



*Eurasian Coalition  
on Male Health*

## **Two Years of Development:**

Assessment of changes in the organizational capacity and level of development of sub-recipients of the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health 2017-2019



Two Years of Development: Assessment of changes in the organizational capacity and level of development of sub-recipients of the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM) for 2017-2019

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## List of Abbreviations

ECOM	Eurasian Coalition on Male Health
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people
MSM	Men who have sex with men
NGO	Non-governmental organization
CEECA	Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia
ECAT	ECOM's capacity assessment tool

## Introduction

Recognizing the problem of the disproportionately low level of access to HIV services for men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans people in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (CEECA), the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM) launched the regional program "Right to Health". The goal of this program is to contribute to expanding coverage and retention throughout the entire HIV treatment system for MSM and trans people in CEECA. The program should achieve three goals: (1) promote increased participation of the MSM and trans communities in decision-making processes in national HIV responses, (2) promote capacity-building of MSM and trans organizations by strengthening organizational structures and technical competencies; and (3) contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for HIV services for MSM and trans people by combating stigma and discrimination, promoting and protecting human rights, and by removing legal and political barriers.

The assessment of the achievements of the regional program was designed as a set of relevant research objectives before the start of the program (baseline assessment) and after its completion (final evaluation). This report provides data related to goal 2: changes in the organizational capacity of ECOM partners in five target countries of the region: Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and North Macedonia.

To conduct the assessment, ECOM developed its own assessment tool, the ECAT, which is based on the MOCAT<sup>1</sup> assessment tool, and takes into account the characteristics of our partner organizations (in general, a rather weak level of organizational development and a focus on advocacy work).

The first assessment was carried out in 2017 at the beginning of the project. Based on this assessment, plans for the organizational development of specific organizations in the target countries were developed. In addition, a technical support plan, including trainings, webinars, mentoring visits, the provision of sample documents (for example, volunteer and safety policies), and the creation of opportunities to share experiences with organizations and activists in other countries of the region (for example, participation in three Ukrainian national conferences of the LGBT and MSM-services movements, participation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Consultation on HIV among MSM and trans people in CEECA, scholarships for the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam, etc.).

The goal of the reassessment was to compare the levels of development of organizational capacity at the beginning and at the end of the project.

## Conclusions

Over the course of the regional program, "Right to Health", there was a qualitative increase in the level of organizational development in all program countries: from an initial level, characterized by basic systems and structures operating ineffectively, to a level with developed and working systems.

Individual countries are arranged in the following order in terms of the change in the level of organizational development: North Macedonia > Georgia > Armenia and Belarus > Kyrgyzstan. The greatest growth occurred in countries where the organizational capacity was initially the lowest.

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<sup>1</sup>Carrying out an organizational capacity assessment of HIV-service NGOs: A toolkit for experts on the use of the MOCAT tool for conducting an NGO assessment. Developed on the basis of the "Modified Tool for Assessing the Capacity of Organizations (MOCAT), USAID, 2003"/Coalition of HIV-service Organizations of Ukraine, Network of People Living with HIV in Ukraine, Futures Group International, USAID. –Kyiv, 2009. –93 p.

There was an improvement in indicators for all three components (institutional, program, and finance), with the financial sustainability indicator showing the greatest growth, followed by program sustainability, and institutional sustainability.

For all three components, there was an increase in organizational capacity, from the level of having basic systems and structures for carrying out activities, to the level of efficiency necessary to ensure the achievement of organizational goals.

In 2019, in order of decreasing indicators, the components are arranged as follows: program sustainability > institutional sustainability > financial sustainability.

ECOM investments in the development of organizational capacity in areas such as establishing effective management, advocacy, strategic planning in various fields, the implementation of integrated approaches in the organizational sense (strategies, operating plans, budgeting), and trainings on organizational capacity (for example, fundraising and communication) have led to a growth in individual elements of organizational capacity and have strengthened the sustainability of the sector as a whole.

The most successful areas included strategic planning, advocacy, external relations, financial sustainability as a whole, and the establishment of governing bodies that operate based on a philosophy of analysis and taking into account the needs of target groups, the community, and key stakeholders.

## Recommendations

Organizations need assistance to consolidate the results achieved, which will require interventions in the following individual areas:

- Development of the technical skills of the staff of organizations in the areas of developing strategic and operating plans, project design based on analysis, budgeting and financial management, fundraising, and external communication.
- Development of an understanding of organizational structures and the distribution of functions among team members. Training on personnel management and, at a later stage, on knowledge management.
- Developing policies and procedures that reflect the real needs of organizations related to internal communication.
- General development of leadership capacity, personal growth, and organizational culture.
- Implementation of innovative approaches based on digital technologies, marketing, and entrepreneurship.

**ECAT**

Methodological section

The ECAT tool entails an external assessment of the level of organizational development and capacity of NGOs. It is aimed at: (1) determining the current level of development of NGOs in terms of three components: institutional, program, and financial capacity; and (2) the development of recommendations for the improvement of various aspects of organizational development.

The structure of the organizational capacity assessment includes institutional, program, and financial components. Each component is divided into categories, which, in turn, are divided into sub-categories.

For example, the institutional component and the "management" category refer to the entire management and decision-making system of the organization. Management includes elements such as the role and effective functioning of the governing body, determining the mission and goals, as well as the extent to which management conforms to the interests of stakeholders. The primary principle for evaluating management mechanisms is whether the entire system meets the needs of the organization, and whether the organization is following its mission. The mission and strategic goals of the organization should be based on the needs of the community, and consistent with the capabilities of the organization and the experience of its members, all while taking into account local conditions, potential problems, and cultural norms in the field of management. The following documents are used for analysis: the organization's charter, regulations of governing bodies, documentation from meetings of governing bodies, strategic and operating plans, and policies and procedures governing the management process. Members of the high-level governing body, members of the organization, management representatives, and employees of the organization are invited for interviews. A similar research approach is applied to all components and categories.

For the program sustainability component, the advocacy category was considered to be one of the key areas of activity of any non-governmental organization. Advocacy is directly related to an organization's external relations system. Successful advocacy requires a clear understanding of and adherence to the strategy, as well as the engagement of community representatives and stakeholders. This category includes evaluating advocacy strategies and practices. For the category "Programs implemented by the organization", the focus is on the management of program activities. The level of development shows how the organization manages its programs and services, and how it improves them while taking into account the needs of its target community.

The financial sustainability component involves an assessment of the level of financial management and the level of stability of the flow of resources, as the sustainability of an organization's activities largely depends on available resources and the management of these resources. A streamlined financial management system strengthens the reliability, accountability, and performance of an organization as a whole. A strong financial management system should have procedures for accurate budgeting, budget management, and accounting. These procedures should ensure the transparency, integrity, and regularity of financial statements. Financial systems should be straightforward and simple, and should be consistent with national legislation and the requirements of donor organizations. Financial procedures and policies should be aligned with strategic and operating plans. Financial statements should be prepared on a regular basis, both at the request of donors and for independent audits. In terms of the category related to the stability of the flow of resources, it is important to assess diversification strategies that reduce an organization's dependence on a single source of funding. The sustainable development of an organization is ensured by various types of resources. Obviously, financial resources are the most universal resource that will ensure the procurement of other resources.

Each category and sub-category were assessed using a four-point scale (from 0 to 4). These points are later averaged, and the resulting scores correspond to 4 levels of organizational development.

Level of organizational development	Description	Points
<b>Establishment of organization</b>	Early stages of organizational development. Basic systems are only being established or do not exist at all.	0 – 1.0
<b>Initial development</b>	The organization is developing its capacity. Basic systems and structures exist, but function ineffectively.	1.1 – 2.0
<b>Active development</b>	The organization has made certain achievements. Systems and processes are sufficiently developed and efficient. The organization achieves its goals, but at the same time, there is room for improvement.	2.1 – 3.0
<b>Established organization</b>	The organization operates at full capacity, is viable, and has a diversified resource base.	3.1 – 4.0

Experts assessed each organization individually through semi-structured interviews with three types of respondents: top management, operational management (including directors and financial directors), and ordinary employees. Experts also used documents from the organization itself (for example, charters, strategic plans, existing policies and procedures, information from the organization's website, etc.) as sources of additional information. Experts agreed on their assessments with each other, following which they discussed their conclusions with the leadership of each organization, made a list of technical assistance needs, and compiled recommendations for organizational development. This report is a summary of all of the data collected.

# **ECAT**

Results

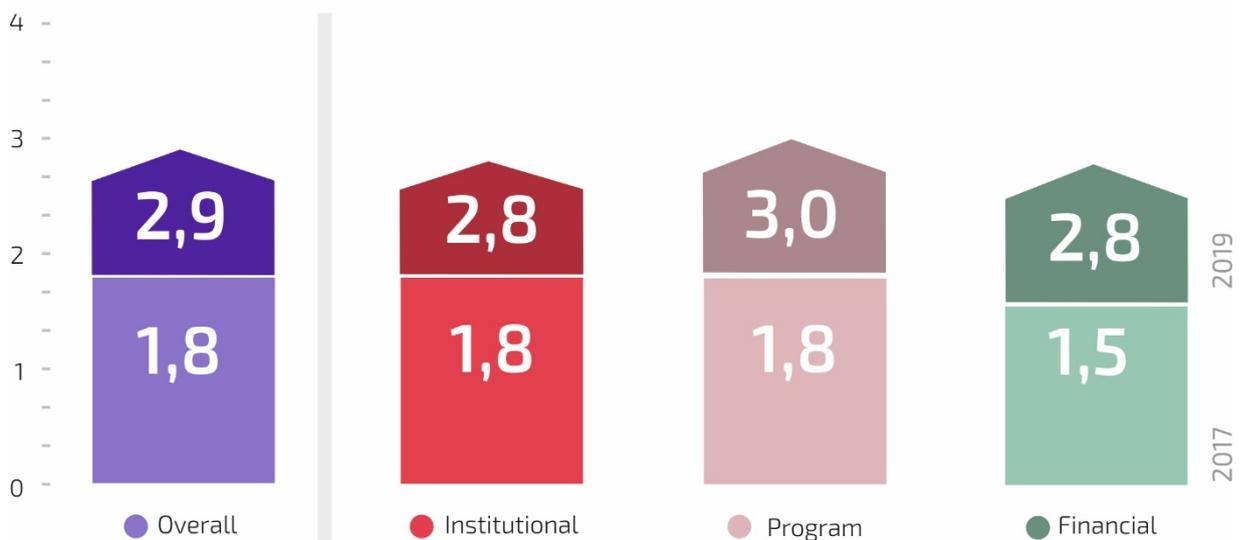


Fig. 1. Growth in organizational capacity by component (regional average)

According to the assessments of organizations in five countries, there was a qualitative increase in the level of organizational development as a whole for all five countries (the average score increased from 1.7 to 2.9). This means that the organizations attained a high level of development of systems and processes from an initial level of development characterized by the presence of basic systems and structures operating ineffectively. Taken together, it is possible to conclude that nearly all ECOM sub-recipients now have a level of development that enables them to achieve their goals. Nevertheless, there remains room for improvement in a number of areas, which will be discussed below.

All three components saw an increase in their indicators with the highest increase (in terms of the difference between the initial level and the level obtained in 2019) being observed in the financial sustainability indicator (1.3), followed by program sustainability (1.3), and institutional sustainability (1.0). For all three components, there was an increase in organizational capacity from a level of having basic systems and structures to carry out activities to the level of effectiveness that ensures the achievement of organizational goals.

If we consider the increase in organizational capacity by components and sub-categories, we see that the greatest changes occurred in the sub-categories "Programs implemented by the organization" and "Advocacy". The role of ECOM's interventions in developing skills and knowledge in the fields of advocacy and promoting the interests of the community is noticeable here. The external relations of organizations did not develop to such a significant degree, which may be explained by the need for a period longer than two years to obtain results in terms of working with external partners.

The next category in which changes took place is financial management. Improving financial management, combined with more active interaction with external partners and the effectiveness of program activities, has contributed to an increase in the stability of financial resources. Organizations diversified their funding and widened their range of donors, began working with volunteers, and expanded fundraising tools. ECOM's interventions aimed at strategic fundraising and the study of applied methods and technologies for mobilizing resources also played a role here. The level of financial management has grown due to integrated approaches to budgeting and the introduction of financial analytics.

Institutional sustainability, as an area for which the impact of interventions is expected in the long term, also demonstrated qualitative changes in terms of how organizations attract and develop human resources, and improve their ability to involve community representatives and stakeholders in managing and making strategic decisions.

Strategic and operating plans were developed, with management expanding their view to the organization as a whole, rather than just focusing on individual projects.



Fig.2. Institutional sustainability, all categories

For the institutional sustainability component, the greatest qualitative increase occurred in the areas of management (1.7 - 2.8) and work with human resources (1.6 – 2.7). The third component, management practices (2.0 – 3.0), had high indicators before the start of the project, which can be explained by previous donor interventions related to the development of management skills in the process of project implementation. Nevertheless, this component also saw growth thanks to improved program planning practices (1.6 – 2.9). The area of management was improved thanks to the growth of strategic planning skills and practices (1.6 – 2.5) with organizations developing strategic and operating plans. In addition, thanks to ECOM interventions, strategic planning took place with the involvement of stakeholders and was based on an in-depth analysis of internal capacity and relevant external factors. The ability of organizations to establish their own governing bodies and to structure the organization in accordance with their mission and strategic goals also improved in this area. Organizations also made progress with respect to the sub-component related to the manner of decision-making from 1.7 to 2.8.

Nevertheless, there is still room for development in terms of improving the effectiveness of governing bodies (boards), developing policies and procedures that would ensure the transparency of decision-making processes in terms of internal and external communication, and having clear ethical rules of conduct based on the values of organizations. Inadequate internal communication can negatively affect organizational culture and potentially lead to conflicts or negative external perceptions. In turn, this affects the success of program activities, fundraising, and advocacy.

In terms of the management of human resources, approaches to working with volunteers have improved significantly (0.9 – 2.5). Organizations established strategies to recruit volunteers, and, more conscious of the need for volunteers, began to work more systematically with them. In turn, this affected the level of participation of the community and other stakeholders in the life of the organizations. Organizations have become more rational in resolving issues related to personnel; recruitment procedures are open and non-discriminatory. Greater value is given to professionalism and commitment to the values of the organization. Training and development opportunities are provided to staff, while initiatives are supported and encouraged.

There remains room for improvement in the areas of recognizing the training needs of staff, effective hiring practices to recruit qualified staff, and in the knowledge management systems of organizations.

Management practices (2.0 – 3.0) of organizations also demonstrate significant changes due to the implementation of program planning (1.6 – 2.9), operational management and the manner of making operational decisions. In planning processes, organizations study the needs of clients, monitor external partners, and successfully use situational analysis to develop new projects. These skills were developed by organizations through long-term work with donors. However, for organizations with no experience managing donor funds, these components may be significantly lower, which should be taken into account when planning future interventions to develop organizational capacity.

The weakest point in the sustainability of the management of organizations relates to the ability to properly structure activities as a whole: for instance, determining the necessary positions according to strategic and operational objectives, and establishing the proper levels of delegation and subordination, coordination and cooperation. In general, structuring is done either according to the principle of project integration or is established intuitively and informally.

The program sustainability component remains the most developed in comparison to the other components of organizational development. A closer look shows improvements in the field of advocacy (1.8 – 3.1), which occurred due to the development of skills needed to develop an advocacy strategy (1.6 – 2.9), which, in turn, led to success in advocacy (2.0 – 3.2). The fact that organizations are increasingly instrumental in mobilizing the community played a significant role (1.9 – 3.3), in particular the ability to manage volunteer programs. Thanks to strategic planning in the field of advocacy and planning, which took into account the priorities of key stakeholders, organizations have changed their approaches from more radical ones (with an emphasis on campaigns) to the use of marketing tools and ads, or focused more on consultations with authorities, which was productive in terms of political decisions. Here, the fact that organizations used the professional capacity of their communities also played a role, again thanks to improved community mobilization skills and the study of key beneficiaries.

Policies and procedures for cooperating with key stakeholders, documentation, monitoring, and analysis still remain problematic in relation to advocacy. Organizations attribute this to a reluctance to bureaucratize. Therefore, it is important to convey that policies and procedures can also be tools for internal communication, building openness and trust, and establishing a productive organizational culture.

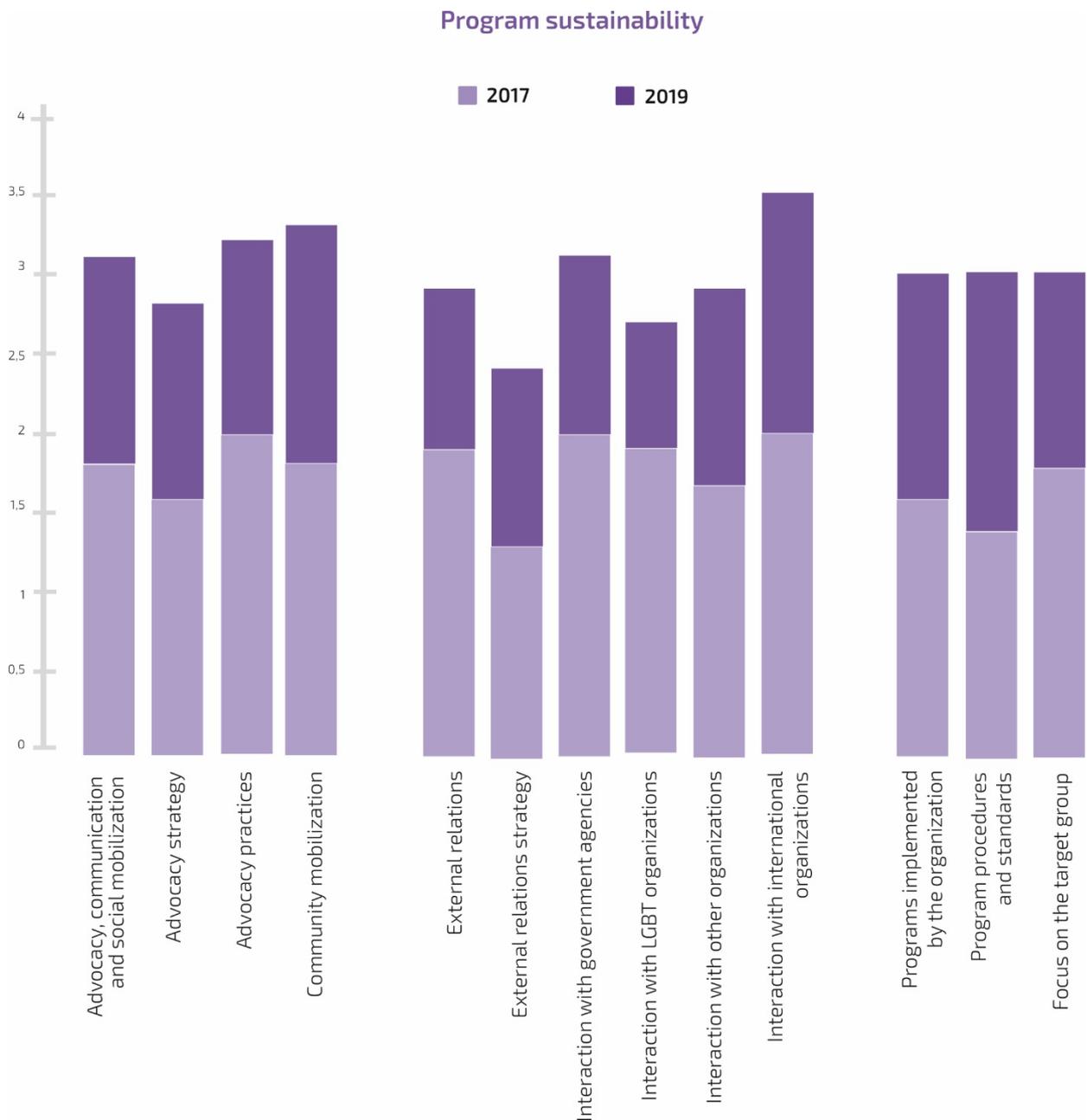


Fig.3. Program sustainability, all categories

The capacity of organizations improved significantly in terms of external relations (1.9 – 2.9) due to the development of an external relations strategy (1.3 – 2.5) and an increase in the ability to manage external relations. The ability of organizations to interact with government bodies also increased (2.0 – 3.1), which resulted in the growth of advocacy activities and improvements in the program component as a whole. The capacity of organizations to interact with international donors also increased (2.0 – 3.5), probably due to a more instrumental approach to fundraising.

Weaknesses related to organizational development can constrain external work, which could be solved by the use of codes of conduct with key stakeholders that would allow for meaningful communication with important external partners. This is especially important for the development of an organizational culture of trust.

The increase in the level of program development and implementation (1.6 – 3.1) occurred due to the development of project and program planning capabilities based on an in-depth analysis of the needs of clients, as well as of the context (1.9 – 3.0) in which these programs are implemented. Procedures for the provision of services to target groups improved significantly (1.5 – 3.0).

In general, it is worthwhile to use these developments to strengthen organizations and move from a project-based approach to an integrated organizational-based approach to planning and budgeting.

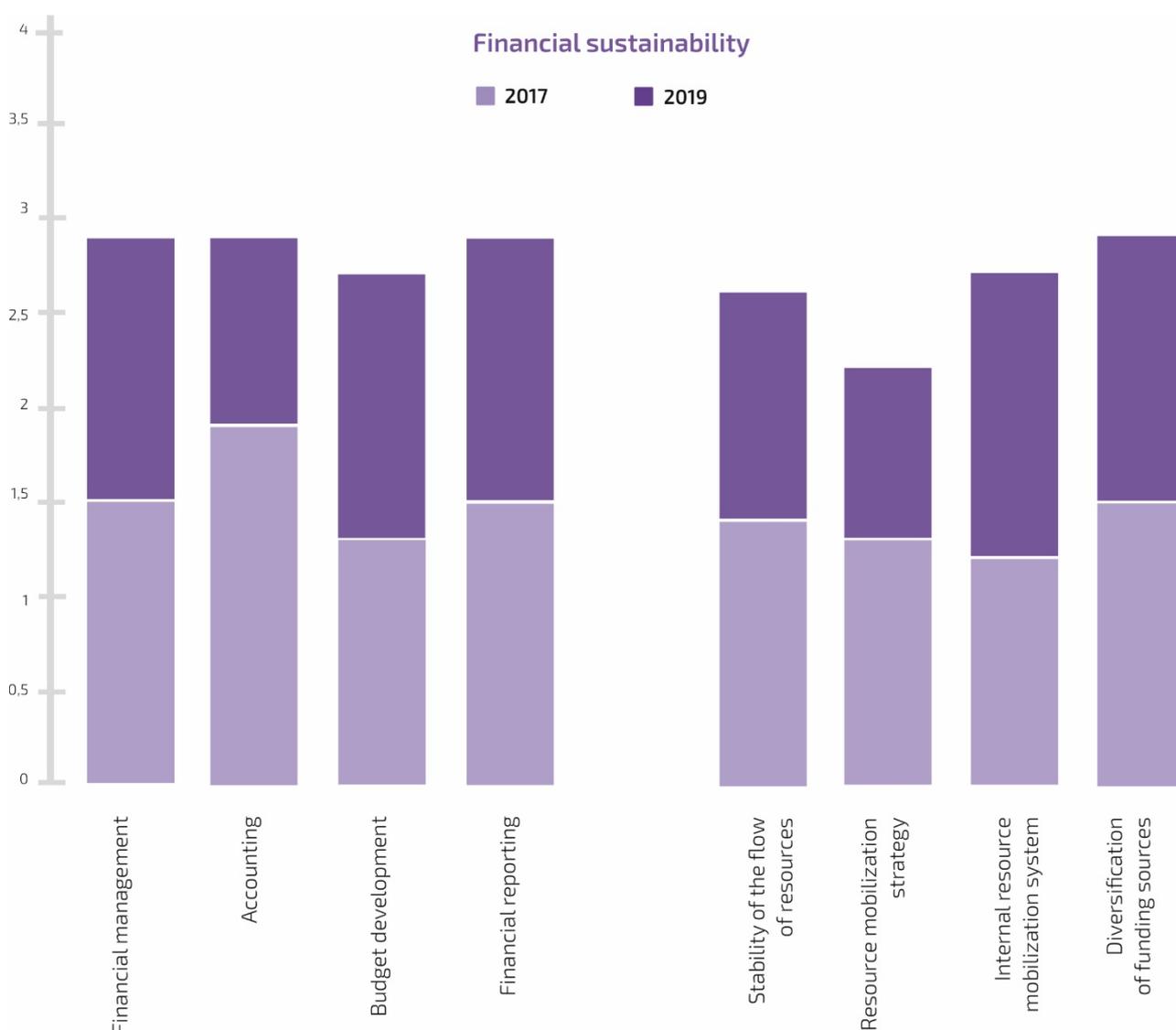


Fig. 4 Financial sustainability, all categories

Both areas of the financial sustainability component demonstrated growth: financial management improved (1.5 – 2.9), and the stability of the flow of resources increased (1.5 – 2.7). Financial management improved due to a growth in technical budgeting skills (1.5 – 2.9). Organizations began to use an integrated approach to budgeting: instead of the previously used project-based budgeting, they began to use budget analysis and forecasting.

The stability of the flow of resources was strengthened due to the diversification of sources of funding (1.5 – 2.9), where organizations sought resources not only from various categories of international donors, but also began to receive government funding, income from social entrepreneurship, and small private donations. This was the result of training on fundraising tools and supporting the development of fundraising strategies.

## Results

### Country level

North Macedonia (3 organizations) demonstrated the greatest growth in the financial sustainability component, from 0.9 to 2.9, where growth in financial management and the diversification of resources played a decisive role. This occurred as a result of training activities carried out under the grants, and due to the fact that the organizations received funding from the state thanks to changes in the country's policies. In turn, this changed the requirements for financial management and became one of the factors for the diversification of resources.

In all countries, technical assistance was aimed at improving the structure of organizations, the development of governing bodies, separating management and governing bodies, and at involving community members in decision-making and leadership development. This all led to an improvement in program activities, which became more focused on the needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders. Financial indicators improved thanks to the quality and performance of the organizations, which they began to demonstrate, not only to current donors, but also to potential state, private, and business donors.

Representatives of Georgia, North Macedonia, and Kyrgyzstan were most successful in terms of program sustainability. For example, in Georgia, assets were increased and a community center was established, which expanded the organization's ability to conduct program activities. In relation to the program sustainability component, advocacy, communication, and social mobilization indicators grew significantly. In the majority of countries, there were some successes in relation to influencing government policy: for example, before decisions were made about the funding of organizations from the state budget (North Macedonia); or, small but productive examples of cooperation to solve specific problems that restrict the rights of beneficiaries of organizations (for example, Belarus is analyzing legislation in relation to infringements of the rights of people living with HIV).

Growth in institutional sustainability occurred in the fields of management and the development of human resources. Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, and Belarus improved indicators related to this area.

### Armenia

Component	2017	2019
Overall	2.5	3.4
Institutional	2.5	3.4
Program	2.5	3.5
Financial	2.5	3.2

Against the background of the significant advancement of organizations in some countries, a comparative analysis showed that there was a balanced growth among Armenian NGOs. Thanks to the interventions of ECOM, the NGOs were able to improve indicators in the gender and the diversity of representation categories of the institutional component; in the community mobilization and interaction with government agencies categories in the program component, and improved financial management and accounting categories of the financial component. All three components changed due to the use of an integrated approach to the work of the organization instead of integrating individual projects. Successes related to advocacy also occurred due to changes in the general political climate of the country, which affected the possibility of effectively protecting the rights of representatives of the community through cooperation with authorities. As a result, the country development indicator is approaching the highest level.

In the future, support is needed at the country level for a more strategic approach to diversifying sources of funding, and for learning strategies for building coalitions and networks, particularly with other NGOs. In addition, attention must be given to creating active strategic governing bodies (boards).

## Belarus

Component	2017	2019
Overall	1.6	2.6
Institutional	1.8	2.6
Program	1.5	2.6
Financial	1.0	2.5

Belarus reached the point where the levels of development of all three components are balanced at a level above average, with the financial indicators showing the largest growth. The organization significantly strengthened the stability of its flow of resources and was able to diversify its funding. However, difficulties remain due to internal procedures related to the state control of funding from international sources. Nevertheless, some progress has been made in attracting state resources. In addition, financial management and budgeting processes were established that stem from the needs of the organization as a whole, rather than just individual projects. A holistic view to the development of the organization was established thanks to interventions in the field of ensuring institutional sustainability, in particular management and strategic planning. Program activities improved thanks to a strategic approach to advocacy and building external relations. For further development of the organization, support is needed for the development of management capacity, understanding of organizational processes in general, and for planning. Partnerships with civil society at the country level are still insufficient. The organization needs a professional approach to mobilizing resources.

## Georgia

Component	2017	2019
Overall	1.6	2.6
Institutional	1.5	2.9
Program	1.6	3.2
Financial	1.1	2.9

Georgia significantly increased its organizational capacity, especially in terms of program and financial sustainability. Thanks to the increase in program implementation opportunities and the establishment of a community center, the organization has the ability to diversify its financial base through social entrepreneurship and crowdfunding. The program component was strengthened thanks to an emphasis on advocacy, which is an essential part of its activities. Institutional development took place due to the structuring of activities around the developed strategy and mission of the organization. Leadership is very strong, and is the engine of activities. In the future, it is necessary to ensure that attention is given to the development of human resources, including the board, staff, and volunteers. Fundraising and knowledge management strategies are also needed in connection with a significant increase in the program component.

## Kyrgyzstan

Component	2017	2019
Overall	1.8	2.6
Institutional	1.8	2.7
Program	1.5	2.7
Financial	2.0	2.5

In Kyrgyzstan, each of the components saw improvements, with the greatest growth demonstrated by the program activities component due to the strengthening of advocacy capacity and the development of external relations, particularly with government bodies. For the financial component, the growth was due to the development of fundraising strategies, the expansion of the range of donors, and to external communication. For the institutional sustainability component, the organization established an active board consisting of representatives of stakeholders, and conducted strategic planning, which allowed it to see new horizons for its activities. Particular attention was given to working with volunteers and to the management of human resources. At the next stage, the organization will need to revise its policies and procedures related to improving the organizational culture of openness and trust, and its understanding of organizational integrity instead of a project-oriented approach.

## North Macedonia

Component	2017	2019
Overall	1.3	2.9
Institutional	1.3	2.7
Program	1.6	3.1
Financial	0.9	2.9

North Macedonia has become an example of significant progress in the development of organizations. In relation to the program component, the organizations achieved significant success in the area of advocacy, which affected the growth of funding from the state. This was also facilitated by the political situation with the country's orientation towards accession to the EU. In terms of the financial component, in addition to improving the stability of resources, financial management was strengthened and organizations began using budget forecasting and analysis during planning. At the next stage of development, organizations in North Macedonia will need support for further development of strategic planning, personnel management, fundraising from various sources, and for interventions to strengthen strategic leadership and interaction with external partners within the country.