



NGO Training and Research Unit

The Istanbul Bilgi University NGO Training and Research Unit (Bilgi NGO) was founded in 2003 to strengthen the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in a pluralistic democracy and to contribute to their effective operations. The first of its kind at a university in Turkey, it operates with the conviction that CSOs, especially at the grass- roots

level, are key actors in the creation of a participatory democracy. Bilgi NGO constitutes a junction where the university and civil society can work together to improve the management and capacities of CSOs and citizen initiatives.

Bilgi NGO collaborates with CSOs organized in a range of issue areas, including women, children, youth, social rights, human rights and the environment, and strives to expand and strengthen their organizational capacity. In addition, it works towards increasing the awareness of CSOs on topics such as social rights, gender equality, participation, multiculturalism and ethics, and towards meeting their needs for support, education, and written and visual materials. It also seeks to facilitate networking between CSOs and to improve the effectiveness of CSOs in central and local decision-making processes.

Staff

Nurhan Yentürk (2003 - 2026)

Ali Alper Akyüz (2003 - 2017)

Yiğit Aksakođlu (2003 - 2007)

Laden Yurttagüler (2005 - 2022)

Özlem Ezgin (2012 - 2016)

Devin Bahçeci (2012 - 2014)

Kenan Dursun (2012 - 2014)

Emrah Gürsel (2016 - 2017)

Projects

NGO Training and Certificate Program (2003 - 2011)

The NGO Training and Certificate Program run by Bilgi University aimed at building the capacity of rights-based CSOs and citizen initiatives working in the area of rights. The program focused on building the capacity of grassroots CSOs. While helping participants improve their skill sets, the program also contributed to the development of CSOs. It was expected that after having completed the program, participants would return to their affiliated CSOs and dedicate some voluntary work.

Eleven programs were carried out between the years 2003 - 2011. During the first two years, 2003 - 2005, the program was organized on a semester basis, while during the last five years, it was on a yearly basis.

The programs run between 2003 - 2005 emphasized general capacity building while those in subsequent years concentrated on topics such as organizational management, advocacy and policy influencing, and integration to the European Union. Throughout the program, participants attended 150 hours of lessons and conducted group work-based practicums utilizing what they had learned in class. Nearly 350 people, each group consisting of 25-35 individuals, affiliated with CSOs working in the areas of rights, either as volunteers or paid staff, took advantage of the program.





Course List:

- TPNGO 001: Civil Society and Democracy
- TPNGO 002: Civil Society and Strategy Development
- TPNGO 101: Proposal Writing Techniques for CSOs
- TPNGO 102: Project Budgeting
- TPNGO 200: Management Skills
- TPNGO 201: Organizational Management for CSOs
- TPNGO 202: Resource Development in CSOs
- TPNGO 204: Collaborating with Volunteers
- TPNGO 205: Financial Management in CSOs
- TPNGO 301: Advocacy
- TPNGO 302: Turkish Grand National Assembly: Legislative Procedures
- TPNGO 303: Public Budget Literacy and Social Budget Monitoring Training Program
- TPNGO 401: Legal Framework and Human Rights for CSOs
- TPNGO 402: Gender
- TPNGO 501: European Integration, CSOs and Advocacy
- TPNGO 502: European Integration and Resources
- TPNGO 601: Communication Skills
- TPNGO 602: Facilitation and Training Techniques

Distant Learning-based Certificate Programs for CSOs (2005 - 2011)

The advanced capacity building trainings were ordinarily offered face-to-face to CSOs and the program was planned and conducted as a means of reaching out to a more geographically disperse audience. At the beginning and conclusion of the hybrid training program, five-day programs bringing the participants together were held in Istanbul. The courses in the program made up its key component and were taught using a web-based forum during the remaining 27 weeks. In each program, at the beginning of each term, participants came together to meet for the first time and to get to know one another. They took courses such as “Civil Society and CSOs” and “Communication Skills.” In addition, “Civil Society and Democracy Seminars,” in which academics participated as speakers, were held to create a pool of common concepts and language for everyone involved. The technical details of the part of the program to be conducted online were also discussed at these meetings. During the first week of the program, participants received the written, visual and electronic materials they would use during the remainder of the program. In the 2005-2006 term, 90 CSO representatives were invited to attend three simultaneous groups. Thirty CSOs participated in the program in each of the subsequent five terms. Approximately 180 persons working for CSOs operating in rights-based fields, either as volunteers or paid staff, took part in the program.

Certificate Program Modules:

Introduction to Distance Learning
Introduction to Organizational Management
Volunteering and Collaborating with Volunteers Fund-raising
Europe, Civil Society and CSOs
Advocacy and Policy Influencing
Project Cycle Management, Proposal Writing and Budgeting
European Union Project Financing and Funding Procedures

The distance-learning program conducted in 2009 - 2010 and 2010 - 2011, was different from those in earlier periods in that it revolved around the theme "European Integration, the EU and CSOs." The introduction of this program lasted three days, while its closing session lasted two days. The main body of the program consisted of a 16-week web-based curriculum.

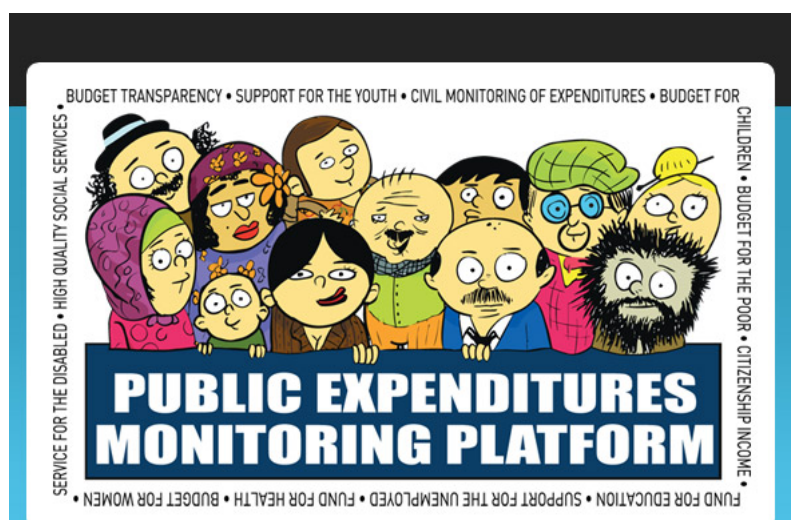
Certificate Program Modules:

Introduction to Distance Learning: Civil Society and CSOs The Concept of Europe and the Idea of Integration European
Citizenship and CSOs
Advocacy and Policy Influencing
European Institutions and EU Organizations
EU Regulations and Policies
EU Funding
The European Dimension and Civil Dialogue
The Enlargement and Negotiation Process

Public Expenditures Monitoring Platform/KAHİP (2010 - ...)

The Public Expenditures Monitoring Platform aims at monitoring the conversion of taxes collected from taxpayers into decisions made in the parliament as to how they will be spent. It works to maintain the transparency of this process, to increase social welfare spending, and to promote the effective use of the taxes collected. The NGO Training and Research Unit is responsible for overseeing the functions of the platform's secretariat.

Towards this end, since 2010, public expenditure monitoring workshops and camps have been held. Moreover, the results of the public expenditure monitoring conducted and related recommendations have been drawn up in letter form and sent to parliamentarians. These letters have also been shared online with the public.





The platform enables rights-based CSOs to monitor the amount of public resources allocated to social welfare, to work towards influencing policy-making to increase these expenditures, and to promote public discussions on the dimensions of social spending.

Among the expenditures the platform monitors are those made for health, social security, social welfare and social services, children, youth, the disabled, justice, the military, and domestic security. It also keeps track of public expenditures made by the Greater Istanbul Municipality. The platform then packages its observations in the form of letters and infographics and sends them to parliamentarians. It also maintains interactive websites.

www.kahip.org

CSOs in the EU Accession Negotiations I and II (2005 - 2006)

The purpose of the project was to inform CSOs about the EU Acquis and the accession process and thereby enable them to take an active role in it. It was organized as a platform where CSOs could develop policy recommendations through working groups that they themselves set up.

For the duration of the project, workshops and meetings and an international study visit were held with the participating CSOs. The aim was to develop international policy making and lobbying skills of participants working on the human rights of women, youth policies and social rights.

Seminars on fighting poverty and the right to housing were held to bolster CSOs engaged in rights-based work and expert foreign guests participated. The primary aim of these seminars was to share with the CSOs the knowledge and experience of people working in similar fields. Miceala Moser, from the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) and Ayşe Buğra, from the Social Policy Forum, participated in the meeting entitled “The Role of CSOs in Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion,” which was conducted in partnership with the Social Policy Forum. Another meeting on The Right to Housing was held in April 2007. Speakers at the meeting, who attended as experts, included

Stefanie del Zotto, from FEANTSA, which works throughout Europe on the subject of the right to housing, Başak Ekim, from the Social Policy Forum, Pınar Uyan, from Istanbul Bilgi University, Anita Danka, from the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), Hacer Foggo, from the Accessible Life Association, Turgut Çakar, from the Greater Kocaeli Municipality, Zelal Yalçın, from the Mor Çatı (Purple Roof Women's Shelter), and Murat Güvenç, from Istanbul Bilgi University.

In addition, a study visit was held in Brussels in September 2006 to get to know representatives at the EU level. It provided the opportunity for participants to become familiar with the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and umbrella CSOs based in Brussels, and to exchange knowledge and experience with one another. During the visit, meetings were held with more than 20 organizations and/or persons.

A radio program by the name of "See what the Angel Says" was broadcast during Açık Radyo's 2006 - 2007 and 2007 - 2008 broadcasting seasons. The program, hosted along with Başak Ekim from the Social Policy Forum, aimed at putting the concept of social rights on the agenda.

CSO Exchange Program – STDP (2015 - 2016)

While CSOs and citizen initiatives without legal entity have acquired expertise in the areas in which they work, they still need to expand their organizational capacity. And it is this inadequacy that is one of the obstacles to the development of civil society in Turkey. The program aims at improving the organizational continuity and capacity, and supporting the creation of means through which civil society can grow.

The program was conducted between April 2015 and March 2016 with the support of the Mercator Foundation, with contributions made by Lead: Capacity Building Center for Leadership and Advocacy in Germany. The mobility of individuals and the mentoring support given to CSOs were used as a means of enriching the mutual learning experience at various stages of the program. Working visits in Istanbul made it possible for organizations to become acquainted with other CSOs operating in comparable fields or using similar tools. They also enabled them about each other's work cultures and to learn from one another. The study visits were made by 23 persons from eight CSOs in December 2015. Activities such as CSO visits, academic discussions, workshops and networking were carried out throughout the program.

In addition, a training program was designed for people experienced in civil society to act as mentors that would work one-on-one with CSOs. The function of the mentoring was to improve organizational operations, strengthen institutionalization, and make the organizations more aware of their needs, in order to ensure sustainability. The program, which was implemented in October 2015, had 23 participants and lasted five days. The mentor pool set up subsequent to this training provided mentoring support for a period of 5-6 months to eight CSOs which were part of the program. This mentor pool is still helping organizations supported by the CCSS. The program also includes plans to expand the program internationally. The goal is to implement the international program as of 2017.

NGO Studies - Training Book Series

Seven books were published as part of the NGO Studies - Training Book Series. The overall objective of this series was to support CSOs and to help them carve out a role in the democratization of Turkey. Accordingly, its aim was to put CSOs in a position where they could more actively participate in finding solutions to the difficulties they encounter, as well as to help local, national and international administrations make the policies needed to solve problems. The

books were based on the experiences obtained in the certificate programs conducted by the unit.

- *Project Cycle Management I: Project Proposal, Writing, Monitoring and Assessment, Nurhan Yentürk and Yiğit Aksakoğlu (2006), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 3, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications.*

To be able to speak of a project, it must have a clearly developed idea, purpose and time frame. It should clearly lay out its activities and possess a method for obtaining results. It should establish its resources and budget beforehand. Moreover, it should spell out who will execute and evaluate it. Providing the conceptual framework for and formalizing all of these stages is “Project Cycle Management.”

This book covers the project proposal writing and monitoring-assessment stages of “Project Cycle Management.” The “Logical Framework Approach,” in particular, was used as a crucial heuristic device. The book uses practices/exercises and a wide range of case studies. It contains questions and addresses the risks that can be encountered. It also facilitates the project writing process by taking the reader step by step through a check list. All of these components are based upon the experiences of participants in CSO capacity development training programs.



- *Introduction to Accounting, Financing and Taxation for Civil Society Organizations , Metin Konca (2006), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 4, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications*

It is not easy to remember the many formalities required in accounting, finance and tax-related topics, such as “Which document do I need to keep?”, “What date should have been put on the invoice?,” “Where should I put the tax office number?” This book contains the basic information needed in such matters. It aims at explaining accounting by condensing it and providing examples. The frequently asked questions section at the end of the book contains the questions related to problems CSOs have experienced and the answers to them.



- *Collaboration with Volunteers, Laden Yurttagüler and Alper Akyüz (2006), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 5, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications*

Volunteering can be thought of as a two-way mirror. The one side reflects how individuals whose social rights have become eroded experience alienation to what they do as they are transformed into “cheap labor.” The other side reflects them as active citizens that can demand their rights as individuals. The second reflection raises the consciousness of individuals and empowers them, thus enabling them to defend their social rights. Moreover, it provides the opportunity for the problems created by the existing economic and social structure and the resulting inequality to be questioned. Which side will be used is completely up to us. This book aims to initiate a discussion of the contributions of volunteering to the participation of individuals in

decision-making mechanisms and as manpower. The book also recommends ways of facilitating collaboration with volunteers in intra-organizational coordination.



- *Strategic Thinking – Strategic Development for CSOs, Hale Akay (2007), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 6, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications*

The aim of this book is to create a guide that will foster and facilitate strategic thinking in CSOs. It is based on the assumption that strategic development should be unique to each CSO. In other words, the techniques and tools offered in this book are not intended to be copied exactly. Adapting them to the conditions and needs of every organization is essential to attaining the goal of the book.

The book first focuses on values, vision and mission, which make up the descriptive backbone of CSOs and their policies. It then discusses

the problems CSOs face and the ways in which they can be solved. The book emphasizes mapping techniques, which will help CSOs create new and creative solutions and actions. Finally, the book discusses the concepts of strategic planning, organization learning and learning organization.



- *Project Cycle Management for CSOs II: EU Funds, Budgeting and Reporting, Alper Akyüz, İdil Eser and Emel Kurma (2007), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 7, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications*

Although usually the last to be considered, resource planning and budget preparation is one of the important stages in project preparation. It may be an uninspiring job for many people who deal with money, but this stage is crucial for the project's success. The basic aim of a project and project cycle management is doing the most efficient and effective job possible with the limited resources available. Therefore, being able to make accurate estimates of costs from available scenarios during budget preparation will have a direct

impact on the organization implementing the project. Moreover, the project's budget is one of the most essential documents in the application assessment of various funding organizations, foremost among them being the European Union, and in the implementation of the project. In addition, the most important tools used in monitoring progress and results of the project, for both the organization carrying out the project and other parties interested in the project, are reports. Preparing a good report has a major role in the project's impact beyond the period of time



in which the project is conducted. This book, *Project Cycle Management*, includes procedures for budget preparation, applying to various funding organizations, particularly the EU, as part of finding resources, evaluation, implementation, and reporting.

- *EU, Integration and CSOs, Alper Akyüz (2009), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 9, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications*

The “European Union” has become a dual-edged sword for rights-based CSOs in recent years. While it has been viewed as a catalyst for positive change, with the expectation that it would apply pressure to governments to make that change, there has been growing antipathy towards it. The Accession Negotiations, which began in October 2005 and are the final stage in the process of acquiring membership in the EU, has given rise to increasing intimacy between the two sides. The period has been characterized by a deepening of knowledge and awareness of each other. This has created the opportunity for CSOs to undergo effective change, which has empowered both themselves and their target populations. This book was written to serve as a guide to CSOs and citizens in Turkey to help them carry out activities and engage in advocacy, and to find ways that European institutions, integration processes, and civil organizations and platforms can find common ground. At the same time, it is a stimulus for critical discussion and forms a perspective with which to view Europe and integration.



- *Advocacy and Policy Influencing, Nurhan Yentürk, Laden Yurttagüler, Yiğit Aksakoğlu, İrfan Neziroğlu, Habip Kocaman and Ebru Ağduk (2010), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 10, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications*

This book discusses the relationship between CSOs and the political arena. Believing that the latter will expand with the participation of CSOs, it considers ways through which this participation can be enhanced. The book contains tools CSOs can use to contribute to the policy-making process of central governments and to increase their capacity to initiate debate in the public sphere. It addresses topics such as advocacy and lobbying and subjects them to discussion. It also contains exercises and best cases of advocacy in Turkey, which helps CSOs in their preparation of advocacy strategy. The book is the first of its kind to focus on CSO participation in the legislative process via the parliament. Cases, illustrations and suggestions for CSOs are provided in the relevant section. The book also contains an article on how CSOs

can monitor public expenditures in such areas as social services, health, social security, military, youth, and education.



- *Project Preparation and Budgeting Techniques for the EU and Development Agencies, Nurhan Yentürk, Alper Akyüz and Yiğit Aksakoğlu (2016), NGO Studies - Training Series, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications*

The main purpose of this book is to examine and discuss in detail “Project Cycle Management,” a process that must be followed when submitting project grant applications to EU Development Agencies. The book uses a completely hands- on approach to presenting and explaining “Project Cycle Management.”



- *T-Kit 8: Social Inclusion Training Guide*

Original Publication: Social Inclusion (2004), Council of Europe Publications, Strasbourg, Trans. Burcu Yakut Çakar (2008), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 8, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications

Reducing social exclusion is not simply an ethical matter related to accepting the wealth of diversity. It is also an indicator of healthy democracies and societies. This book aims at providing CSOs, especially those that work with youth, the conceptual and applied tools and resources on social inclusion.



.T-Kit 9: Funding and Financial Management Training Guide
Original Publication: Funding and Financial Management (2004),
Council of Europe Publications, Strasbourg, Trans. Çiğdem Türkoğlu
(2006), NGO Studies - Training Book Series no. 2, Istanbul Bilgi
University Publications

Rejected funding applications, missed deadlines, incorrectly spent budgets, and lost documents are not CSOs' fate.

When looking for funding, you can be better prepared than simply saying "good luck in fund-raising." This training guide aims at providing comprehensive information to help in this preparation. The book includes many recommendations to make this job easier. It includes tips like getting to know your funding sources, and how to form successful relations with them. Moreover, it shows how to keep records and accounts related to the funding you receive. This book, like *Organizational Management*, was published as a product of the Council of Europe and the European Commission.



CD and Internet-based Content Production for CSO Capacity Building (2007 - 2010)

This project consisted of training and certificate programs, which were used to prepare a set of ten training CDs to be employed in CSO capacity development. Included on these CDs were the various contents of these programs, such as in-class video recording, lesson notes, questions for users to test themselves, sample cases, fill-in tables, additional reading materials and a resource list. Thanks to the experience acquired in Distance-Learning programs in particular, it was possible to design the “CSO Studies- Training CD Series” as “moderator-free distant learning.” These CDs made it possible for people unable to participate in a certificate program either in Istanbul, or primarily via Distance Learning, to improve their skills.

CDs published as part of the series:

Civil Society and Democracy
Organizational Management
Project Cycle Management I
Collaborating with Volunteers
Project Cycle Management II
Mapping and Strategy Development
Resource Development
English-Turkish Concept Dictionary for NGOs
EU, Integration and CSOs
Advocacy and Policy Influencing