examples include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women’s rights groups, farmers’ associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, and the not-for-profit media.”

1. **A collective of individuals**
2. **Not controlled or managed by the state or other forms of power**
3. **Not seeking individual profit**
4. **With a purpose of common good or public service**
5. **Governed democratically**
6. **Having a role of intermediation between the public authorities and the people**

Inherent contradiction of civil society

it cannot be connected, managed or controlled by any form of public authority or powers, but at the same time it seeks the same objective for which those public authorities and powers are established in the first place



1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries: Civic Space

- Role for CSOs as **democratic mediator between the interests of citizens and the state.**
- For being non-market and non-state, **civil society space is often referred to as a third sector**
- **Some theoretical perspectives:**

Three **broad categories of democratic effects** of CSOs (Warren, 2001):

- 1. developmental effects on individuals** (efficacy, information, political skills, civic virtues and critical skills)
- 2. public sphere / discourse effects** (public communication and deliberation, representations of difference, representations of commonality)
- 3. institutional effects** (representation, resistance, subsidiarity, coordination and cooperation, democratic legitimation)

Six **potential democratic contributions** of associations (Fung, 2003):

1. the intrinsic good of association and freedom to associate
2. civic socialisation and political education
3. resistance and checking power;
4. interest representation
5. public deliberation and the public sphere
6. direct governance

Seven **functions of CSOs which interact with governments and markets:**

1. market support
2. the provision of public goods
3. the provision of private goods analogous to public goods
4. the facilitation of political action
5. the provision of cultural services
6. the facilitation of self-determination
7. the facilitation of entrepreneurship



1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries: Categories

CSO categorization

- **A theoretical and practical challenge:** *What commonly accepted categories to use? What standard typology to categorize? What does the legislation say?*

CSO Compass covers:

- The purpose
- The sectors of activities
- The activities
- The target groups
- Geographical coverage
- Size or capacities

Type	Activity	Description
The “Big Three”	Advocate systematically	Public/private activities aimed at directly shifting or influencing public policy
	Build capacity	Coordinating and running training, leadership development and education activities
	Deliver service	Providing free service delivery or material goods, including charity
“Business as usual”	Manage organisation	Various activities to keep functioning, including self-governance, measurement and evaluation
	Engage community	Coordination, training or activating volunteer labour relating to other CSO activities
	Work collaboratively	Working with other CSOs through formal and informal networks, alliances, coalitions, etc.
Enabling	Hold space	Providing spaces where other can meet and conduct activities, whether virtual or in person
	Provide funding	Coordinating, managing and distributing funding to community groups and other CSOs
	Coordinate network	Facilitating/convening groups of CSOs working together, e.g. facilitator, peak, intermediary, etc.
	Conduct research	Formal or informal research, for policy development, evaluation and advocacy, etc.

Source: Riboldi, M. (2024). A typology of civil society organisation activities: a multi-grounded theory approach to what CSOs do. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 59(2), 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2024.2362211>

1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries: CSO Compass



Not all non-commercial organizations are civil society organizations

Non-commercial Juridical Form RO Non-commercial Juridical Form ENG	Common type of non-commercial organisations under each legal form in Moldova	Form of CSO	Included in CSO Compass
Asociația Obștească Public Association	Associations of: parents and teachers, farmers, local residents, animal protection. Unions of workers and professionals. Cultural societies, sports clubs. Development NGOs.	Yes	Yes
Asociația Patronală Employers' Association	Associations of producers, processors, growers, entrepreneurs, importers, transporters, etc. and chambers of commerce	Mainly Yes	Yes
Cult religios și parte componentă Religious cult and component part	Religious cult, religious community and religious institution	Yes	No
Fundația Foundation	Cultural, religious and charity oriented, private sector foundations, international, development promotion org.	Yes	Yes
Instituția Privată Private Institution	<u>Education</u> : Academies, institutes, schools, colleges, universities <u>Social and cultural</u> : periodicals, cultural centers, theaters, clubs	Mainly No	No
Instituția Publică Public Institution	<u>Education</u> : Academies, schools, colleges, universities <u>Social and cultural</u> : community centers, cultural centers	No	No
Partid și altă organizație social-politică Party and other social-political organiz.	Political parties and political movements	Yes and No	No
Publicația Periodică Periodical Publication	Newsletter, gazette, magazine, periodical, newspaper	Yes	Yes
Sindicatul Trade Union	Trade union centre, trade union organization, trade union federation	Yes	Yes
Uniunea de persoane juridice Union of legal persons	Associations of producers, processors, growers, entrepreneurs, importers, transporters, etc. and chambers of commerce	Mainly Yes	Yes
Altă organizație necomercială Other non-commercial organisation	Association of water users, association of condominium owners, sectoral committees for vocational training, iNGOs, intercommunity development association, local action groups.	Mainly Yes	Yes



1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries



2. Discovering CSOs Diversity



3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience

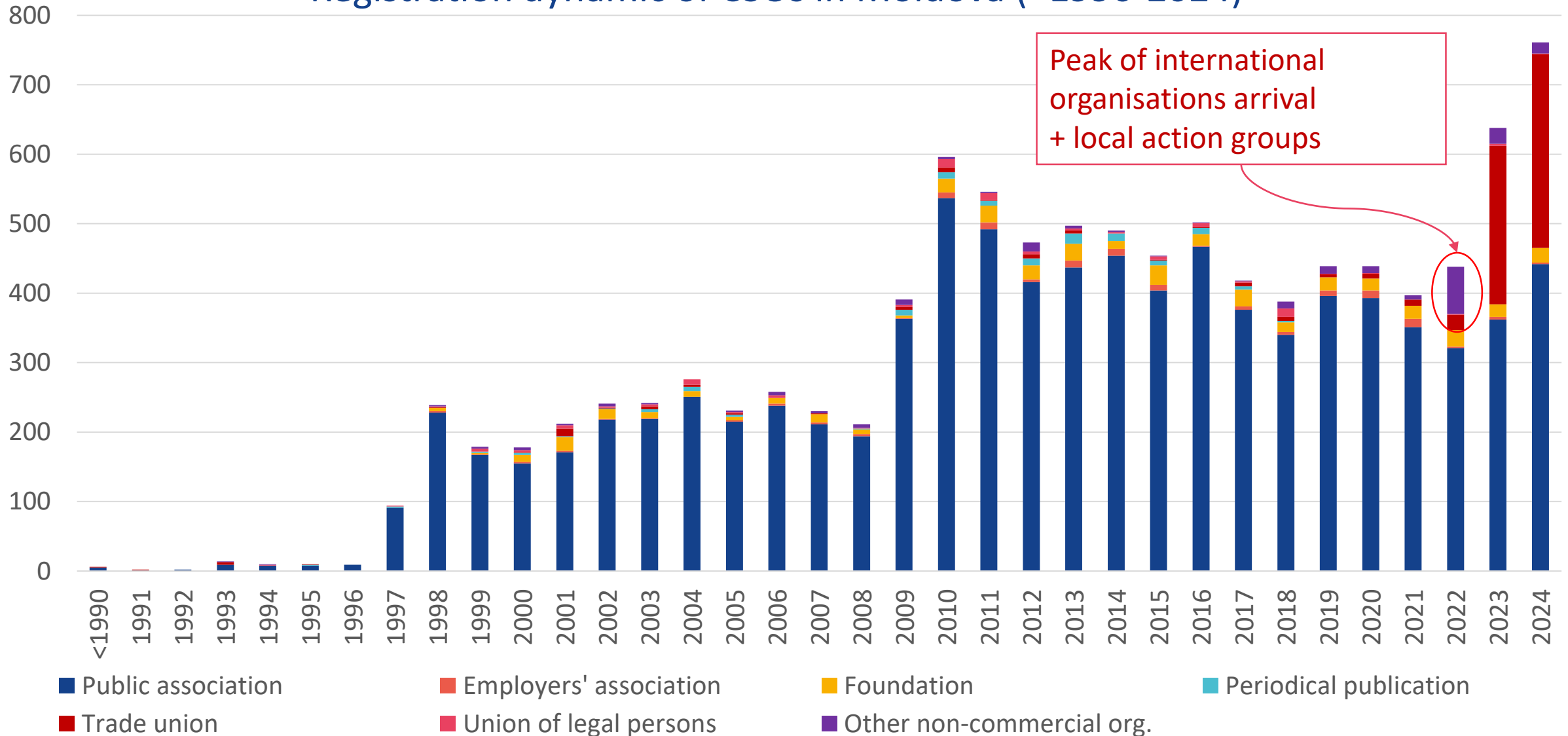


4. Setting the Next Landmarks



2. Discovering CSOs Diversity: Creation

Registration dynamic of CSOs in Moldova (<1990-2024)

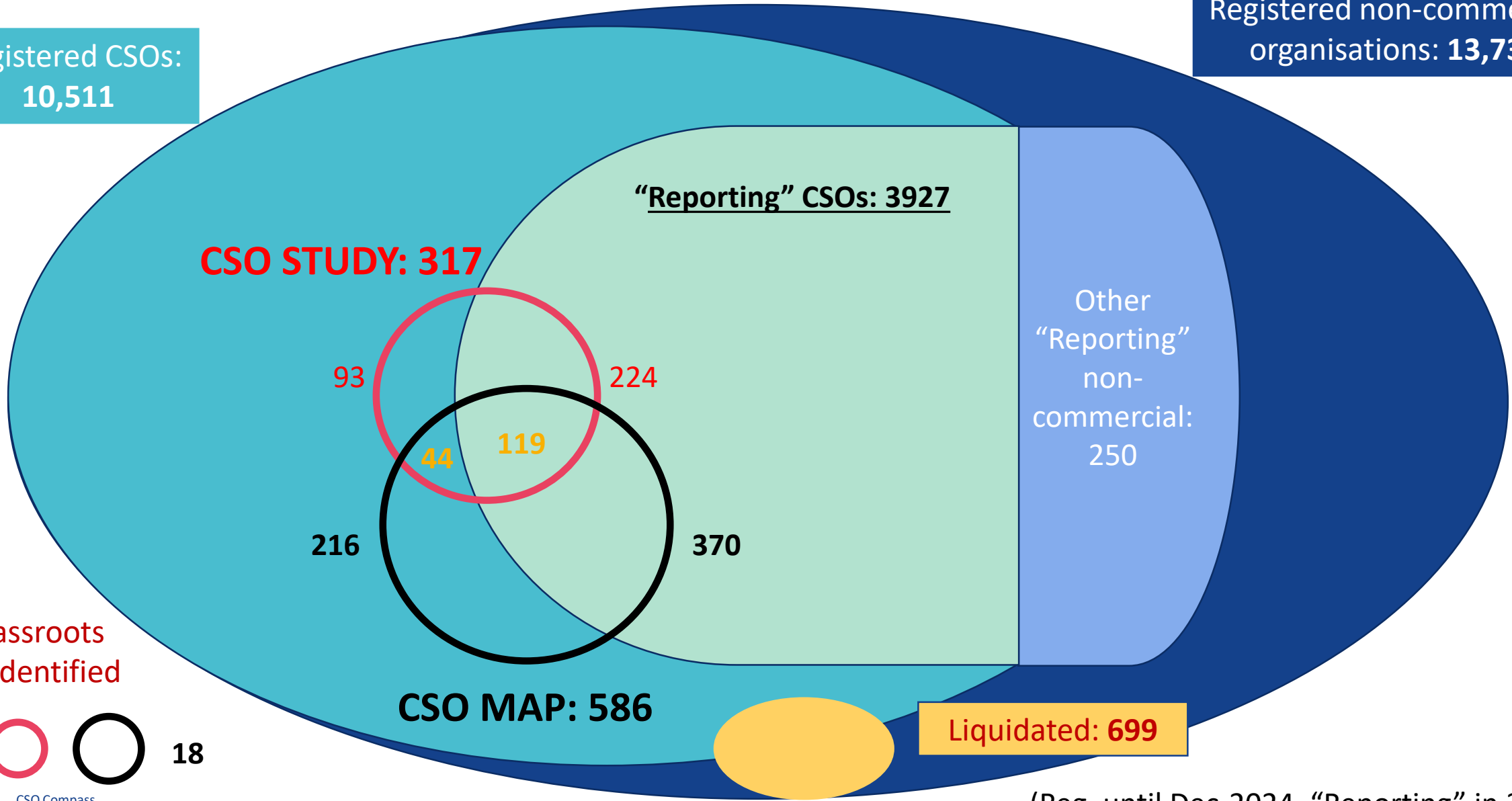




2. Discovering CSOs Diversity: The Landscape

Registered non-commercial organisations: **13,732**

Registered CSOs: **10,511**



+ Grassroots or unidentified

15 18
CSO Compass

(Reg. until Dec-2024, "Reporting" in 2023)



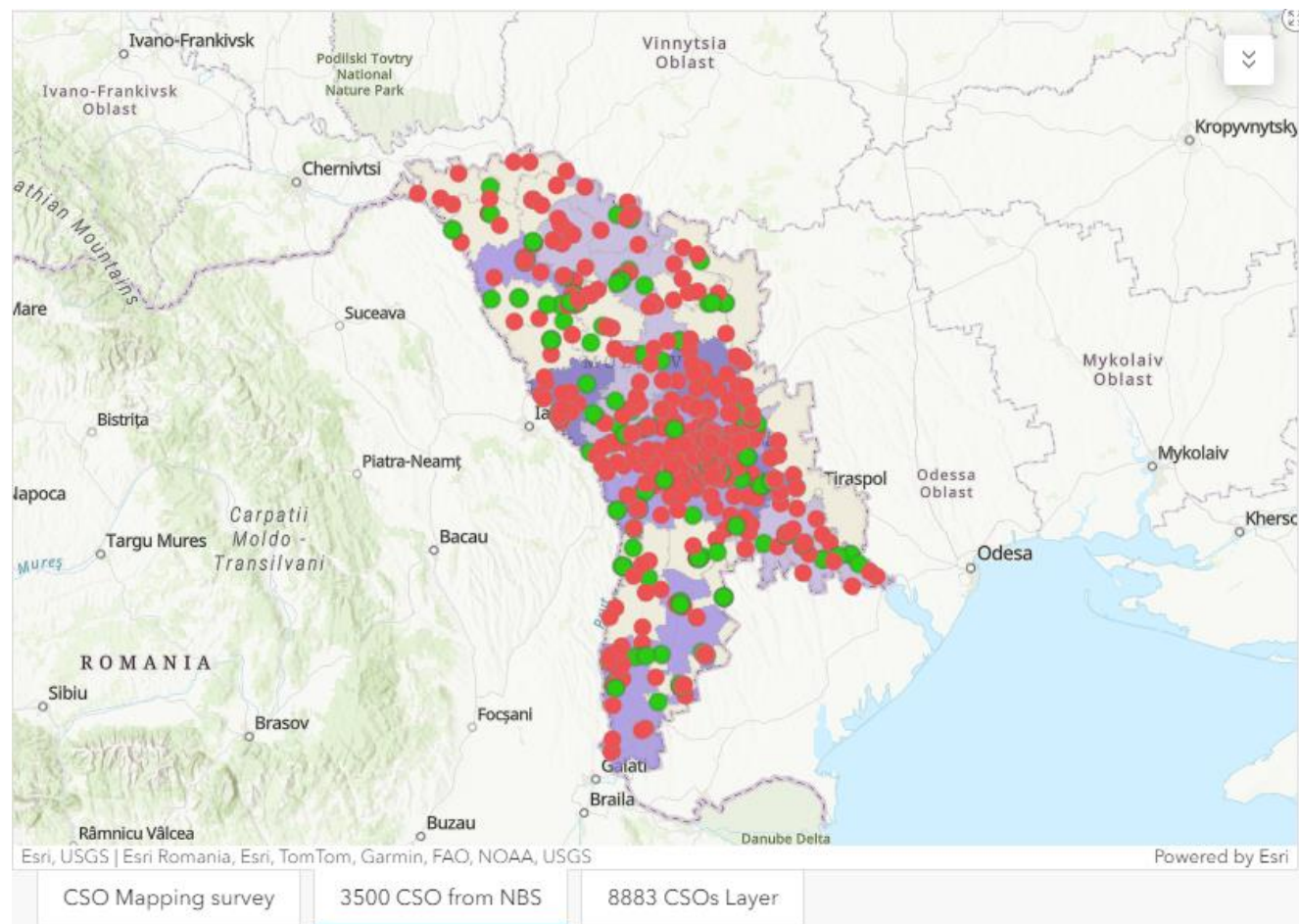
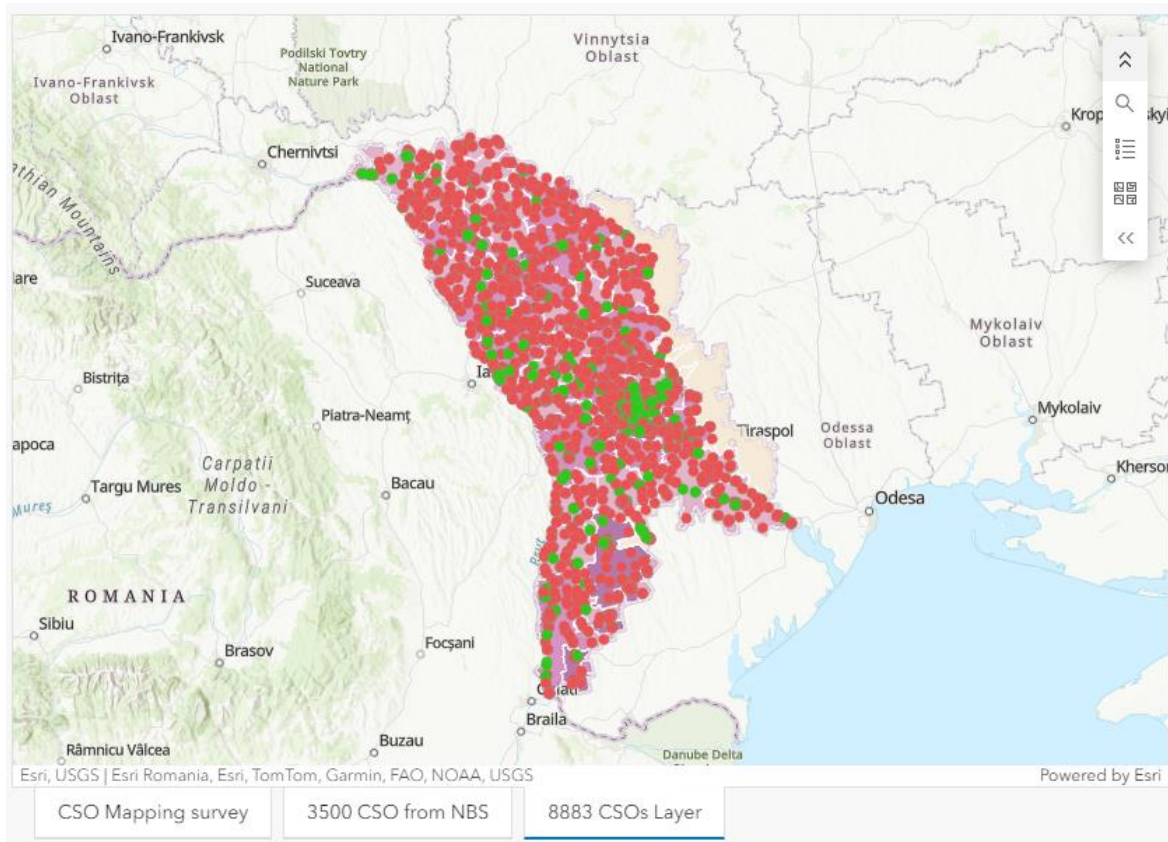
2. Discovering CSOs Diversity: The Landscape



- The **Moldovan landscape can be dimensioned at around 5,000 “active” civil society organisations:**
 - ~2,700 presenting their financial statements
 - ~900 active, but not presenting them
 - ~1,400 created in the last 2 years
- This universe of organisations is rapidly growing:
 - **2 CSOs are created every day in Moldova**
 - **While 1 is officially liquidated every 4 days**
- Comes the question of overlap, real capacities, efficiency and overall financial sustainability.
- The **CSO Map** seeks to cover that informational gap and **facilitate the identification active CSOs** while portraying their capacities.

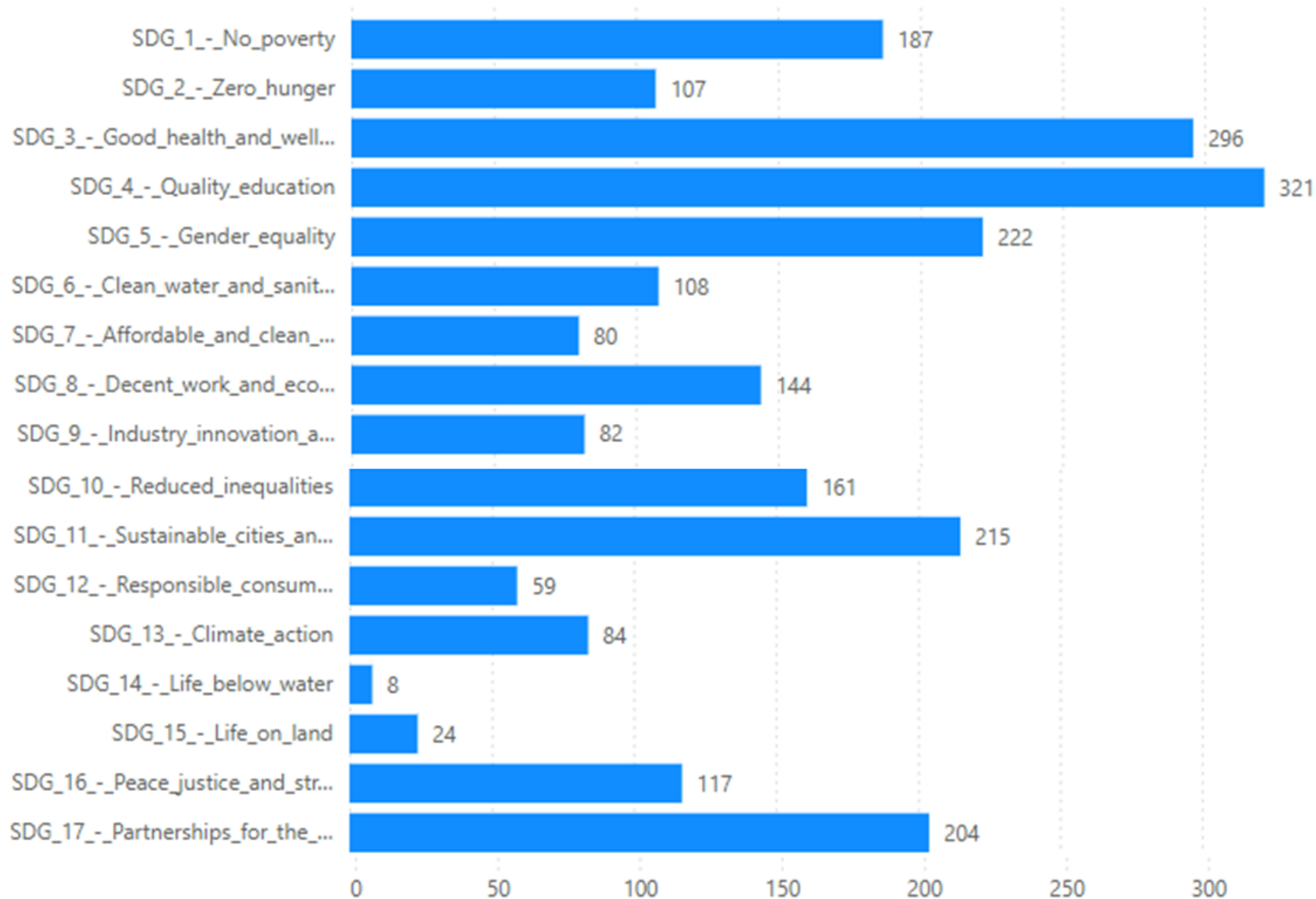


2. Discovering CSOs Diversity: Building Blocks





2. Discovering CSO Diversity: Their Purpose



Moldovan CSOs contribute to all Sustainable Development Goals

Main areas of focus:

- 1. SDG 4 Quality Education**
- 2. SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing**
- 3. SDG 5 Gender Equality**

- Sustainability cities and communities, Partnerships and No poverty follow-up closely in the priorities
- Not much focus on biodiversity



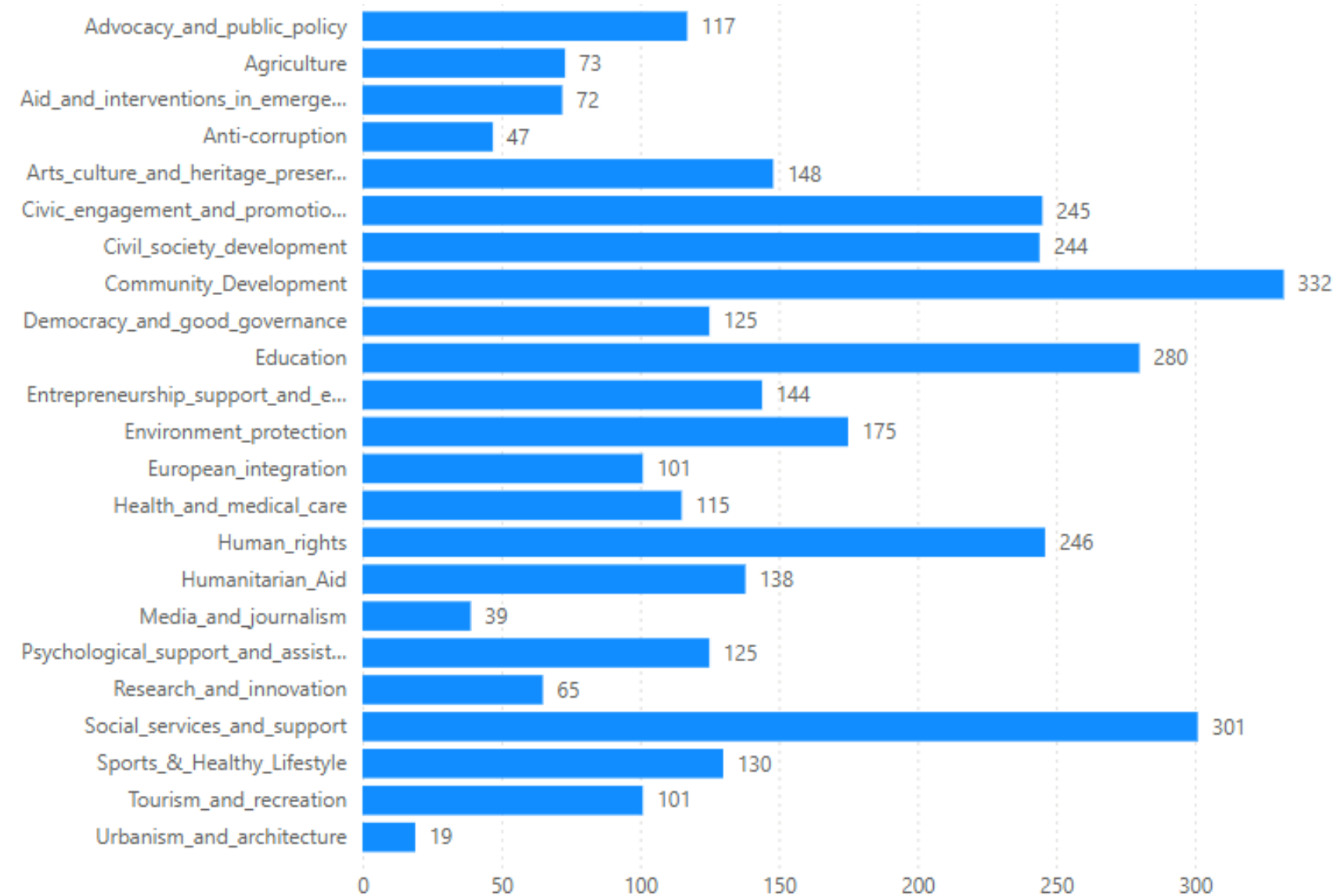
2. Discovering CSO Diversity: Sectors of Activity

Moldovan CSOs are present in all the fields of activities

Main sectors of activity:

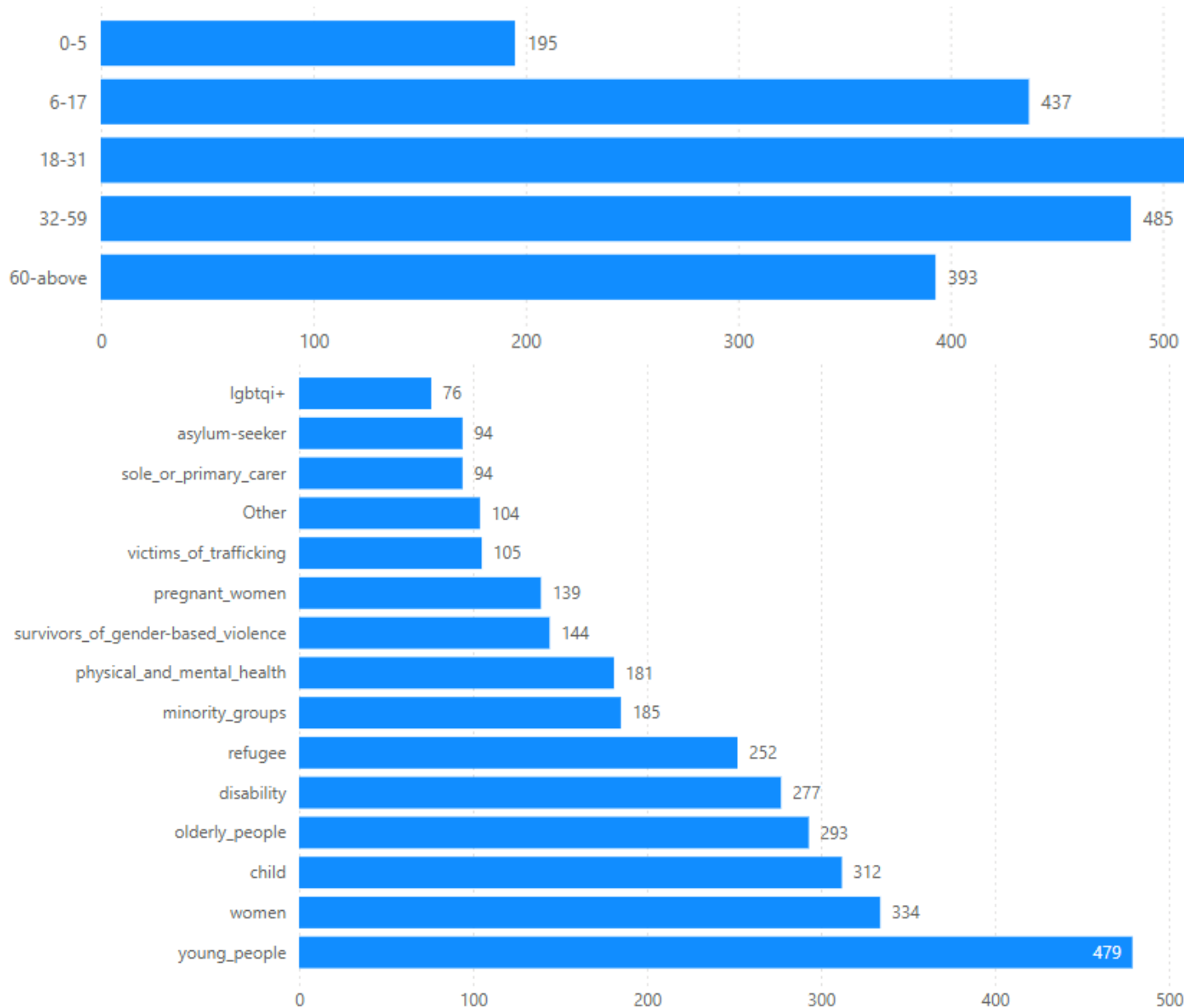
- 1. Community development**
- 2. Social services and support**
- 3. Education**
- 4. Civic engagement**
- 5. Civil society development**

Critical subjects like media and journalism, anti-corruption and urbanism are underrepresented





2. Discovering CSO Diversity: Target Groups



Moldovan CSOs have a clear focus on youth, women and children.

- Particular attention is also given to **elderly people and people with disabilities**
- **Refugees** continue to be a priority target group, though its **importance has reduced over time**
- Contrary to propaganda portraits, only a few consider LGBTQI+ as part of their target groups



1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries



2. Discovering CSOs Diversity



3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience



4. Setting the Next Landmarks



3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience

A. Organizational Capacities

- **Governance, policies and strategic planning**: 56,2% have HR policies; 50.8% Internal Procedures Manuals; and, 76.2% have a strategic plan thanks to donors funds but **seem donor-driven and limited to short-term objectives**. Additional requirements (procurement guidelines and financial control mechanisms) account for 55.9% of CSOs expressing need to further develop governance frameworks (82.8% in S, 63.5% in N)
- **Human resources**: 62.1% have full-time employees, 37.8% part-time with an average of 8 employees per CSO. **28.2% are properly staffed and 13.8% have a significant staff shortage**
- **Professional development**: Lack of trained personnel, high-turnover and uneven competition with iNGOs. **Training requirements in MEAL, financial management, digital security and strategic communication**
- **Resilience and adaptation to unstable contexts**: 60% of CSO express that external pressures have impacted their ability to sustain operations. **Trade-off between immediate community priorities vs. long-term goals**, with the **refugee crisis having redirected efforts to humanitarian assistance**



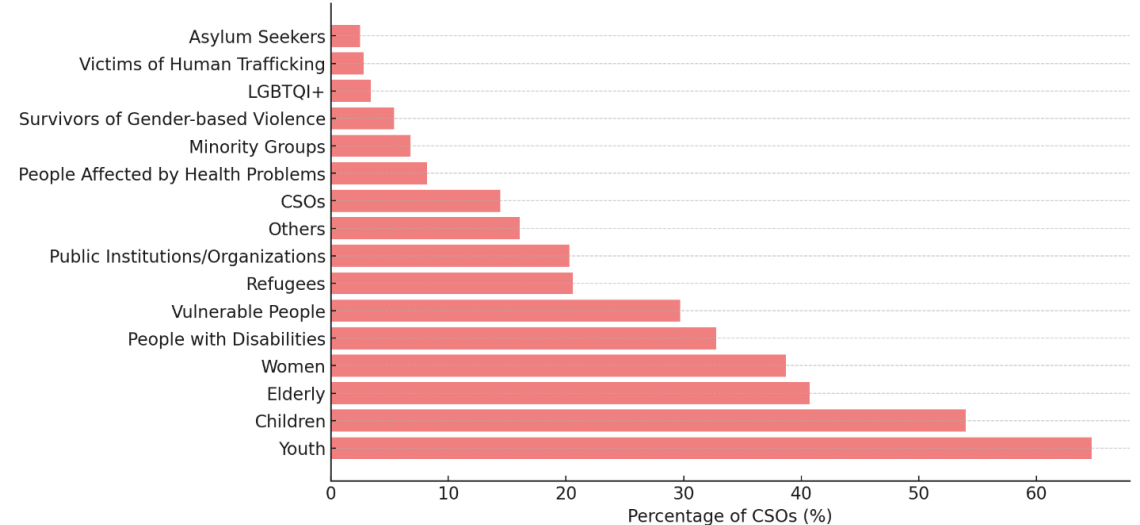
3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience

B. Programmatic Expertise and Community Impact

- **Areas of focus:** The **three main account for over 80% of the primary focus** of study participant CSOs: Social services and support (33.3%), Education (31.1%) and Community Development (21.8%)
- **Beneficiaries target group:** Youth (64.7%) and children (54.0%) take the highest priority followed by elderly (40.7%) and women (38.7%)
- **Some lack of clear thematic focus areas** make CSOs overextend without adequately addressing community needs
- **Mismatch between donor priorities and community needs**



Beneficiary Groups Served by CSOs





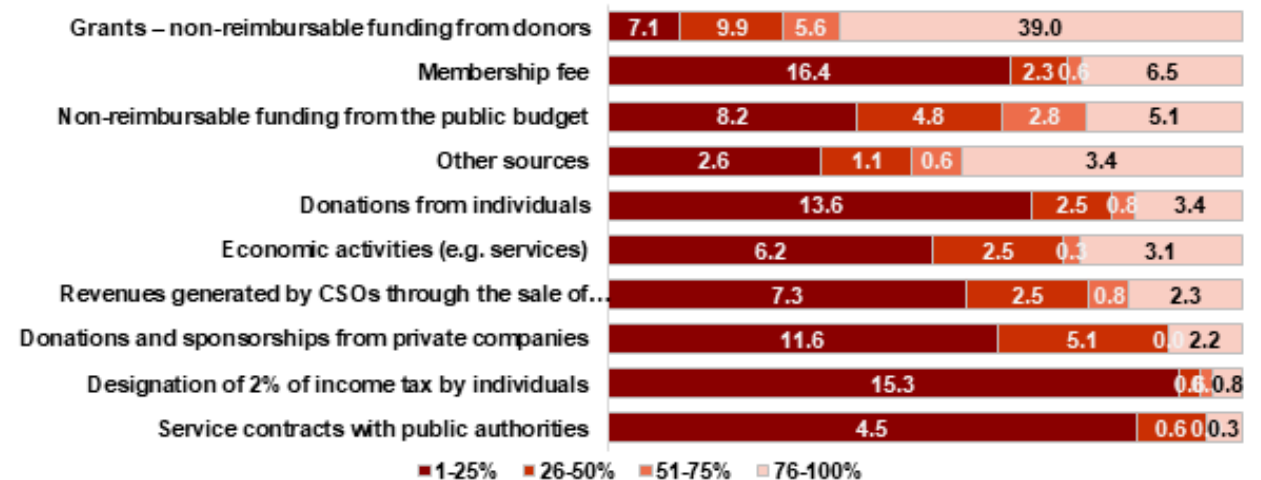
3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience

C. Financial Viability

- **Foreign donors represent 61.6% of CSOs funding**
- Efforts and mechanisms to diversify (membership fees, public budgets and individual/corporate donations) still account for a small portion of structure
- **Large financial variability:** annual budgets from zero (16.7% of CSOs) to some over 5 million lei
- Around **37.3% of rural CSOs depend solely on one funding source**, usually grants

Regional disparities:

- **North:** challenges on managing and reporting on complex grants, lack of financial management skills
- **Center/Chisinau:** generally more financially stable due to enhanced access to networking opportunities, but struggle to secure paid services
- **South:** Reliance on short-term grants with few local co-funding opportunities





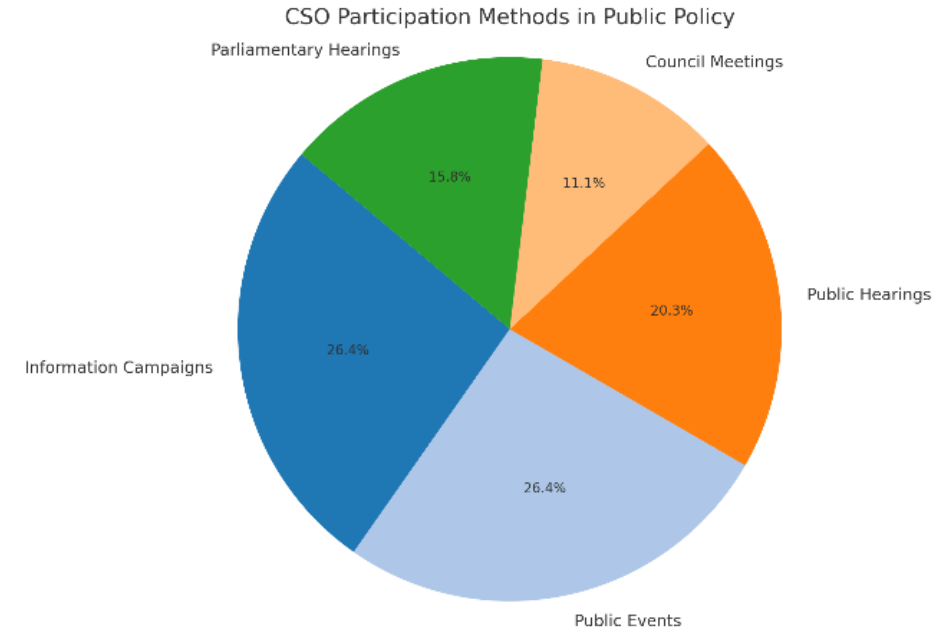
3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience

D. Stakeholder Engagement and Cooperation

- **Advocacy:** 15% actively engaged in advocacy and policy dialogue, 50% participate occasionally and 10% limited involvement and 25% do not engage
- **Community outreach barriers** to engage with citizens and marginalized communities include: **limited financial resources** (45%), **lack of capacity or expertise** (15%) and **low motivation or interest of community members** (15%)

CSO and LPA relationships:

1. **Existing collaborations:** include **policy formation**, through consultations, public hearings and joint-initiatives; **service provision**, particularly in health and social services; and, **partnerships to address community needs**
2. **Challenges hindering effective cooperation:** **LPAs lack of resources and capacities** to engage with CSOs; **CSOs fragmentation** expressed by 44.4%; and, incipient **awareness and skills from citizens**
3. **Promising good practices:** **public consultations** build partnerships by including CSOs in specific discussions; **participatory budgeting initiatives** allow citizens and CSOs to actively engage in fund allocation; **local participation spaces** (e.g., District Council for Participation in Cahul)





3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience

E. Refugee Crisis Response

- Swift adaptation underscored **CSOs' flexibility and commitment** to addressing urgent needs. **61.9% CSOs actively involved in delivering essential assistance**
- Despite this significant engagement, **only 39.7% of these CSOs received external funding**, forcing 60.3% to rely on their own resources and volunteer support.
- While this reliance highlighted their resilience, it also revealed financial vulnerabilities within the sector.



Refugee crisis financial impact: Mostly beneficial in terms of increased funding with uneven distribution (CSOs in border areas over-favored) and some “left-out”. Created competition while redirected funds and efforts **left usual beneficiaries underserved in some cases.**



3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience

F. Gender Empowerment

- Women are a **driving force** in Moldova's CSOs, **comprising over 67% of the workforce and holding 55% of managerial roles.**
- This strong representation highlights their significant contributions, yet **disparities remain, especially in leadership positions.**
- While women lead a majority of CSOs in regions like Gagauzia (90.9%) and the South (69%), men still dominate leadership roles at the national level, particularly in urban areas like Chişinău.



- **72.9% of organizations state that they consider gender needs in their activities,** employing methods to ensure equal participation.
- **Traditional gender norms,** especially in rural regions, **often limit women's influence in decision-making.**



1. Drawing Civil Society Boundaries



2. Discovering CSOs Diversity



3. Navigating Challenges with Resilience



4. Setting the Next Landmarks



4. Setting the Next Landmarks



- A. **Towards a more comprehensive CSO Passport**
 - Identify mechanisms and define typologies on CSOs activities for collaboration and oversight
- B. **Closing the center/periphery gaps between CSOs**
 - Harnessing the power and potential of technology
 - EU Accession open opportunities
- C. **Capacity strengthening of the CSO ecosystem**
 - Moving from a “top down” approach to more interactions between all parts of the system
- D. **Monitor progress of CSO ecosystem resilience**
 - Review previous mechanisms and analyse its risk of disruption





4. Setting the Next Landmarks



E. Strengthen existing CSO cooperation platforms

- Representation, collaboration, sharing, caring and ensuring less vocal get their voices heard

F. Public, private and international partnerships

- Move away from destructive narratives towards constructive collaborations with open dialogues and clearly defined roles

G. Stakeholders engagement and advocacy

- Further push localization agenda with knowledge sharing and creative initiatives
- Discuss representation within diversity

H. Continue to grow, not in numbers, but in capacities

- Current realities oblige to have an honest conversation on **the size of the Moldovan CSO Landscape that is sustainable in the long-term**



FINAL KEY INSIGHTS

1. Highlight the **Diversity, Resilience and Adaptability** of Moldovan CSOs
2. Remind of the importance of **Equitable Partnerships**: joint decision-making, mutual accountability and resources sharing
3. Emphasize the need of **Flexible Models** of participation, capacity building and funding
4. Harness the potential of **Digitalization to Narrow the Center/Periphery Gap** of CSOs
5. Enhance **Existing Platforms of Collaboration and Information-Sharing** for more efficient and impactful collective action



Consult online all documents and results of

CSO Compass: Unfolding Moldovan Civil Society Organizations Landscape

Key Insights

*Llinás, G., G. Cremene &
R. Chibowski*
People in Need



CSO Map

Trimetrica and People in
Need

CSO Study

Serghei Neicovcen
Contact Center

CSO Plan

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People in Need

CSO Initiatives

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