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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Report on EU engagement with Civil Society in External Relations**

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## Introduction

In 2012, the European Union decided to push its long-standing support for civil society a step further.

The European Commission set out its proposals for a renewed and more ambitious approach in its Communication entitled "*The roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations*"<sup>1</sup>. The Council endorsed<sup>2</sup> this enhanced approach to working with civil society and invited the Commission to report back on progress made in its implementation by 2016.

This Commission Staff Working Document (SWD) presents the achievements obtained since.

Four years later, EU support to civil society organisations (CSOs) has massively increased. The EU is one of the leading donors for CSOs. Civil society is now integrated in all EU external policies.

The EU has established a structured dialogue with civil society and promotes it with all partners. A new generation of EU external action instruments is in place to support CSOs, as actors of both development and democratic governance. The EU has adopted an Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy that addresses the threats to civil society space, and a 'rights-based' approach to development that encompasses all human rights. The approach gives a crucial role to civil society.

In 2016, the Global Strategy for the European Foreign and Security Policy<sup>3</sup> and the Commission proposal for a new European Consensus on Development<sup>4</sup> recognise as a key principle the Partnership between the European Union and Civil Society as well as CSOs vital role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Commission recognises the challenge posed by the shrinking space for civil society in many partner countries. The proposal for a new Consensus puts forward a number of commitments for the EU and its Member States on promoting an open and enabling space for civil society, inclusive approaches and transparency in decision-making at all levels.

Part of the EU support to civil society has shifted beyond traditional development projects and strengthens CSOs as actors of governance in their own right. In order to support CSOs' participation in public life, the EU promotes a conducive environment for CSOs and is helping them become better able to operate independently. The EU has prepared country

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<sup>1</sup> *The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, (COM(2012) 492).

<sup>2</sup> *Council Conclusions on The roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations*, 15 October 2012.

<sup>3</sup> *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe — A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, June 2016.

<sup>4</sup> *Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development Our world, our Dignity our Future*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, (COM(2016) 740).

roadmaps in which this shift on focus is translated into concrete strategies implemented on the ground.

Moreover, the EU has developed a specific method in its work with civil society. Indeed, the EU approach is enshrined in ownership, fed by complementarity, driven by comprehensive interactions, working with cooperative regional orders, and embedded in universality. This report gives examples of Commission's implementation of this method on the ground.

Finally, the EU has adapted its CSO support to cover new challenges. Today, CSOs are heavily involved in developing key projects dealing with new crises and conflicts, promoting and defending gender equality, addressing the root causes of migration, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

**Disclaimer.** This report features numerous examples of EU-funded projects. They are given simply as examples and should not be regarded as making any specific qualitative reference to individual CSOs or countries. Moreover, the number of such projects is far higher than the few highlighted in this report. The CSO-LA programme of the Development Cooperation Instrument<sup>5</sup> alone supports the deployment of more than 1500 operations on the ground every year.

## 1. Strengthening Europe's engagement with civil society

### *Operating a policy shift*

In 2012 the EU moved to supporting civil society not only by providing aid, but also by promoting governance and democracy. This renewed and more ambitious approach intends to promote civil society's meaningful and structured participation in government policies and democratic processes. In order to achieve this, the EU's approach seeks to promote an environment in which CSOs can operate freely and flourish and to increase CSOs' capacity. This commitment was translated into realities in the field through local roadmaps.

The Commission's 2012 Communication sets **three priorities for EU support**:

- ✓ *to enhance efforts to promote a conducive environment for CSOs in partner countries;*
- ✓ *to promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSO in the domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes;*
- ✓ *to increase local CSOs' capacity to perform their roles as independent development actors more effectively.*

The EU's approach:

- combines action in individual countries with action at a multilateral level;
- blends work on long-term impact with short, rapid reactions;
- works on legal frameworks and structural policies, but also on targeted actions and individual cases;
- associates tripartite dialogues, public and silent diplomacy, and global and country strategies;

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<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020

- supports advocacy, reforms, policy changes, capacity building and work on the ground.

## **a. Promoting civil society participation**

### ***Supporting a meaningful and structured involvement of civil society***

CSOs play a key role in promoting the culture and values of democratic governance. By giving a voice to citizens' concerns, CSOs are active in the public arena, where they work to further democracy. They embody a demand for transparent and accountable governance, and seek to ensure that there are limits on state power. CSO participation in policy processes is key to ensuring inclusive and effective policy.

All of the EU's external relations instruments support civil society's participation and role in promoting democratic governance.

Reinforcing CSO participation in public life is a priority of the **CSO thematic programme**<sup>6</sup>. In 2015, 1165 projects supporting CSO participation were implemented in 118 countries accounting for 50,2% of the projects under this programme. They strengthened the meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies, EU programming and international processes. They also led to concrete changes in constitutions and laws, on inequalities and poverty, and on day-to-day practices affecting citizens' well-being or dignity.

The **European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)**<sup>7</sup> finances many projects promoting the role of CSOs in democratic governance, in areas such as accountability, citizen participation, culture of democracy, transparent and inclusive elections, and freedom of speech.

An EU project in **Paraguay** increases the civic participation and political representation of women, indigenous peoples, young people and people with disabilities. Implemented by the Network of Municipal Women, the project strengthens the participation of 300 women in the local life of six of the country's departments. It supports voter information and citizen participation in the electoral process, civil society's initiatives and citizen electoral observation, improving the transparency of the 2018 general elections.

The trade agreements that the EU negotiates with its partners also include civil society engagement mechanisms. These are a strong priority for the EU, in order to strengthen governance, transparency and accountability and to contribute to sustainable development both within Europe and in partner countries. Close involvement of civil society is envisaged in all new-generation EU trade agreements through dedicated mechanisms in trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters and in Economic Partnership Agreements either with direct provisions in the agreement or through their basis in the Cotonou Agreement.

The specific mechanisms for such engagement are established at different levels with features, and modalities, all different according to the specificities of the agreement and the countries in question, while the substance remains consistent across agreements. These mechanisms foresee a balanced representation of environment, labour, and business organisations. Formats include mechanisms at domestic level, within the EU and partner countries respectively

<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020

<sup>7</sup> Regulation (EU) No 235/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for democracy and human rights worldwide

(Domestic Advisory Groups - DAGs), as well as at joint level with our partners (e.g. Joint Civil Society Dialogue Forum, Joint Consultative Committee).

Under the EU ‘GSP+’ (**Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus**) scheme, trade tariffs on two thirds of all products are fully removed for countries which ratify and implement core international conventions on human rights, labour rights, the environment and good governance. An EU project implemented by the Equal Rights Trust improves the capacity of 360 CSOs, including grassroots organisations and trade unions, to monitor whether these core international conventions are being implemented correctly in current or former GSP+ beneficiary countries. The countries involved are: Armenia, Bolivia, Georgia, Cape Verde, Mongolia, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan.

In **Cambodia**, the EU uses the tools of the International Budget Partnership\* in its policy dialogue with the government on budget and budget support. Using an ‘open budget index’, it supports discussions between the government and an NGO forum on resources and spending of the national budget. The discussions led to the publication of the executive budget proposal, the production of budget briefings that can easily be understood by the public and the timely production and release of audit reports.

\*Born out of a CSO initiative, Disha, in Gujarat India 1985, the International Budget Partnership invests in civil society’s capacity to analyse public budgets, participate in budget processes and engage in evidence-based advocacy.

<http://www.internationalbudget.org/>

The EU also promotes structured civil society participation in **environmental policy** development and implementation. For example, the EU allocated funds in 2015 to the Green Economy Coalition<sup>8</sup> to reinforce regional networks and complement policy development support to government institutions. The EU also supports continued civil society participation in implementing the EU Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade<sup>9</sup>, notably through its participation in policy dialogue fora, policy inputs and monitoring.

## **b. Protecting civil society-enabling environment**

### ***Mitigating a shrinking space***

A worryingly increasing number of countries have introduced legal and administrative constraints against CSOs that often contradict those countries’ international commitments and constitutional or legal obligations. The EU monitors new legislation and stands ready to provide assistance and expertise on new draft association laws, and to advocate for the application of international standards on freedom of association. Civic freedoms are reportedly under threat in more than 100 countries and CSOs are regularly the subject of violent crackdowns or physical attacks. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019)<sup>10</sup> translates the strong EU commitment to address threats to civil society’s enabling environment.

### ***Addressing threats to civil society space***

<sup>8</sup> The Green Economy Coalition is a global network of organisations committed to accelerating a transition to a new green inclusive economy.

<sup>9</sup> *Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), Proposal for an EU Action Plan*, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, (COM(2003) 251)

<sup>10</sup> *Council Conclusions on the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015 – 2019*, 20 July 2015



- a. Promote and support legislation, policies and mechanisms designed to protect Human Rights Defenders (HRDs); in particular, strengthen the implementation of the relevant EU Guidelines and the EU HRD Mechanism launched under the EIDHR.
- b. Monitor and assess the legal (e.g. laws and regulations) and enabling (e.g. arbitrary procedural, financial harassment or restrictions, in particular regarding foreign funding) environment for civil society including social partners and proactively identify and report on threats to civil society space, including reprisals, and take steps to counter such threats.
- c. Oppose through public or non-public messaging unjustified restrictions to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, confinement of civil society's space and attempts to hinder the work of civil society, including HRDs, such as the criminalisation of HRDs, ensuring these issues are regularly raised in bilateral meetings, human rights dialogues, and UN and regional fora.

*Point 10 of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019*

At multilateral level, the EU has worked on supporting an enabling environment for civil society. The EU is working closely with UN agencies, UN Special Rapporteurs, the African Union, the OSCE and other regional organisations. The EU is also very active on the issue of civil society at the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly (third Committee). In these fora the EU has repeatedly repelled attempts to hinder the work of NGOs and human rights defenders, including attempts to prevent them from participating in the UN Human Rights Council.

The EU has developed a layered response to provide immediate intervention to protect human rights defenders, maintain funding flows and safeguard CSOs' existence in the worst situations. Longer-term actions aim to safeguard legal frameworks, develop CSO resilience, foster positive attitudes towards CSOs and support international processes.

Working with CSOs in the most difficult environments is a key priority of the EIDHR, which has earmarked EUR 200-250 million for this purpose between 2014 and 2020. This support is giving hundreds of CSOs the necessary breathing space to maintain their vital work on governance. Often this support simply helps individuals or organisations to survive in difficult times.

For over 10 years the Democratic Voice of Burma has been one of the few independent media networks working inside **Myanmar**. Its journalists have played a crucial role in exposing the human rights violations and repression in the country. Many paid dearly for their actions and spent many years behind bars. An EIDHR small emergency grant was provided to nine Democratic Voice of Burma journalists who were released from prison following a January 2012 amnesty. Under the grant, the journalists received urgent medical care to help them recover from the harsh conditions of their detention and gave them the means to resume their journalistic activities at this crucial moment in Myanmar's transition.

In **Brazil**, the EU-Brazilian Dialogue project supported the creation of a regulatory framework for CSOs. The project led to the adoption in 2014 of a law that recognises CSOs as legitimate entities, safeguards the role and space of the country's 300 000 CSOs and establishes mechanisms and conditions for public partnerships, funding and taxation. The project was implemented together with the Brazilian National Association of NGOs (ABONG) and the Platform for a New Regulatory Framework. It involved 50 000 organisations, social movements and networks.

An EU project implemented by Civicus mitigates the increasing shrinking space for civil society in some countries of the former **Commonwealth of Independent States**. Through networks, direct support, capacity building and information sharing, the project strengthened targeted CSOs by easing law-based restrictions, obstacles to their registration and obstacles their operations. The project fought the isolation of civil society in the region.

### ***The EU Human Rights Defender Mechanism***

"ProtectDefenders.eu" is the EU mechanism specifically aimed at protecting human rights defenders. It provides stable, comprehensive and gender-sensitive EU support to individuals and local organisations that are at high risk and facing the most difficult situations worldwide because of their daily work.

Implemented by a consortium of 12 NGOs (*FrontLine Defenders*, *Reporters Sans Frontières* (RSF), *Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme* (FIDH), *Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture* (OMCT), *International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ESCFR-Net), *International Lesbian Gay, trans and intersex Association* (ILGA), *Urgent Action Fund*, *Protection International*, *Peace Brigades International*, *Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders* (EMHRF), *Forum Asia* and *East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project* (EHAHRDP), the project:

- delivers a fast 24/7 and specific EU response to support human rights defenders at risk;
- supports local organisations working with human rights defenders;
- extends the international network of host institutions offering defenders temporary relocation when preventive and protection measures for personal security are no longer enough.

The project also:

- provides a training programme to meet the security needs of human rights defenders;
- builds public awareness;
- ensures enhanced visibility about the situation of human rights defenders at every level.

ProtectDefenders.eu is a flagship for EU support for human rights and CSOs. It saves lives on a daily basis.

<https://protectdefenders.eu>

### **c. Consolidating civil society capacity**

#### ***Allowing CSOs to act as independent actors more effectively***

Local CSOs can face capacity constraints, ranging from limitations in management and skills to funding or internal governance. The EU supports the long-term capacity development of CSOs, with a strong focus on local CSOs and on consolidating networks and



representativeness. It also supports partnerships for capacity development between local and European CSOs.

Strengthening CSO capacity is a priority of the **EU CSO thematic programme**, funded under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). In 2015, more than 1000 projects tackling this issue (43 % of activities) were deployed on the ground. The projects helped strengthen the legitimacy, credibility, project delivery, evidence-based advocacy and collaboration of CSOs. Thanks to this support, thousands of organisations have been able to carry out higher quality and more credible work. In turn this has increased the number of lives they save, increased their impact on reducing poverty and helped them bring more structural improvements to the societies they work in.

The EU sees the *capacity building* of CSOs in a holistic manner, with five main components.



In **China**, an EU project reinforces the capacity of CSOs to better represent marginalised groups. Implemented by the Beijing Civil Society Development Research Center, the project strengthens marginal groups' access to social services in growing urban areas and helps develop CSOs' advocacy methods when interacting publicly with state bodies and policy-makers. In doing so, the project has helped the rise of a stronger Chinese civil society.

In **Russia**, an EU project, implemented by a consortium of NGOs, aims to enhance the capacity of human rights defenders and civil society to counteract pressure from public authorities and other groups through the establishment of a joint resource centre to provide methodological, informational and institutional support.

In **Senegal**, an EU project strengthens the capacity of CSOs to better ensure that women and young people benefit from the land reform. This project, implemented by the *Conseil des*

*Organisations non-Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement* (CONGAD), helped local civil society develop better skills to negotiate with authorities and defend individual cases. As a result, 205 hectares of land in 18 villages were allocated to 250 women and 56 young people, who have gone on to set up windmills, dairy and wheat treatment units.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, an EU project harnesses the strength of civil society to drive improvements in the inclusivity and sustainability of growth. Implemented by the Rural Advisory Service in the country's Batken region, the project establishes a support mechanism for CSOs operating community-led action on social and economic development. The project strengthens the capacity of local CSOs involved in the development of the 46 villages and 9 rural communities in the Leylek district of the Batken region.

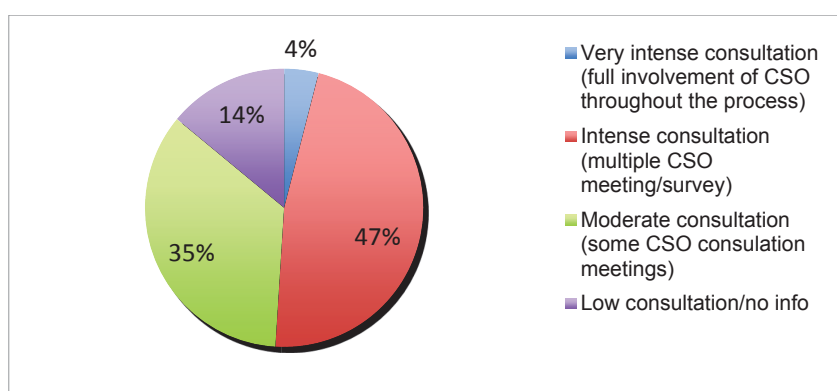
#### **d. EU country roadmaps for engagement with civil society**

##### ***Turning one global policy shift into 100 local strategies***

To translate its political commitment into practical action, the EU decided to develop 'country roadmaps' for engagement with civil society. These roadmaps present a coherent and shared EU analysis of the panorama of civil society, its enabling environment and the obstacles, constraints and opportunities faced by CSOs. By identifying EU priorities when engaging with and supporting CSOs in partner countries, the roadmaps improve the impact, predictability and visibility and consistency between EU dialogue, various policy sectors and operational support.

Today, 105 country roadmaps are in place. They have been conceived with civil society and jointly adopted with EU Member States. Whenever they agreed, host countries and other donors have joined them. These roadmaps made it possible to translate the ambition to support CSOs' role in good governance into concrete steps in each country. The roadmaps are currently being implemented and are regularly updated. They also feed into the EU Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies.

**CSOs' participation in the adoption of EU roadmaps**



*Roadmap process: taking stock – Capitalisation report – October 2015*

The roadmaps have led to concrete gains on synergies. They allowed common approaches facilitating future Joint Programming on the ground and increasing EU collective impact and division of labour.

The Roadmap on **Tunisia** focuses on the explosion in the number of CSOs following the Arab Spring. It addresses the difficulties these CSOs face in trying to survive in a sustainable manner and the challenges that civil society is facing, namely how to structure itself, promote democratic and citizen culture, and implement a participatory and partnership approach. A joint EU-civil society reference group set up to feed the implementation of the Roadmap and help keep civil society alive is now following up on these issues.

The Roadmap for **Ecuador**, drawn up as a complete joint EU-civil society strategy, addresses the increasingly restrictive and difficult environment for CSOs in the country. It set up a dedicated structured dialogue that is fed by active technical groups. These help provide best practices that can be used by organisations facing difficulties with the country's new CSO legislation.

The Roadmap for **Pakistan** helped focus on the participation of civil society in rural development, education, elections, rule of law and climate change. It fostered regular dialogue between the EU Delegation, Member States and CSOs and linked strategic policy dialogue around these sectors to the planning of specific action.

## **2. Invigorating a long-standing support**

### ***Forging a genuine partnership***

In the last 4 years, the EU has considerably increased its engagement with civil society. It has fulfilled its ambition to become a leading donor for CSOs worldwide. It has deepened the integration of civil society in the definition of its policies. It has developed various complementary instruments to support CSOs. It has structured and intensified its dialogue with all components of civil society.

### **a. The EU, a key donor for CSOs**

#### ***A decade of expanding support***

The European Commission has been providing support to civil society since 1976, when it launched its first such programme, with a value of an historical 2.5 million ECU.

With the signature in 2006 of the European Consensus on Development, the EU as a whole decided to add policy to this area and to '*enhance its support for building capacity of non-state actors in order to strengthen their voice in the development process and to advance political, social and economic dialogue*'. It led to a decade of expanding support.

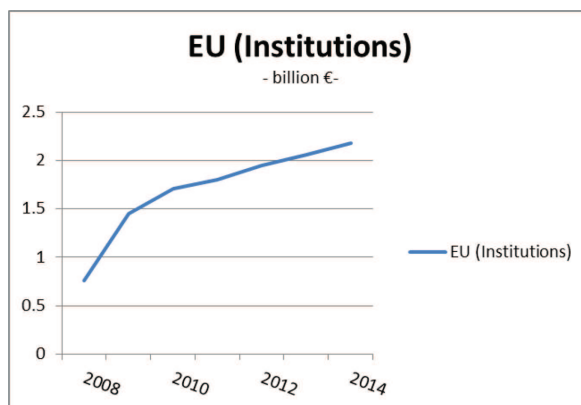
In 2008 the European Commission was the eighth largest donor to civil society. Today, it is the third largest donor to CSOs around the world<sup>11</sup>. The EU has greatly broadened the range of its work with CSOs, which now accounts for an annual budget of EUR 2 billion. This accounts for 12 % of the current EU official development assistance.

This increased additional financial effort has made it possible to invest in the specific approach, added value and results that CSOs can bring compared with more traditional aid. CSOs work on the frontline and have a strong local knowledge and connection.

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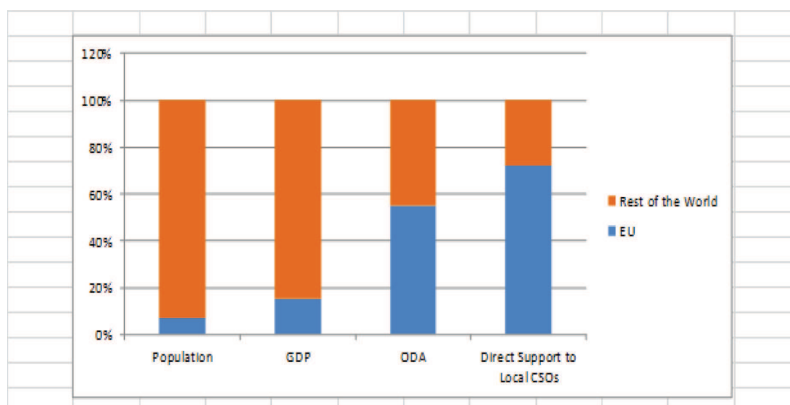
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/stats/idsonline.htm>

With this increased EU support, CSOs have been able to face this decade's unprecedented explosion in the number of in natural and man-made disasters, protracted crises and forced displacement, refugees and climate and food crisis. The support has helped mitigate the trend towards shrinking space for CSOs in public life and fundamental freedoms and has improved poverty reduction in remote places.



Over the last decade, the EU has become one of the top leading donors for CSOs. It has the largest world programmes delivered **through** CSOs in humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy, and **to** CSOs as actors of governance. The EU is the leading donor for local CSOs in partner countries.

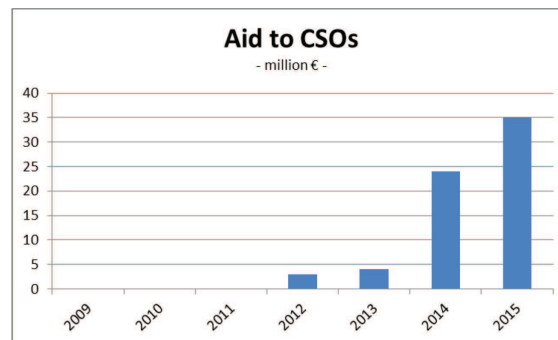
One remarkable fact is that while the EU represents 7% of the world population and 15% of world GDP, it represents half of the world's official development assistance (55%) and two thirds of assistance to CSOs based in developing countries (72%).<sup>12</sup>



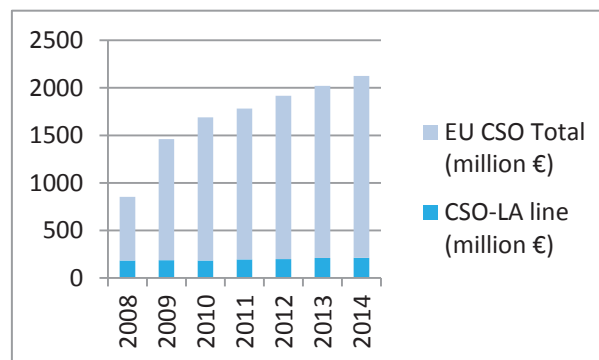
A visible result of the 2012 policy shift is the increasing EU support to CSOs as partners and actors in their own right (i.e. funding **to** CSOs) rather than as service-delivery implementers (i.e. funding **through** CSOs).

Since 2012, there has been a clear upward trend in the amounts of EU official development assistance going to CSOs to support them as governance and development actors in their own right. In 2015, the amount of assistance reached EUR 35 million per year.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/stats/idsonline.htm>



The EU CSO Thematic Programme of the Development Cooperation Instrument<sup>13</sup> is unique as it is actor-based and dedicated to support CSOs both as actors of development and governance. However, support to CSOs has grown exponentially across all EU development instruments. As a consequence, the specific CSO programme now represents a smaller share of EU official development assistance going to CSOs.



This is a clear indication of the success of the CSO programme in piloting projects, increasing CSOs' capacity to manage larger funds from other sources and in creating synergies and leverage. However, there is a need for a stronger focus on these core added values.

## b. Integrating CSOs into EU policy

### *Mainstreaming political recognition for CSOs*

Since 2012, the EU has incorporated its vision for a stronger partnership with CSOs into a set of **major policy documents**.

The Commission's proposal for a new European Consensus on Development<sup>14</sup> follows up on this vow and affirms that *'The EU and its Member States will deepen their partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs). They will promote operating space and enabling environments for CSOs to play their full role as advocates and implementers. They will support CSO commitments to effective, transparent and results-oriented development cooperation'*.

<sup>13</sup> Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020

<sup>14</sup> *Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development Our world, our Dignity our Future*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, (COM(2016) 740).

The **Global Strategy for the European Foreign and Security Policy**, presented in June 2016 by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, commits to deepening the EU's partnership with civil society through dialogue, support and more innovative forms of engagement.

In parallel, the **EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy** adopted by the EU in July 2015 details the EU's commitment to promoting, monitoring and defending civil society in order to address threats to it. The Action Plan also translates this commitment into practical action on the ground through the adoption of EU Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies.

The 2015 Review of the **European Neighbourhood Policy**<sup>15</sup> reinforced the key role of civil society in the region. This more focused engagement has been integrated into the process of negotiating 'Partnership Priorities' with partner countries in the European Neighbourhood. Outreach and inclusion of civil society is a key part of all the priority areas covered by the Eastern Partnership.

**The EU Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**<sup>16</sup>, details the role and importance of Civil society in the development of inclusive local and national disaster risk reduction strategies, with active engagement of local actors - authorities, communities and civil society.

In **enlargement** countries, strengthening the enabling environment for civil society is part of the political criteria for accession, as outlined in the 2016 enlargement strategy and country reports. The involvement of CSOs is key to ensuring that the process is not just government-led but also reflects citizens' views and needs.

An important step forward was the appointment in 2012 (renewed in 2014) of Stavros Lambrinidis as **EU Special Representative for Human Rights**.

Mr Lambrinidis is the first ever thematic EU special representative whose mandate includes promoting a civil society-enabling environment and defending its shrinking space from further attack.

In June 2012, the EU decided to move towards a **rights-based approach** to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights.

Through the application of all rights, the participation (access to the decision making process), non-discrimination (equal access), accountability (access to the rule of law), and transparency (access to information), the rights-based approach (RBA) profoundly changes the way rights-holders are targeted and involved in designing and implementing EU development programmes.

It also acknowledges the fundamental role of civil society in expressing rights-holders' views and empowering them, and in fostering accountability and transparency.

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<sup>15</sup> *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (JOIN (2015) 50)

<sup>16</sup> Commission Staff Working Document *Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk reduction 2015-2030 A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies* (SWD (2016) 205 final/2)



### c. Integration of CSOs in the new generation of external relations instruments

#### *A comprehensive pro-CSO toolbox*

The EU has adopted a new set of instruments for its external relations for the period 2014-2020. They form a comprehensive set of complementary tools. The instruments all support CSOs, which is a strong feature of this multiannual financial period, and bring EU support for CSOs to an unprecedented level. The instruments work in synergy, focusing on their respective added values and complementing each other.

The **Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities of the EU Development Cooperation Instrument (CSO-LA)** is dedicated to helping CSOs function as actors in their own right. The programme is endowed with funding of EUR 1.907 billion for 2014-2020, of which EUR 1.43 billion is dedicated to supporting CSOs. It funds actions enhancing CSO contributions to governance and development, reinforcing CSO networks and supporting CSOs' work on development education and awareness raising. On the ground the programme specifically supports CSO participation, its enabling environment and capacity building.

#### *Framework partnership agreements: a new way of working with CSOs*

Framework partnership agreements create long-term common strategic objectives supporting CSOs not only as providers of aid but also to play a key and active role in the governance involved in successfully implementing the sustainable development goals.

In 2016, the European Commission signed 23 such agreements with major civil society networks: NGOs, private-sector organisations, trade unions, farmers' organisations, cooperatives and community- and faith-based organisations.

Agreements have been signed covering Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and Europe. They cover a wide array of fields, including anti-corruption, gender, accountability, human rights, political and social inclusion, and economic empowerment.

The **European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)** is the concrete expression of the EU commitment to supporting democracy and human rights in non-EU countries. Endowed with EUR 1.3 billion for 2014-2020, it backs CSOs in strengthening, protecting, promoting and monitoring democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. It supports in the space available for CSOs to operate in, human rights defenders, and victims of repression and abuse in the most difficult situations.

The **Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)**<sup>17</sup> enables the EU to help prevent and respond to actual or emerging crises around the world. Endowed with EUR 2.3

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<sup>17</sup> Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace

billion for 2014-2020, the IcSP supports different types of actors, including CSOs to deploy urgent short-term actions on conflict prevention, peace-building, and global threats, including in new areas such as cybercrime, illicit trafficking and counter-terrorism. It also supports longer-term capacity building and crisis preparedness of CSOs.

**EU humanitarian assistance** provides assistance to people hit by man-made and natural disasters, with particular attention on the most vulnerable victims. Endowed with an annual budget of around EUR 1 billion, it reaches 120 million people in over 110 countries every year. Implemented by 200 operating partners, the majority of them CSOs, European civil protection and humanitarian aid are provided in areas such as food and nutrition, shelter, disaster preparedness, healthcare, water and sanitation, and education in emergencies.

#### ***A network of focal points in EU delegations***

EU support needs to be deployed as close as possible to the ground so that it reaches the people who need it most. The EU has set up a network of focal points dealing with civil society issues inside each EU delegation.

These work in synergy with other networks of focal points in areas such as human rights and democracy, EIDHR, gender focal points, as well as with staff deployed in the field by the European Commission (Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations).

The four major geographical EU instruments, the **Development Cooperation Instrument**, the **European Development Fund**<sup>18</sup>, the **European Neighbourhood Instrument**<sup>19</sup>, and the **Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance**<sup>20</sup>, all support long-term projects with civil society in their respective geographic areas, ensuring world coverage for EU support.

Following the Arab Spring, a **Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility**<sup>21</sup> was established to strengthen CSOs and promote their role in reforms and democratic changes in the neighbourhood countries. It helps to create an environment in which CSOs can function and flourish, while promoting CSOs' involvement in policy dialogue and their interaction with public authorities.

Finally, in the field of external relations, **EU trust funds** are foreseen as a new innovative implementing tool<sup>22</sup>. The new EU trust funds enable major surges of activity in times of crisis, such as in Syria (the Madad Trust Fund) and the Central African Republic (Bekou Trust Fund), and on the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa). The trust funds are also implemented by CSOs and pool substantial resources from different donors to enable a swifter response to emergency situations.

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<sup>18</sup> Council Regulation (EU) 2015/33 of 2 March 2015 on the financial regulation applicable to the 11th European Development Fund

<sup>19</sup> Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument

<sup>20</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

<sup>21</sup> *A new response to a changing Neighbourhood*, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, (COM (2011) 303).

<sup>22</sup> See Article 187 of the Union Financial Regulation (Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, OJ L298, 26.10.2012, p. 1

Among the enlargement countries, the **Civil Society Facility**<sup>23</sup> was set up in 2008 to support the development of civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey<sup>24</sup>. The Facility comprises both national and multi-beneficiary coordinated initiatives. It enhances the capacity, accountability and credibility of CSOs, fosters dialogue between CSOs and governments within the region and promotes CSOs' role in the democratic process.

#### **d. Supporting dialogue with CSOs**

##### ***Promoting transparent and constructive interactions***

In 2013 the European Commission set up a formal space for regular policy dialogue with CSOs, following the positive experience of the first structured dialogue in this area. The new body, the **Policy Forum on Development**<sup>25</sup>, fosters debate on European development policies and global agendas.

The Forum meets once a year in Brussels as a multi-stakeholder trust-building mechanism promoting better understanding between 74 representatives from 61 global and regional networks, the EU institutions and Member States. The Forum also takes place at regional level to debate issues related to regional organisations.

In 2016 in **Guatemala**, the Forum debated the increasing inequalities and gender issues in Latin America and helped establish instruments that tackle these issues and adapt EU assistance to graduating countries. The Forum has also been held in **Lima** (Latin America, 2014), **Bangkok** (Asia, 2015) and **Dakar** (Africa, 2016).

Consultations and policy dialogue with CSOs have become the norm. For example, in the EU's **pilot exercise on democracy support**<sup>26</sup>, CSOs have been closely associated in drawing up the democracy action plans which will guide EU action on democracy in the years to come. An EU project implemented by Democracy Reporting International provided capacity building and logistics to enable CSOs to become involved in this process.

The EU promotes and supports dialogue with civil society organisations and platforms as part of the **Africa-EU Partnership**. Under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, the main tools for such interaction are its steering committees (both African and European) and the Joint Annual Forum to assess progress on implementing the Strategy.

A further EU programme supports the input of African and European CSOs to the annual human rights dialogue between the EU and the African Union. With structured preparatory meetings, the programme enables CSOs from both regions to give independent and evidence-based inputs to the dialogue. It works in conjunction with projects supporting CSO work with the bodies of the African Union's human rights architecture.

The **EU-Russia Civil Society Forum** is a network of 150 thematically diverse NGOs from Russia and the EU member states. The Forum strengthens cooperation between CSOs based on common values of pluralistic democracy, rule of law, human rights and social justice, striving to establish a 'civil society beyond borders'. It develops joint projects, research and

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<sup>23</sup> *Western Balkans: Enhancing the European perspective*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (COM (2008) 127).

<sup>24</sup> *Western Balkans: Enhancing the European perspective*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council (COM (2008) 127).

<sup>25</sup> <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/policy-forum-development>

<sup>26</sup> *Council Conclusions on Democracy support in the EU's External Relations*, 17 November 2009.

advocacy. It conducts public discussions and dialogues with decision-makers, and facilitates people-to-people exchanges.

The **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** brings together CSOs from six countries and EU CSOs active in these countries. It provides a platform for experience-sharing and partnership building. The CSOs provide input to the intergovernmental platforms, produce thematic research and indices with regional focus, conduct monitoring of the implementation of their governments' commitments and carry out regional projects. The Forum is an important counterpart for the EU institutions.

In **Georgia**, an EU project supports dialogue between local CSOs and the municipalities of Dmananazi, Kazbegi, Samtredia and Martvili. Implemented by the Caucasian Institute for Economic & Social Research, the project gave structure to local CSOs and helped them engage more effectively with local government authorities. It also strengthened citizen participation in local life and contributed to progress on reforms in local self-government, budget priorities and urban development.

An EU project implemented by the Arab Trade Union Confederation is creating an enabling environment for social dialogue. It brings together representatives from trade unions, chambers of industry and civil society in **Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco** to foster exchange of best practices between social partners and develop a charter for social dialogue. The project paves the way for common positions on topics that affect labour relations and social development.

Another EU project supports the implementation of the 'Blueprint for Jobs in Africa', adopted by social partners in 2015. Carried out by the International Organisation of Employers, the project brings together Business Africa, African trade unions and the International Labour Organisation to develop a continent-wide framework to take common action against inadequate creation of decent jobs in Africa and to support inclusive growth.

### **3. An EU specific feature**

#### ***Turning essential principles into realities on the ground***

The EU has developed specific approaches in its work with civil society that gives a specific feature to its support. This report gives examples of the reality of these approaches enshrined in ownership, fed by complementarity, driven by comprehensive interactions, working with cooperative regional orders, and embedded in universality.

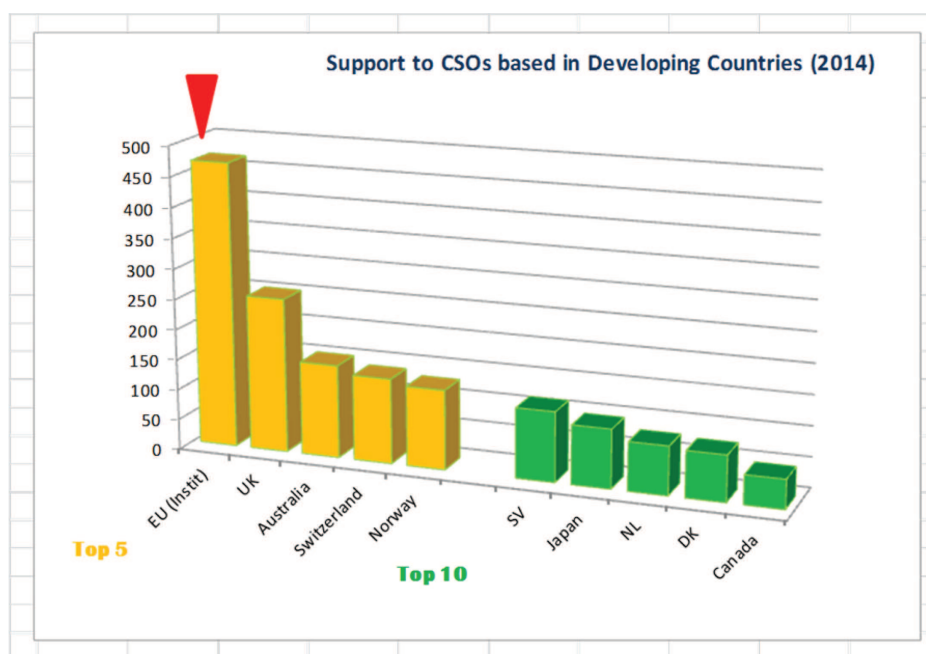
#### **a. Delivering on ownership**

##### ***Supporting small, grassroots and disenfranchised CSOs***

For development to be sustainable, it needs to have the full involvement of people, organisations and authorities in the local areas where it is needed. Local CSOs are best placed to reach out to the most vulnerable, marginalised and disenfranchised members of communities make their voices heard and respond to their needs. The EU is committed to

better engagement with CSOs in their most local forms i.e. small local NGOs, community-based, grassroots or disenfranchised organisations, often in remote places far from capital cities.

The EU is currently the leading worldwide donor to CSOs based in partner countries<sup>27</sup> and in financing partnerships between European and local CSOs. The EU accounts for two thirds of world official development assistance that goes to local CSOs, while 13 % of the projects under the **EU CSO Thematic programme** go to grassroots or community-based organisations.



In the remote Kapilbastu District of **Nepal**, an EU project works with local CSOs to improve the equity and quality in early childhood and basic education offered to the 500 000 inhabitants of the district. Implemented by We World, the project improved access to schools and the content of the courses provided to primary school children, in particular those from small villages in the district.

In **Russia**, an EU-funded project "Sparks of hope for Russian villages" has supported the sustainable socio-economic development of rural communities. It allowed the involvement of the residents in the process of making the decisions affecting their quality of life, in particular in the area of rural development and rural tourism initiatives.

In **Fiji**, an EU project is empowering community-based organisations in disenfranchised areas of the country's Western Province. Implemented by the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprise, the project enabled grassroots voices to participate effectively in the decision-making processes of local initiatives on governance and development projects that affect these communities on a daily basis, ensuring that the projects are better adapted to the local needs and aspirations of the population.

In **Tajikistan**, an EU project in the districts of Khujand, Khorog and Dushanbe ensures that people with disabilities are part of decision-making committees and that their access to services is guaranteed. Implemented by Handicap International, the National Union of

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/stats/idsonline.htm>



Disabled People Tajikistan, the Ishtirok Women's League, the Public Organisation of Deaf People Tajikistan and the Public Organisation of the Blind, the project reached out to 1 035 000 people with disabilities, their families and communities.

In **Kosovo**<sup>\*</sup>, an EU project, the Kosovo Women's Fund supports grassroots CSOs run by women that lack access to funding. Targeting in particular, those working in remote rural areas, ethnic minority groups, young people and other disenfranchised groups the projects helped these CSOs to finance their activities.

## **b. Delivering on the humanitarian/development nexus**

### ***Linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)***

The EU is committed to implementing humanitarian and development cooperation through a comprehensive approach to enable a durable recovery, to build the self-reliance of affected populations, build resilience and tackle chronic vulnerability and risk. CSOs play a key role in linking development and humanitarian practices to ensure relief, rehabilitation and development efforts complement each other. CSOs work to deliver both development and humanitarian assistance in protracted crises and integrate long-term displaced people into wider development planning.

The EU Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013 -2020<sup>28</sup> reiterates the particular role of CSOs in fragile, crisis and risk-prone situations to safeguard vulnerable populations and communities, and as promoters and implementers of local resilience strategies.

Following the May 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the EU is one of the first donors to have reached and exceeded the global target of 4 % of humanitarian funding earmarked for education (the EU's 2016 figure was 5 %).

In **Libya**, after EU humanitarian assistance provided food and shelter to the children of Misrata when the city was under fire, an EU project implemented by the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development followed-up on urgent relief and started the early launch of basic social services, including schools. Later on, an additional project helped CSOs move from humanitarian delivery to a political role. The project filled the gap before educational programmes began to be deployed. In this way the project forged a link between relief and rehabilitation and development.

It is estimated that every euro invested in the resilience of local communities saves EUR 4-7 in humanitarian assistance. An EU-funded project implemented by MercyCorps Europe, supported emergency preparedness initiatives in conflict-affected host communities of South Kordofan, **Sudan**. The project improved the delivery of emergency response services by local communities to long-term displaced households, saving lives affected by the protracted crisis in the Kadugli, Abu Kershua and Rashad localities.

An EU project implemented by the Afghan Civil Society Forum strengthens local civil society's role to influence sustainable reforms and transparency in Community, District and Provincial Development Councils of the Ghor and Samangan provinces of **Afghanistan**. The

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<sup>\*</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

<sup>28</sup> Commission Staff Working Document *Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020* SWD(2013) 227



project shifts crisis assistance towards structured long-term development and focuses on the needs of poor and marginalised people, especially women, and investment in capacity building.

### **c. A territorial approach to local development (TALD)**

#### ***Unleashing the potential of territories as engine of development***

Growing inequalities between urban and rural areas have showed the limits of traditional top-down centralised policies. A ‘territorial approach to local development’ is increasingly used to better fit local needs and realities. By promoting dialogue and concrete action involving all local stakeholders, it helps a given territory to pool its combined potential, thus creating additional impact.

Implemented today in more than 15 countries, this new approach has enabled local areas and regions to fully tap into their potential and achieve improvements in social inclusion, economic growth and environmental sustainability. The new approach has empowered local players to plan, finance and manage their own development. It also feeds into policy and institutional processes, boosting further genuine local development.

In **Colombia**, the FORPAZ EU programme builds on the work of the ‘Laboratory de la Paz’ CSO network and helps affected rural areas overcome years of armed violence and conflict. The project supports the restoration of rule of law, reinforces institutions and builds joint development prospects and action through dialogue that involves local people, organisations and authorities and which looks to achieve comprehensive development for the territory in question.

An EU programme in the **Baluchistan province of Pakistan** empowers local government and reinforces community mobilisation. It also improves citizen access to basic social and public services and helps establish pilot actions on local development, involving communities and local authorities. These actions influence the adoption of local development policy by the Baluchistan Government.

In **Uganda**, an EU programme implements an integrative territorial approach in the remote northern area of the country. The programme helps improve poor nutritional knowledge, malfunctioning value chains and poor transport infrastructures by preparing strategies for food security and agricultural development that focus on specific areas, involving all of civil society around local authorities.

### **d. Delivering on cooperative regional orders**

#### **Supporting CSOs’ engagement with regional organisations**

In a world caught between global pressures and local pushback, the regional dimension is particularly important. Voluntary forms of regional governance offer states and people the opportunity to better manage security concerns, reap the economic gains of globalisation, fully express their cultures and identities and project influence in world affairs.

Scores of EU projects support the participation of civil society in regional organisations such as the Council of Europe, the African Union, the Organisation of American States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). They also target sub-regional organisations such as the Central American Integration System, the Southern African

Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States, the League of Arab States and the Union for the Mediterranean.

An EU project strengthens the engagement of REPAOC<sup>29</sup> and REPONGAC<sup>30</sup>, two regional platforms of African CSOs respectively with the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** and the **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)**. This made it possible to make the voices of citizens heard in intergovernmental policy-making at regional level.

An EU project implemented by Articulaci3n Feminista Marcosur supports interaction between women and feminist CSOs and the **Organisation of American States**. With targeted advocacy and media campaigns, the project tries to include gender issues in the Organisation's policies. Through gender-thematic hearings on sexual and reproductive rights in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the project also reinforces other gender networks on indigenous peoples, afro-descendant or economically excluded women.

The **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** gathers European heads of state and 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. An EU project supports the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) which brings together Asian and European Civil Society back to back to the ASEM Summit. It allowed, the AEPF to express citizen voices through a reporting slot in the 11th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM11) held in Ulan Bator in July 2016 on issues such as participatory democracy and human rights, peace and security, social and economic rights and environmental justice.

## **e. Supporting development education and awareness raising (DEAR)**

### ***Delivering on universality***

The 'development education and awareness raising' (DEAR) programme fosters public engagement to implement an ambitious development policy and shape the future of Europe's relationship with the rest of the world. In the coming years it will need to help find responses to the challenges of the sustainable development goals, migration, climate change and gender equality, to name but a few issues that affect European citizens.

Largely implemented by CSOs and running for 40 years, the aim of the EU's DEAR programme is to make EU citizens aware of global development concerns and their local and personal relevance to them, thus turning people into global development advocates.

*'A strong and informed engagement of EU citizens in development issues is essential for an ambitious EU development policy. DEAR enhances the European general public's understanding, skills and critical engagement, regarding development and the issues that affect it.'*

Commission Staff Working Document on **Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR)** in Europe (SWD (2012) 457)

**"Challenging the Crisis"**, a DEAR project, targets and is led by youngsters from Greece, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. Implemented by the Irish Development Education Association, it raises awareness against the negative impact of the financial crisis and the austerity measures on development. It influences national and European policy to

<sup>29</sup> REPAOC - Network of NGOs' Platforms from Western and Central Africa

<sup>30</sup> REPONGAC - Network of national NGOs' Platforms from Central Africa

support public engagement for development, and advocates the value of solidarity for a collective North–South answer to the financial crisis, inequalities, and global justice.

**"Don't look away"**, a DEAR project, targets child sex tourism around major sports events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic games through prevention campaigns in 22 countries. Implemented by ECPAT in collaboration with 16 Member States and 350 Brazilian municipalities, the project has mobilised support from the European media, tourism sector, and major European Departure airports, considerably reducing cases of child abuse.

**"Introducing a global dimension in social science subjects in formal education"** a DEAR project targets pupils in schools that have traditionally given little attention to global issues, poverty and development. Implemented by the Latvian Education Development Centre, the project introduced development education in school curricula and teaching methods in eight central and eastern European countries.

## 4. Adapting our work

### *Working with CSOs on the most pressing challenges*

The EU has adapted the coverage of its support to CSOs to new challenges. Today, CSOs are major operating partners in the deployment of key projects in areas experiencing new and expanding crises and conflicts, promoting and defending gender equality, addressing the root causes of migration and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

#### **a. Crisis**

##### *Helping CSOs do their part to tackle the crisis*

Poverty, conflict, fragility, humanitarian need and forced displacement are deeply interlinked and must be addressed in a coherent and comprehensive way. As CSOs are on the frontline in most crises, they are key partners in implementing a comprehensive agenda to tackle conflict and crises, focusing on fragility and human security, and targeting the most vulnerable.

The EU has increased its support to CSOs involved in fragile and conflict-affected areas and is committed to pursuing this trend. CSOs are implementing a broad set of EU projects that address all stages of the conflict cycle and which target conflict prevention and resolution, gender-based violence, human rights abuses, reconciliation, crime and armed violence.

**Confidentiality.** EU CSOs projects, as any EU projects, are public. Only a limited number of projects, in the most difficult situations, are restricted and confidential to protect the physical integrity of their beneficiaries under serious threat.

The **EU Madad Trust Fund** launched the biggest EU response package ever to the Syrian refugee crisis.. The programme primarily addresses longer-term resilience needs of Syrian refugees and IDPs in neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq) as well as supporting host communities and their administrations. Largely implemented by several CSOs and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, the programme supports basic education and protection for 1 million Syrian refugee children.

It strengthens the access to healthcare, psycho-social support, and protection from sexual and gender-based violence to at least 700,000 refugees. It sets up water, sanitation and hygiene programme for up to 1 million persons. It supports the economic opportunities and social

inclusion in 200 communities of 400,000 members of vulnerable families, engaging disillusioned youth through work, skills development and community engagement in preparation of a future return to Syria, while also mitigating tensions between host and refugee communities

An EU project implemented by CARE provides additional emergency support to civil society in **Burundi**. The project involves civil society providing basic social services such as health, education and nutrition for the local population. It also helps local independent CSOs to stay open during the crisis in the country and the resulting discontinuation of development assistance.

In **Somalia**, an EU project implemented by SOS Children's Village runs a clinic in Badbadho camp, which hosts more than 36 000 displaced people, and a hospital in Heliwa district. It provides life-saving care, surgery, emergency obstetrics and nutrition care. A special centre provides care for survivors of sexual violence. Thanks to these projects, birth attendants perform 450 deliveries every month, and despite surrounding fighting, permanently reach 200 000 patients in Mogadishu every year.

## **b. Gender equality**

### ***Supporting civil society working on gender equality***

Despite progress, women's rights remain a critical issue throughout the world. Gender inequalities are still a major barrier for human development. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation and the labour market, limiting their freedom of choice and their ability to achieve their full potential. CSOs play a critical role in reinforcing women's roles as actors of change.

In October 2015, the EU issued a new framework on gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations for 2016-2020 (the ***EU Gender Action Plan II***). The plan reaffirms the EU's strong commitment to gender equality, human rights, the empowerment of women and girls, and the eradication of gender-based violence. It reiterates an ambitious goal that 85% of all new programmes should consider gender equality by 2020.

Specifically, on CSOs, the new framework on gender equality emphasises that consultation with Civil Society working on girls' and women's rights should inform country level programmes, regardless of the sector. Furthermore, it is highlighted that women's organisations should participate as accountability agents in budgetary, legislative and policy making processes at all levels.

The informal ***EU Task Force on women, peace and security*** was created pursuant to the 2008 Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security.

This Task Force is an important platform to support the development and implementation of EU policy on women, peace and security. It brings together EU Member States, EU institutional actors, multilateral organisations and CSOs. It allows exchanges of best practices, lessons learnt and the identification of joint challenges, opportunities and interests, to further implement the UNSCRs.

***Gender*** is a priority for the EU. The EU Gender Action Plan II (2016-2020) focuses on four pivotal areas

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ensuring girls and women's physical and psychological integrity</li><li>2. Promoting the economic and social rights / empowerment of girls and women</li><li>3. Strengthening girls and women's voice and participation</li><li>4. Shifting the Commission services and the European External Action Service' institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments</li></ol> |
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In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, an EU project supports the rehabilitation of female child soldiers kidnapped by rebel militia, who are often turned into sex slaves. It provides psycho-social support, medical care to freed victims and temporary shelter for girls at risk of being enlisted by force. Moreover, it offers the girls an alternative through schooling and vocational training. Implemented by War Child, the project has helped the recovery and reintegration of 800 girls affected by armed conflicts.

The EU gender equality project 'Making every voice count' in southern Africa helps the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance Network hold governments to account and empower citizens to claim their rights. Implemented by South African Gender Links, this project generates best practices on how to interact with governments over public policies on gender and is developing an innovative tool, the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, to identify gaps between political commitments and concrete policies.

Promoting sexual and reproductive health rights is another critical challenge in the area of gender equality. The EU is supporting a wide range of CSOs promoting access to basic sexual and reproductive health services. In the **Philippines'** autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao, an EU project implemented by Oxfam GB targets about 150 000 women and girls in areas that are underserved by sexual and reproductive healthcare services.

### **c. Addressing the root causes of migration**

#### ***Helping CSOs do their part to tackle migration***

Most of the world's 214 million international migrants are citizens of developing countries. Clearly, migration and mobility represent both an opportunity and a challenge for development. The EU strives to strengthen their positive synergies between migration and development and to mitigate any negative impacts. The EU also supports actions improving migration governance and harnessing the potential of migrants as development actors.

Between 2004 and 2014, more than EUR 1 billion was spent on more than 400 projects on migration, half of those projects in African partner countries. CSOs implemented projects supporting migration policy development, labour migration, countering trafficking, migrant and refugee protection and rights, access to healthcare and action to enhance the positive impact of migration on development.

The Global Public Goods Programme, "the Civil Society Action for Promoting the Rights of Migrants", protects migrants and contributes towards eradicating human trafficking, in its different forms, in targeted countries, corridors and regions. The programme operates as part of a globally coordinated civil society action.

An EU project implemented by the International Catholic Migration Commission, strengthens the effectiveness and representativeness of regional CSOs from Africa, Asia,



Latin America and the Caribbean in policy-making and global governance in migration. The project brings the voices of citizens, migrants and diaspora representatives into intergovernmental debates as part of the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

An EU project implemented by Soleterre supports local CSOs battling the arbitrary arrest, extortion, rape, kidnap and murder by criminal organisations committed against the 500 000 undocumented migrants from Central America crossing Mexico each year. The project provides basic humanitarian assistance and shelter to migrants, improves the relationship between law enforcement and CSOs, and protects those CSOs at risk.

Another EU project supports the establishment of the Europe-wide African Diaspora Platform for Development. It supports the diaspora's contribution, as a key component of civil society, to development in Africa. The projects reinforces ways to better engage with diasporas of African immigrants, support their impact on the root causes of migration, including on remittances for development, and raises awareness in departure countries about the human trafficking component of migration.

#### **d. Protecting the earth**

##### ***Helping CSOs do their part to tackle climate change***

Environment and climate policies are areas where CSOs are major players in EU international cooperation as advocates of ambitious actions, providers of expertise, contributors to dialogue mechanisms and monitors of progress on the ground. The Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Action Plan is an example of an initiative where civil society involvement is well acknowledged and institutionalised.

The EU, through its long-term commitment to international efforts to tackle climate change, has decided to set an example through robust policy-making at home. It has reduced its own emissions by over 20% compared to 1990 while continuing to enjoy economic growth; has set targets for reducing EU domestic greenhouse gas emissions progressively up to 2030, in line with the Paris Agreement's goal of keeping global temperature rise well below 2°C; and has an objective to achieve further reductions by 2050 in the context of necessary reductions according to the IPCC by developed countries as a group.

Environmental sustainability, including a containing climate change, is indispensable to poverty eradication and sustainable development, particularly for the poorest sections of society. The EU has committed to allocating 20 % of its budget to climate change-related action, including for its external action. CSOs are essential partners in this objective to 'green' development cooperation.

*'Our societies have no choice but to be resilient to face the shock of climate crisis and give a future to our youth'.*

An EU project supported the contribution of sub-Saharan CSOs from the Sahel to the 2015 UN Conference on Climate Change (COP 21).

Implemented by the Human Rights National Council, the Economic Social and Environmental Committee and the General Confederation of Enterprises of Morocco, an EU project supports the role of all civil society components in the 2016 UN Conference on Climate Change (COP 22) in Marrakesh and throughout the Moroccan presidency of the COP. It enables the voices of citizens and other independent voices to be heard with an objective of ensuring that governments are held accountable for their commitments.



An EU project initially started in Benin and Cameroon but now covering 10 African countries aims to reduce quantities of solid waste while creating jobs and opportunities. The project, which is implemented by the Association for the Sustainable Management and Valorisation of Solid Waste and Mineral Raw Materials, deploys upstream action to reduce the production of solid waste and help its industrial treatment, including raising public awareness and making waste collection better and healthier. The project also promotes the green economy through recycling and industrial uses such as compost.

Land and environmental rights defenders are highly exposed to physical attacks often by non-state aggressors, and many are killed because of their work to combat the impact of extractive industries and infrastructure projects. An EU project run by Friends of the Earth International mobilises global protection for environmental defenders at risk around the world and gives visibility to cases of abuse against them. It provides urgent and direct protection and support to activists in Latin America, Europe and Africa.

## 5. Global governance and democratic accountability

### *Ensuring transparency at home, an issue of credibility*

The EU supports CSOs in promoting democratic accountability, aid effectiveness and transparency. It is therefore adamant that its support should itself be up to the highest standards.

**Democratic accountability.** EU projects deliver on objectives laid down in annual action plans. These plans are validated in consultation with the Member States in committees of experts and are subject to formal democratic scrutiny by the European Parliament. CSOs are consulted on their drafting. Structured informal and formal reports are regularly produced.

**Transparency.** EU procedures and projects are public online. Only projects in which beneficiaries are under serious threat are not made public to protect their physical integrity. The European Commission's financial transparency system publishes the beneficiaries, including CSOs, of funding under the EU budget or the European Development Fund. Projects can be found at [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts/index_en.htm).

In 2011 the EU committed itself to establishing '*an EU Transparency Guarantee to increase accountability and predictability, strengthen democratic ownership and improve development results*'<sup>31</sup>. As a direct result, the European Commission reports to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). The Commission publishes its own IATI data on the EU Open Data Portal<sup>32</sup> and all available development and humanitarian aid data on the 'EU aid explorer' site<sup>33</sup>

**Anti-corruption.** The European Commission has a Framework Partnership Agreement with Transparency International that strengthens integrity and combats corruption by supporting and monitoring the effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws and standards. It also offers helpdesk support for EU delegations on how to prevent and monitor cases of corruption.

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<sup>31</sup> Council Conclusions of 14 November 2011 on EU Common Position for the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

<sup>32</sup> <https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://euaidexplorer.ec.europa.eu>

**Results.** EU support to CSOs is an integral component of the new results framework for the EU's development cooperation. The new framework ensures that every euro spent around the globe is well spent and delivers the best possible results. The framework contributes to measuring development progress, the EU's specific contribution to this progress and how the European Commission has managed its own performance.

**Donor coordination.** Synergies between donors are a key element of aid effectiveness, particularly as the top seven donors to CSOs provide up to 77 % of the aid from the OECD's Development Assistance Committee to CSOs. The European Commission is also an active participant in the International Donor Group. The Group brings together the 14 EU and non-EU donors providing CSO support together to exchange information, best practices and foster operational synergies.

**CSO development effectiveness.** The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), established in Busan, Korea, brings together development actors to make development more effective. Civil society contributes intensively to this process through the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE). This open platform unites CSOs from around the world and promotes effectiveness in all areas of work, including in CSOs' own commitments enshrined in the Istanbul Declaration. An EU project is giving the CPDE the means to support country, regional and sectoral CSO inputs to GPEDC.

After an extensive worldwide consultation process involving thousands of CSOs, representatives endorsed in Istanbul in 2010 the Principles for CSO development effectiveness ('the Istanbul Principles') as the foundation for an international framework for dealing with this issue. It creates a foundation for the transparency and accountability of CSOs. It put forward a set of principles that define good practices for CSOs around the world. It describes how CSOs are accountable for the quality and results of their actions and expect to be held accountable for their performance against these principles.

#### ***The 8 Istanbul Principles***

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights
3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
4. Promote environmental sustainability
5. Practice transparency and accountability
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change