

## About Foreign Funds

Civil society plays an active role in the development of democracy and in solving social problems. It is essential for democracy that civil society operates in an enabling environment and the fundamental freedoms of individuals are guaranteed.

Similar to other countries, civil society organizations (CSOs) in Turkey need various sources of income in order to fulfill their critical function. Domestic and foreign funds are among such sources, as are individual donations, public funds and income from corporate collaborations. It is important that CSOs have access to all these diversified financial resources to continue their activities that bring social value and benefits.

However, the funds available to CSOs in Turkey are scarce and diversity is limited. The culture of individual giving is not well developed. In addition, in accordance with the restrictive Law on Aid Collection, which has been in force since 1983, NGOs are required to obtain permission each time they raise funds.

Within all these constraints, it is inevitable for CSOs to search for funds from domestic and foreign sources to sustain their important work. For NGOs operating in Turkey, the grants provided by the European Union continue to be among the most fundamental sources, and funds can be received from many different countries within the scope of varying programs and priorities.

In addition, public institutions and local governments benefit from these grants as well. A number of projects that contributed to the wellbeing of Turkish people, have been implemented with support from international donors.

The relationship between the grant makers and the grantees is a legal and legitimate one which occurs as a result of the matching priorities and visions of these institutions. Spending and reporting processes of funds are structured and it is obligatory to notify the relevant public authorities when receiving all kinds of cross-border funds. There are a number of measures taken and implemented by the public administration to prevent abuse, including notification, reporting, declaration and, where necessary, audits.

Since 1993, TUSEV has been working to develop civil society and to assure that CSOs operate in an enabling environment in terms of legal, financial and functional aspects. It is our priority to ensure that the legal framework is supportive and facilitating, to maintain a dialogue based relationship with public authorities, funders and other stakeholders in order to diversify the sources of funds for civil society, and to improve the reputation of civil society.



In this regard, we are concerned about the statements and declarations in social media and other mediums regarding CSOs receiving foreign funds. Creating suspicion and labeling institutions that receive foreign funds without any proof may damage the reputation of so many legitimate institutions.

Considering these aspects, we believe that the issue should be debated with responsibility and prudence. The contribution of CSOs in social value creation and democracy should be taken into account. If there is a suspicion of abuse or misuse of funds, public authorities should take the necessary precautions while supporting the very existence and sustainability of civil society organizations.