



MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN EU DELEGATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

European NGO confederation
for relief and development

CONCORD

Confédération européenne des ONG
d'urgence et de développement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THIS REPORT

CONCORD has been monitoring the deconcentration of EC contract management since the end of 2005, using concrete examples of experiences provided by civil society on contracts signed as far back as 2000. This 2014 CONCORD report takes a broader perspective and, in addition to contracting and compliance issues, it looks also at political and policy dialogue and programming processes, including the CSO roadmap process. The overall aim of the report is to contribute to improving the working relationship between EU delegations and CSOs, gather examples of good practice and lessons learned, and give feedback and make recommendations to the EU (delegations and headquarters), to member states, and to the civil society community.

CONCORD is the European NGO confederation for relief and development whose 28 national associations, 18 international networks and 2 associate members represent over 1,800 NGOs which are supported by millions of citizens across Europe. CONCORD leads reflection and political actions and regularly engages in dialogue with the EU institutions and other civil society organisations. At global level, CONCORD is actively involved in the CSO Partnership on Development Effectiveness, the Beyond 2015 campaign and the International Forum of NGO platforms. Find out more about CONCORD at www.concordeurope.org

The core mandate of CONCORD's Funding for Development and Relief (FDR) working group is to translate the political recognition of civil society organisations into an enabling environment in development, demonstrated by funding of a high quality and quantity and by political, regulatory and policy-influencing space.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states	LA	Local authorities
ACT Alliance	Action by Churches Together for Development Alliance	MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
CBO	Community-based organisation	MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation	MS	Member State
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
CSO	Civil society organisation	NIP	National Indicative Programme
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument	PADOR	Potential Applicant Data On-Line Registration
CSP	Country Strategy Paper	PRAG	Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions
DEVCO	Directorate-General for Development Cooperation	SD	Structured Dialogue
EC	European Commission	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
EDF	European Development Fund		
EEAS	European External Action Service		
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights		
EU	European Union		
EUD	European Union Delegation		
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade		
HRBA	Human rights-based approach		
ICNL	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law		
INGO	International non-governmental organisation		
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre		

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1. FOREWORD

By Seamus Jeffreson, Director of CONCORD

For almost a decade now, in our work on monitoring the performance of European Union delegations' engagement with civil society, CONCORD has played a "watchdog" role, assessing how policies decreed in Brussels are actually being put into practice in the countries in which the EU works. This important role remains. But civil society organisations can also have a role highlighting good practices and encouraging improvements. At a time of Euroscepticism, I think it's particularly valuable to support steps by the EU to ensure that civil society can play a meaningful role in the planning and implementation of its external policies on the ground. This report, drawing on wide-ranging participation from CONCORD members and partners, describes what's working well and where things could be better.

The space for civil society around the world to do its job (watchdog, advocate, service provider, educator) is increasingly under threat. EU institutions' and EU delegations' efforts to include civil society and other non-state actors in a dialogue about EU programmes and policies is therefore as critical as ever. We want European external policies to be progressive, respectful of human rights and single-mindedly focused on ending extreme poverty. Involving civil society is not only the right thing to do, it is also effective. It makes for better, more inclusive and better-accepted policies.

The role of civil society as a partner in policy dialogue is not accepted or understood in the same way by all the EU's partner governments. Highlighting successful practices, proposing where things could be done differently or better, is one important way of increasing and improving civil society involvement in decision-making and in the implementation of those decisions globally. CONCORD has successfully drawn on its members' work at EU policy level, combined with in-country presence and relationships, to make a significant contribution to this vital aspect of the EU's external action – supporting CSO engagement.

My first experience of CONCORD was responding to a questionnaire about CSOs' interaction with EU delegations back in 2005 while working for CAFOD and Trócaire in Addis Ababa. This report marks another milestone in the process in which European CSOs and their in-country civil society partners are working together to increase and improve the quality of consultation and engagement between the EU and civil society in the countries in which the EU's programmes and policies have an impact.

I would like to thank all those whose time and hard work contributed to the findings of the report, and I look forward to continued and deeper cooperation between CSOs, our partners and the EU in maintaining and expanding civil society's role as a key driver of sustainable development with a place at the decision-making table.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system, and is an asset in itself. Civil society can help make policies more effective, development more equitable and sustainable, and growth more inclusive. In its communication on the role of civil society in development, the European Commission recognises the multiple roles of civil society and its important contribution to development and democracy. The communication highlights the need for a more comprehensive and strategic engagement with civil society at country level, and recommends that, when drawing up and adopting EU roadmaps for engagement with civil society organisations, in close cooperation with member states' embassies, EU delegations (EUDs) should bear that need in mind.

This report examines how civil society organisations involved in dialogue between EUDs and civil society, joint implementation, and so on, perceive this engagement. Its aim is to identify good practice and put forward recommendations, for both institutional and civil society actors, in the hope of bringing about lasting improvements in both the EUD-civil society dialogue and in the enabling environment and political space for civil society.

The report is based on responses to a worldwide 39-question survey from 229 civil society actors (CONCORD members and their partners) working in 70 partner countries, supplemented by some interviews with EUDs.

The survey was divided into four separate parts, although in reality these are interlinked and many local CSOs make no distinction between the different processes and issues featuring in their relations with EUDs. Whereas past CONCORD studies focused mainly on the EU-civil society funding relationship, and on programming, this report also assesses engagement in political dialogue and the drawing up of EU country roadmaps for engagement with civil society.

Participation by local organisations in structured, long-term dialogue is still a challenge, but improvements have been noted by many actors around the world.

Over and above being one of the world's most important civil society donors, EUDs are strategic partners for CSOs. By the same token, CSOs are strategic partners for EUDs. They are the eyes and ears on the ground, the drivers of change, the ones who hold governments to account. A stronger relationship needs to be built, especially with local civil society, with a view

to encouraging exchanges and action on matters of common concern.

The results of the survey and the interviews with the EUDs (one in each continent) show a positive trend. EUD-civil society dialogue is increasing. In some countries, a well-organised consultation on the programming of EU cooperation was established, and coordinated contributions by civil society were facilitated through national or thematic civil society coalitions and platforms. Major challenges remain, however: existing ad hoc consultation processes need to be transformed into more permanent dialogue mechanisms that allow for genuine coordination on relevant matters, and the range of civil society actors and the issues addressed need to be broadened.

Despite a number of interesting experiences of dialogue with and support from EUDs on political and policy issues, and on the human rights situation, EU delegations' involvement in promoting the political role of civil society still needs to be reinforced and extended. EUDs are expected to play a more active and supportive role in situations where civil society space is at risk, but this can be a highly sensitive matter in EUD relations with partner countries.

The drafting of roadmaps for EUD engagement with civil society is viewed as a major step in the right direction. Recently, EUDs have managed to outreach more widely and more locally, and they can now build on this by identifying the remaining challenges and exploring options for overcoming them. On the CSOs side too, however, coordination could have been better, and challenges hampering efforts to improve it still need to be addressed.

Regarding funding opportunities and aid modalities, the survey shows that the dialogue between EUDs and CSOs, and information-sharing remains fairly limited, while engagement with local, grassroots organisations – including those that have not yet benefited from EU funding – needs to be stepped up. Applicants whose applications have been rejected should receive better follow-up, and more detailed feedback, so that organisations can improve the quality of their proposals in the future. On the positive side, despite the complexity of EC rules and procedures for grant applications and implementation, which many organisations still struggle to understand (especially small, local ones), the survey did show some positive experiences of capacity-building activities by EUDs (for example in Congo-Brazzaville) which could be replicated in other countries.

Recommendations are centred around the importance of upgrading, broadening the scope and improving the inclusiveness of EUD-CSO consultation with a view to developing permanent dialogue mechanisms. Ensuring good follow-up, increasing support for CSOs involved in structured participation in domestic policies, and coalition-building and networking around priority issues and sectors – all these are key recommendations from this perspective.

Together, EUDs, INGOs and more advanced national partners/platforms could step up their efforts to share information and to provide capacity development, spaces for dialogue and financial support to ensure that organisations at the local level get better structured and organised and have the means and the capacity to influence policymaking and to make their views and the interests of their constituencies heard.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 CIVIL SOCIETY: ROLE AND SPACE

The past decade has seen an increase in the growth, recognition and influence of civil society actors at national, regional and global levels. Strong civil society makes the state accountable, while a democratic, accountable state ensures that its citizens enjoy freedom of speech, assembly and association. An empowered civil society is in itself a crucial component of any democracy, and provides opportunities for communities with diverse ethnic, religious, cultural and racial identities to come together.¹ When articulating citizens' concerns CSOs are active in the public arena and engage in initiatives that foster pluralism and strengthen participatory democracy. By introducing the notion of participatory democracy into the Lisbon Treaty, the EU went beyond the informal inclusion of stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation. Civil society's increased participation in EU affairs was the result of a process in which CSOs advocated for improved access to EU decision-making, coupled with a gradual review by the Commission of its policy and strategy for engaging with civil society.²

At the same time, there is considerable evidence from international groups such as CIVICUS, ACT Alliance and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law that civil society space is shrinking in many places.³ Within repressive regimes, emerging economies and established multi-party democracies, space for civil society actions is becoming increasingly confined through the imposition of legal restrictions, bureaucratic constraints, and the intimidation, imprisonment, torture and assassination of civil society activists.⁴ In particular, those organisations that work in the fields of justice, human rights or natural resources feel increasingly threatened.⁵ Hard-won human rights and civil liberties are under threat even in Europe. Citizens are suffering the effects of the financial crisis and the "global war on terror".⁶

In the midst of a deteriorating situation, we should look at the opportunities for civil society to help protect its space from shrinking. Civil society is one of the three important sectors in any society, but all too often it is squeezed between warring parties, undemocratic governments and the corporate sector. Both civil society actors and civil society actions need to be protected, strengthened and recognised. Engagement with civil society is vital to democratic governance and ownership of EU development programmes. Given the growing role and influence of civil society throughout the world, the EU must strengthen regular dialogue with it, at both centralised and decentralised levels, in order to ensure the consistency and transparency of EU policies. International NGOs play a crucial role in supporting local organisations in their efforts to network, to be a voice for the poor and to campaign at the national, EU and global levels. The EU should continue to invest in civil society by facilitating an enabling environment; it should support collective civic action for accountability, and promote partnerships and dialogue mechanisms. Finally, more work is needed to increase the technical capacity of local civil society and local authorities alike. Building constructive mutual engagement between EUDs and CSOs around the world could have an important effect on these processes.

¹ "A Reflection on the Legal Framework for Civil Society in Nepal", The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law, Volume 13, Issue 3, June 2011.

² In their historical account of the Commission's consultation regime, Quittkat and Finke show that there has been a gradual extension of the approach that was also reflected in official terminological change from notions of "consultation" in the 1960s and '70s, to "partnership" in the 1980s and '90s, and finally to "participation" in the late 1990s and 2000s (2008: 184).

³ Tiwana, M. and N. Belay (December 2010), 'Civil Society: The Clampdown is Real', Johannesburg: CIVICUS; ACT Alliance (June 2011), 'Shrinking political space of civil society action', Geneva: ACT Alliance; ACT Alliance (February 2011), 'Changing political spaces of Civil Society Organisations', Geneva: ACT Alliance; and ICNL (2012), 'Defending Civil Society', Washington D.C.; ICNL; 'Democracy in Action: Protecting Civil Society Space' describes evidence of a clear trend towards shrinking political and operational space for civil society (Trócaire).

⁴ Enabling space for civil society action, INTRAC Newsletter, No. 52, September 2012.

⁵ Shrinking political space of civil society action, ACT Alliance, 2012.

⁶ See: Enabling space for civil society action, INTRAC Newsletter, No. 52, September 2012.

3.2 ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EU DELEGATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In September 2014 CONCORD launched a survey to assess the mutual engagement between EU delegations (EUDs) and civil society worldwide. CONCORD has been monitoring the deconcentration of EC contract management since the end of 2005, using concrete examples of their experiences provided by civil society organisations, dating from contracts entered into in 2000.⁷ These past CONCORD studies focused mainly on the funding relationship between EUDs and CSOs, and EC grant compliance issues. This 2014 CONCORD report looks at additional aspects of the engagement between EUDs and CSOs: political and policy dialogue, programming processes, and contracting and compliance processes. It will assess the extent to which EU delegations are actually following up on the commitments made in the EC's 2012 communication on civil society. The overall aim is to contribute to improving the working relationship between EUDs and CSOs, gather good practices and lessons learned, and give feedback and make recommendations to the EU (delegations and headquarters) and member states as well as to the civil society community.

The three phases of the research, and the sources used, were as follows:

- A trilingual survey based on 39 quantitative and qualitative questions, distributed among and by the CONCORD constituency (28 national associations, 18 international networks and 2 associate members, representing over 1,800 NGOs) as well as regional partners and global alliances. The survey asked civil society worldwide to assess EUD engagement with civil society in the context of the in-country programming of the EU's bilateral cooperation under the new multiannual financial framework (MFF 2014-2020), broader policy dialogue, EU roadmaps and funding;
- Four key informant interviews with staff from EU delegations based in Kenya, Moldova, Nepal and Peru;⁸
- Consolidation and analysis of the results of the survey and interviews, identifying common trends and recommendations.

In May 2013, CONCORD launched the first survey after the first programming phase of the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2014-2020 and the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). The aim here was to draw lessons and formulate recommendations to influence and improve EUD consultations with CSOs, both for the second programming phase and for other processes, such as the EU roadmaps, policy coherence for development commitments and EU dialogues and consultations on human rights. Six recommendations for a more structured dialogue were put forward: EUDs should (1) reach out to more CSOs; (2) build capacity, provide relevant information and guide them, so that all CSOs can speak up and be heard; (3) give CSOs time to prepare and coordinate by sharing planning documents and announcing consultations in advance; (4) interact more regularly, making follow-up part of the dialogue process, in order to achieve a structured dialogue; (5) be flexible about issues, and address also those outside EU-funded projects; and (6) increase EUDs' capacity and resources for engaging with CSOs.⁹ The outcome of CONCORD's 2013 survey was used as the baseline for designing the 2014 one.

⁷ EU Delegation Watch, 2012 Concord report.

⁸ These four EU delegations were selected on the basis of the outcome of the survey and recommendations from CONCORD. Interviews were held with CSO focal points, a deputy head of operations, a head of cooperation and a head of macroeconomics, governance and private sector development, for the purpose of recording good practice and challenges.

⁹ EU delegations' engagement with CSOs, August 2013, CONCORD.

<http://www.concordeurope.org/civil-society/funding-for-ngo-s/item/260-concord-s-reccomendations-for-eu-delegations-engagement-with-cso-s>.

4. THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 INCREASED RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The recognition of civil society organisations and other non-state actors as fully fledged players in the development process was one of the main innovations in the ACP/EU/2000 Cotonou Agreement, in which the parties committed themselves to increasing civil society's participation in development projects and policies (Article 4).

Stepping up regular dialogue and consultations with civil society is one of the principles enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty (2009) to ensure the consistency and transparency of EU policies. Article 21 of the treaty, moreover, puts the following principles at the forefront of the EU's external action: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. With the Lisbon Treaty, the position of High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) were created, to pave the way for a more coherent and effective framework for formulating and executing the Union's external action, including its development cooperation with partner countries and regions. Within this new framework, EU delegations in third countries and regions play an important part in enabling the EU to strengthen its role in the world and improve its overall results and impact, in particular through its development policy and external assistance.¹⁰

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) called for greater partnership between donors, beneficiary governments and CSOs in order to improve aid effectiveness.

In 2011 the Busan Aid Effectiveness Forum shifted the emphasis from aid effectiveness to the broader concept of development effectiveness, for the first time including CSOs as development stakeholders in formal negotiations.

In this context, where the EU and other donors are promoting the comprehensive participation of civil society – and, more recently, local authorities (LAs) – in countries' development processes, and in broader political, social and economic dialogues at all levels, an intensive consultation (the structured dialogue for an efficient partnership in the EU's development cooperation) was held in 2010-2011. It brought together over 700 CSOs and local authorities from all over the world, as well as participants from the EU member states, European Parliament and European Commission, to reflect upon and define ways to improve the effectiveness of all those involved in EU development cooperation. The final statement of the structured dialogue, the Budapest Declaration, recommended that the EC should intensify dialogue at all levels and establish a space for regular dialogue with civil society organisations and local authorities.

One of the key policy documents drafted in follow-up to the structured dialogue was the Communication entitled 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations',¹¹ which was followed by Council Conclusions¹² and a European Parliament report.¹³

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/14_05_11_progr_instructions_cover_page_clean.pdf

¹¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132870.pdf

¹³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A7-2013-0296+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

THE ROOTS OF DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: EUROPE'S ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS (SEPT. 2012)

The so-called CSO Communication puts forward the following three priorities and related commitments:

(a) To enhance efforts to promote a conducive environment for CSOs in partner countries: The international community, the EU included, has a duty to advocate for a space to operate for both CSOs and individuals. The EU should lead by example, creating peer pressure through diplomacy and political dialogue with governments and by publicly raising human rights concerns. The EU will strengthen its efforts to monitor legislation, regulations and operational issues which may affect CSOs, in accordance with international commitments. In parallel, the EU will promote CSO-led initiatives and support international arrangements to promote and monitor an enabling environment for CSOs.

(b) To promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in the domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes: The contribution of local CSOs as partners in dialogue and in oversight will be at the heart of future EU engagement. The EU believes in the value of CSOs' participation in domestic policies, and is committed to promoting it. The EU has been at the forefront of promoting CSOs' participation in EU programming phases. This approach has been progressively embraced, notably in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, following the Cotonou Agreement provisions in this regard. Further efforts should be made to consolidate the practice in all regions.

(c) To increase local CSOs' capacity to perform their roles as independent development actors more effectively: The EU will reinforce its support to the capacity development of CSOs, particularly local actors, as part of a long-term, demand-driven and flexible approach, giving particular consideration to constituency building and representativeness. The EU will also support long-term and equitable partnerships for capacity development between local and European CSOs. These should be based on local demand, include mentoring and coaching, peer learning, networking, and building of linkages from the local to the global level. Tailored funding constitutes an important component of the EU's engagement with CSOs and should allow better access for local organisations. The Commission will use an appropriate mix of funding modalities so as to best respond to the widest possible range of actors, needs and country contexts in a flexible, transparent, cost-effective and result-focused manner.

In addition, the communication puts a strong focus on the country level, and foresees that the EU and Member States develop country roadmaps:

The EU and the Member States should develop country roadmaps for engagement with CSOs, to improve the impact, predictability and visibility of EU actions, ensuring consistency and synergy throughout the various sectors covered by EU external relations. These roadmaps are also meant to trigger coordination and sharing of best practices with the Member States and other international actors, including for simplification and harmonisation of funding requirements.

4.2 THE ROLE OF EU DELEGATIONS

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty EUDs gained the status of diplomatic missions, and they now represent the European Union officially in partner countries. The network of 141 EU delegations around the world is run by the European External Action Service.

The role of an EU delegation has been expanded from development cooperation and economic and trade cooperation to include duties such as conducting political dialogue and making diplomatic representations (démarches) on behalf of the EU and the High Representative for the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. EUDs play a key role in designing, programming and implementing EU development cooperation programmes, and also take a leading role by coordinating on the spot with member states on the implementation of all EU assistance, both multilateral and bilateral, to boost synergy and increase the visibility of the EU.

With the adoption of the EC Communication on Civil Society and the subsequent Council Conclusions, EUDs have also been requested to engage with civil society in a more strategic, structured way, and consequently to draw up roadmaps in close cooperation with member states' embassies.

What lessons can be learned from the field about the cooperation between EUDs and civil society? What do CSOs say about their relations with EUDs, whether through consultations on programming, dialogue on human rights and political issues or through the general and financial support they receive from EU delegations?

5. THE SURVEY

To answer these questions, civil society was consulted through a survey.

Structure of the survey: The survey was divided into four different sections, covering the following areas:

- Civil society involvement in EU delegations' multiannual programming/budget planning
- Civil society involvement in developing broader national and EU policies
- EU roadmap for engagement with civil society
- CSOs as beneficiaries of EU cooperation funds

Type of questions:

The survey contained both direct and open-ended questions, allowing CSOs to voice their concerns and

appreciation around their overall relationships with EUDs. Quantitative and qualitative data combined gave insights into civil society's current experiences of engaging with EUDs, and revealed its perception of consultations, dialogue and project support.

Geographical coverage:

The geographical coverage achieved was excellent: the questionnaire was completed by CSOs from a total of 70 countries from sub-Saharan Africa (36.6%), Latin America (23.5%), Asia (18.3%), the Caribbean (2.2%), the Pacific (0.9%), North Africa (4.2%), the Middle East (4.2%), and the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood (3.8%) and Enlargement Region (6.6%).

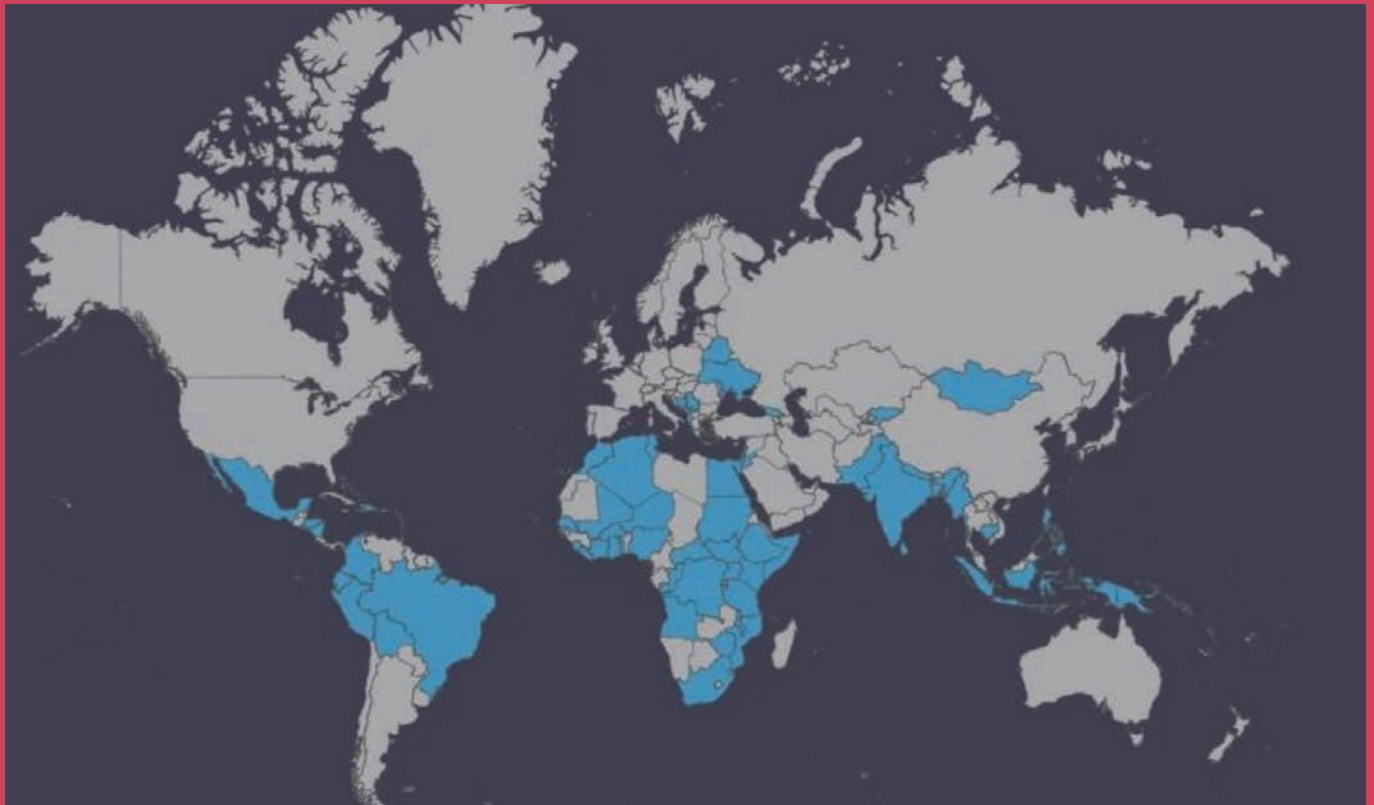


Figure 1: Countries in which respondents are based

Peru, Nicaragua and Colombia came top of the list, with 14, 13 and 10 organisations respectively responding to the survey. Niger, Cambodia, Mali, Nepal and Kenya came second (between 6 and 9). Most other countries had between 1 and 3 respondents.

Respondents: A total of 229 organisations responded the survey: 138 in English, 41 in French and 50 in Spanish. Some shared well-thought-out opinions about their experiences of EUD-CSO engagement in the field; others mainly answered the quantitative questions. The number of respondents differed from one section to another, and even from one question to another, reflecting the diversity both of CSOs and of the levels of engagement between them and the EUDs.

Almost half of the respondents were INGOs (46.8%), followed by national NGOs (29.2%), local NGOs (9.7%),

regional NGOs (1.4%) and CBOs (0,9%). Academia accounted for 1.9%, foundations 1.4%, not-for-profit media 0.9%, professional or business associations 0.5% and other, 6%. This latter category included, amongst others, national platforms that included both local and international NGOs, and faith-based organisations. The group of French-speaking respondents, however, included more national NGOs (48.7%) than international organisations (35.9%). (See Figure 2.)

Section 5 will follow the structure of the survey and is therefore divided into four parts, including a short “way forward” after each section. EUD-civil society engagement is an integrated process, and the final section will therefore weave the different parts together into overall conclusions and recommendations.

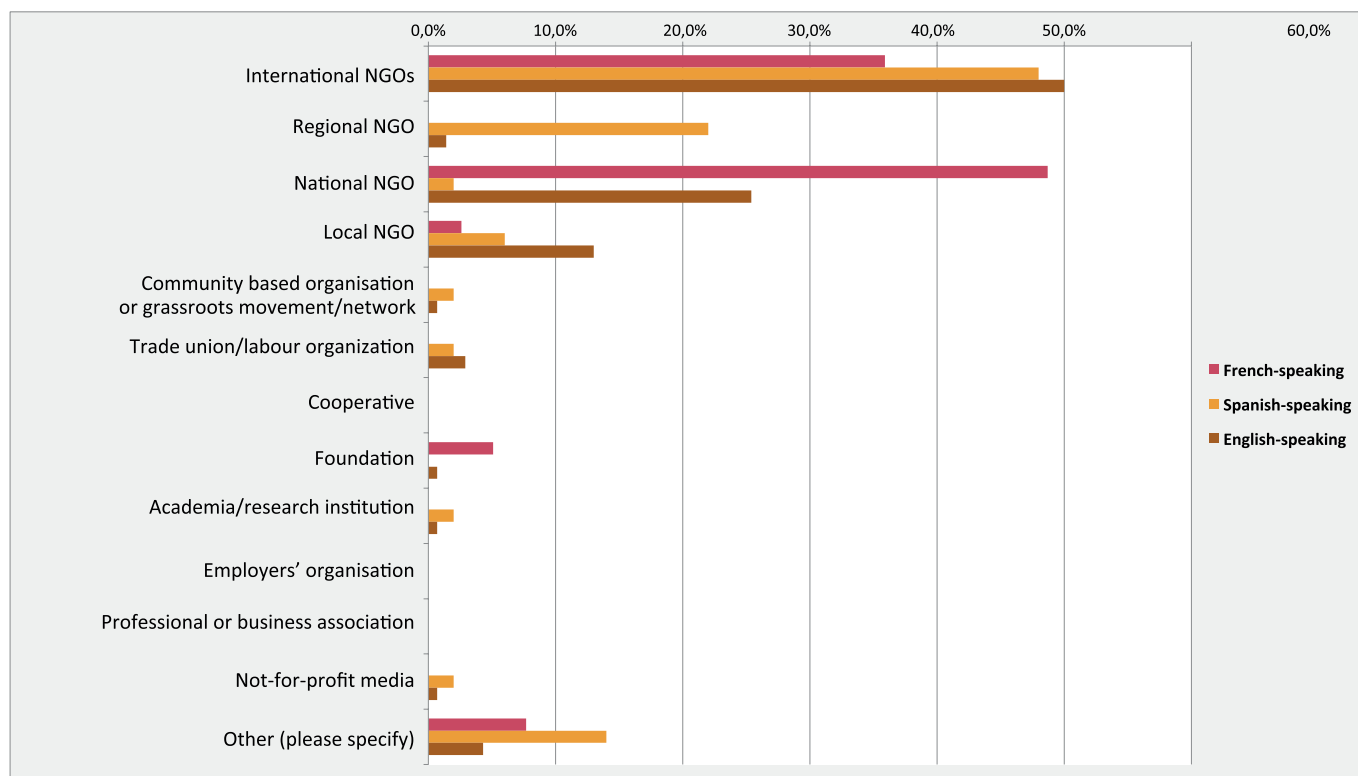


Figure 2: Types of organisations

5.1 EUD ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK (MFF) PROGRAMMING FOR 2014-2020

Over the last two years the European Union has introduced a process for programming its development cooperation assistance under the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2014-2020, and under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). The objective of the programming is to identify future areas for cooperation in each country or region for the next seven years, in consultation with national governments and, as far as possible, in line with their national development plans.

The delegations play a crucial role in the programming process, as it is they who prepare and propose the EU strategy for engaging with a partner country to their Brussels headquarters. During the process, they were required to consult civil society. This section briefly analyses civil society's experiences of this process.

Only 23.3% of organisations responding to this survey (51 out of 219 respondents) were invited by EUDs to participate in consultations on the bilateral cooperation programme in order to discuss the priority sectors and aid modalities. It seems that the percentage of French-speaking respondents who received an invitation (31.6%) was higher than for other languages (SP 19.6% and EN 22.2%).

This might have to do with the fact that the French-speaking respondents were mainly in ACP countries (10 out of the total of 13), where consulting civil society on EDF programming has been compulsory since the signing of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000. Some CSOs did not receive a direct invitation, but pro-actively approached the delegations to obtain information and gain access to the consultation process.

Some of the respondents provided additional information on the content and quality of the consultation. The priority sectors for cooperation were the major issue discussed at most of the consultation meetings, but the multiannual indicative programme, cooperation modalities and cooperation with and funding for civil society were also discussed. Not all respondents distinguished between the different phases of the programming and consultation processes. For many of them, the consultation meeting on programming represented a rare opportunity for dialogue with the EUD, and they used it to raise their main concerns and questions, not all of which were directly related to the programming.

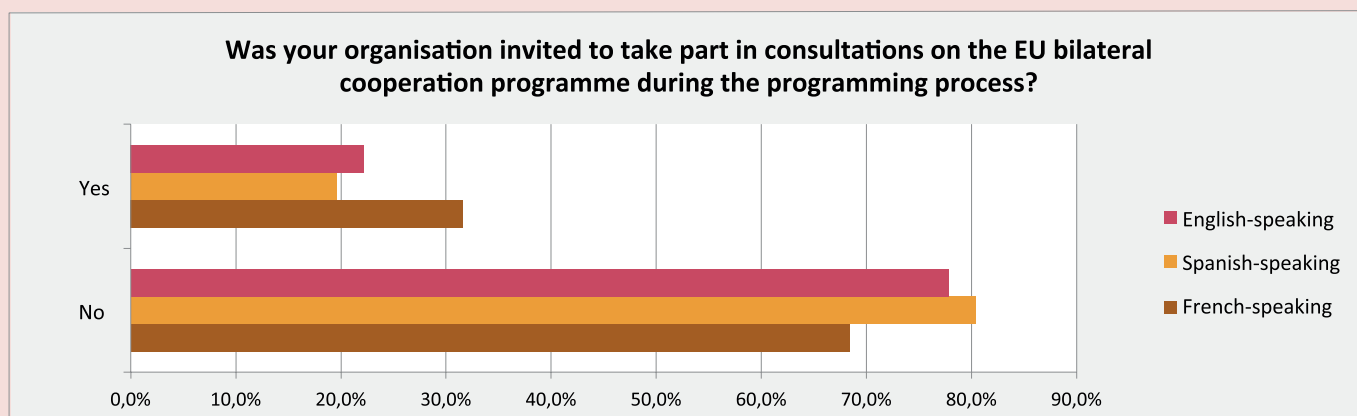


Figure 3: CSOs invited to participate in EU programming consultations

The quality of the consultations varied depending on the country and on the perception of the participating organisations. Different formats are reported for consultations and meetings. Some describe a well-organised, open process and good exchanges, while others found that there was no real dialogue and the meeting was merely a briefing exercise. Some noted that the process was too formal and not sufficiently open, while

others explained that the CSOs themselves took the lead in organising it. In Nepal, for example, a platform circulated invitations and formed a working group for EUD-civil society engagement. In Cambodia, “our network mobilised members and other partners to generate their comments and feedback and formulate them into a slide presentation”.

Table 1: Examples of processes for consulting civil society on EU aid programming

Participatory	Neutral	Critical
<p>Burkina Faso: “Through SPNGO and the Troika, CSOs presented the European Union delegation with their written contribution to the setting up of the 11th EDF. The delegation evaluated the 10th EDF, and feedback on the multiannual indicative programme for the 11th EDF and the various aid modalities was provided for civil society as a whole, the State and the other development partners, in the Directorate-General for Cooperation (DGCOOP) meeting room. All civil society, without exception, was invited to this presentation and validation of the programme for the 11th EDF.”</p> <p>Kenya: On the priority sectors and multi-annual indicative programme. The consultation was a one day round table meeting organised by EU delegation to Kenya in Nairobi. The participants were drawn from government, INGOs, NGOs, private Sector and trade unions/alliances. After the introductory session, there were break-away group sessions according to thematic areas, i.e. Democracy, Human Rights and governance, Health, Environment, Food security, Transport and infrastructure. There was a plenary session after this, and debriefing. The areas identified were shared with participants through email about two weeks after the session.</p>	<p>A half-day meeting was held with CSOs (both national and international) to identify the priority sectors. Each participant provided her/his three priorities and then these were summarised as input to the EU planning process. There was also some discussion on the different delivery modalities, mainly pointing out how the government has not been able to spend and deliver more than half of its development budget.</p>	<p>“It wasn’t really a consultation, it was more two information meetings which gave participants no opportunity to question either the programming framework or the choice of priority sectors, which were felt to have been imposed by the EU. Very few organisations (representing vital sectors) took part in these meetings, and most of them were ones that had an affinity with the EU delegation. We had to really beg for the invitation to be extended to other organisations that had serious analyses of EU cooperation. Judging by the papers and presentations prepared afterwards, the organisations’ comments and recommendations made during this exercise were not really taken into account.”</p> <p>Sorry to report that the EUD here made minimal, cursory efforts to engage a wide range of stakeholders.</p>

According to 86% of 56 respondents, the EUD's CSO focal point was involved in the consultation. In 44.6% of cases, the head of delegation was also present at the consultation meeting, which is a positive indicator of EUDs' growing interest in the dialogue with civil society.

It seems that the consultation meetings were aimed mainly at CSOs but that in a number of cases a multistakeholder approach was adopted, involving sector ministries (31%), the private sector (26%), local authorities (21%) and, to a lesser extent, EU member states (15%) or parliamentarians (8.2%).

It is interesting to note that INGOs present in the country were represented in the consultation meetings slightly more often than local ones (see Figure 5). This may be because more INGOs responded to our survey, but it may also reflect a special relationship between EUDs and INGOs which could derive from

a longer-term funding relationship, and the fact that INGOs are generally based in capitals and have better information and stronger connections with the EU through their European offices. In a number of countries, INGOs are organised in informal coalitions where information is circulated and common positions are prepared. In others, national platforms involving both national and international NGOs are set up. Where there is good coordination and cooperation between INGOs themselves and between them and local civil society, INGOs' special access to EUDs could represent a real asset, leading to better engagement between EUDs and civil society. INGOs have a responsibility to make sure that the views of local civil society and local people are to the fore when processes such as aid programming are taking place.

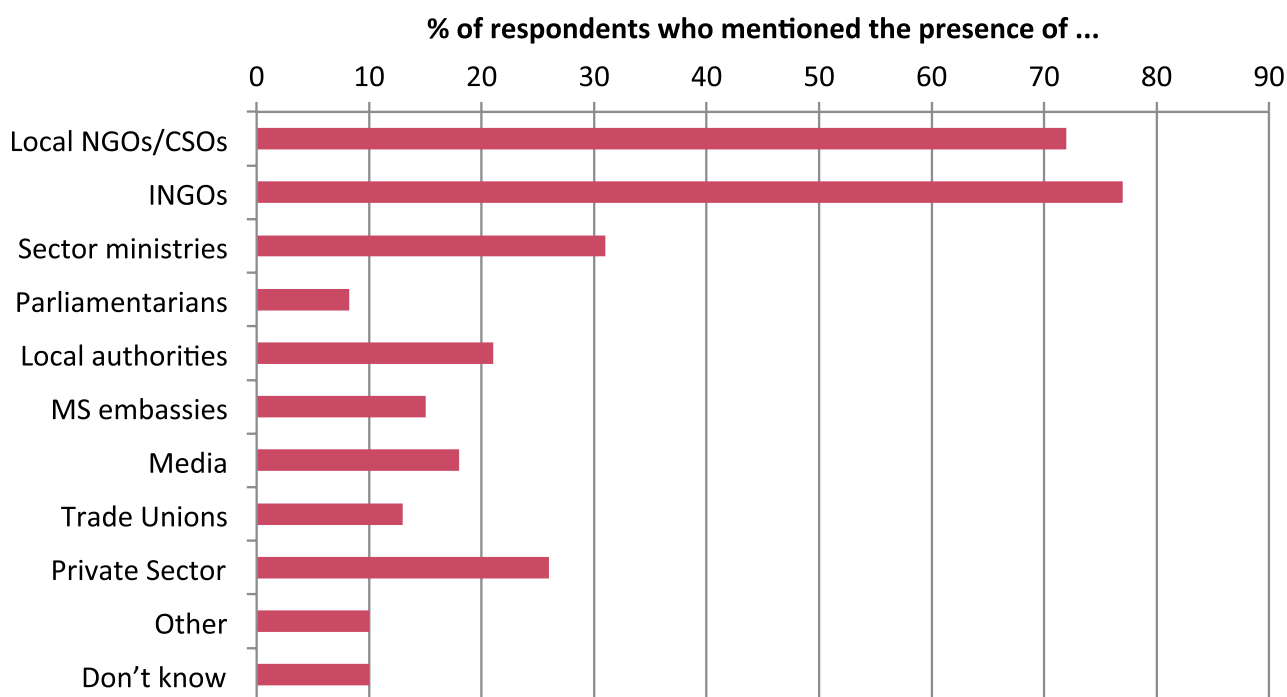


Figure 4: Types of participants at consultation meetings

Almost 60% of the 67 respondents – as many as 73.3% in case of French-speaking organisations – mentioned some degree of CSO coordination, while many respondents recognised that it was necessary to involve a broader range of civil society actors in this type of consultation. One platform in Uganda, for example, mobilised its partners to participate, so that smaller local organisations that had no direct contact with the delegations would also be involved in the dialogue,

Examples were provided from different countries about the added value of horizontal coordination:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: “We submitted a joint recommendation with the Child Protection Working Group

Quality of the consultation process

It seems that 66% of the organisations that took part in the consultations were informed in advance by the delegation about the programming process and what it was about. Sixty-three per cent consider that the consultation on programming was to some extent part of a longer-term structured dialogue. This could indicate increasingly structured dialogue between EUDs and civil society, but it could also mean that the organisations invited to take part in the consultation were those already in regular contact with an EUD. The organisations invited are more critical of the fact that they did not receive the invitation, agenda or other documents sufficiently in advance (in 55% of cases). Timely access to documents is important, in order to foster

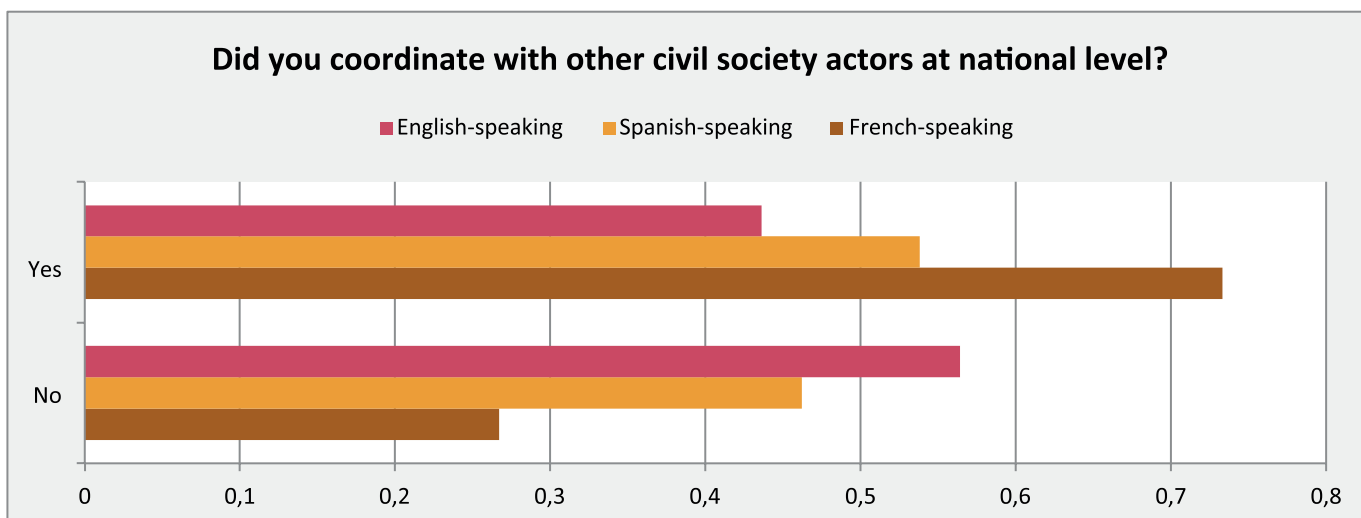


Figure 5: Coordination of civil society at national level in context of programming consultation

on including the deinstitutionalisation of children without parental care in the multiannual indicative programming. The proposal was accepted by the EUD.”

- Burkina Faso: “We held discussions within our permanent NGO secretariat to come up with common observations and positions, and we also participated as an individual NGO. That leads to more fruitful discussions and also helps bring out shared and particular concerns more.”

- “We coordinated the contributions of CSOs during the development and selection of priority areas for Zimbabwe and also assisted in putting together the submissions of all sectors.”

good preparation and coordination amongst CSOs.

The main weakness in the process appears to be the lack of follow-up by EUDs (observed in 74% of the cases), which in a way contradicts the first remark regarding the longer-term dialogue. Still, 48% of respondents feel that their recommendations on priority sectors were partly taken into account, while 21% even feel that they were fully taken into account.

These conclusions confirm the findings and recommendations of the previous CONCORD survey on the first phase of the programming process,¹⁴ and show that improvements are still needed in many places to enable a broader range of CSOs to contribute effectively to it. CSOs' comments shared through this second survey,

however, highlight the fact that some EUDs are making a real effort to improve the quality of the consultation, and that good practice exists on both sides. EUD-civil society dialogue and the quality of EU programming would certainly benefit from the spreading of that good practice.

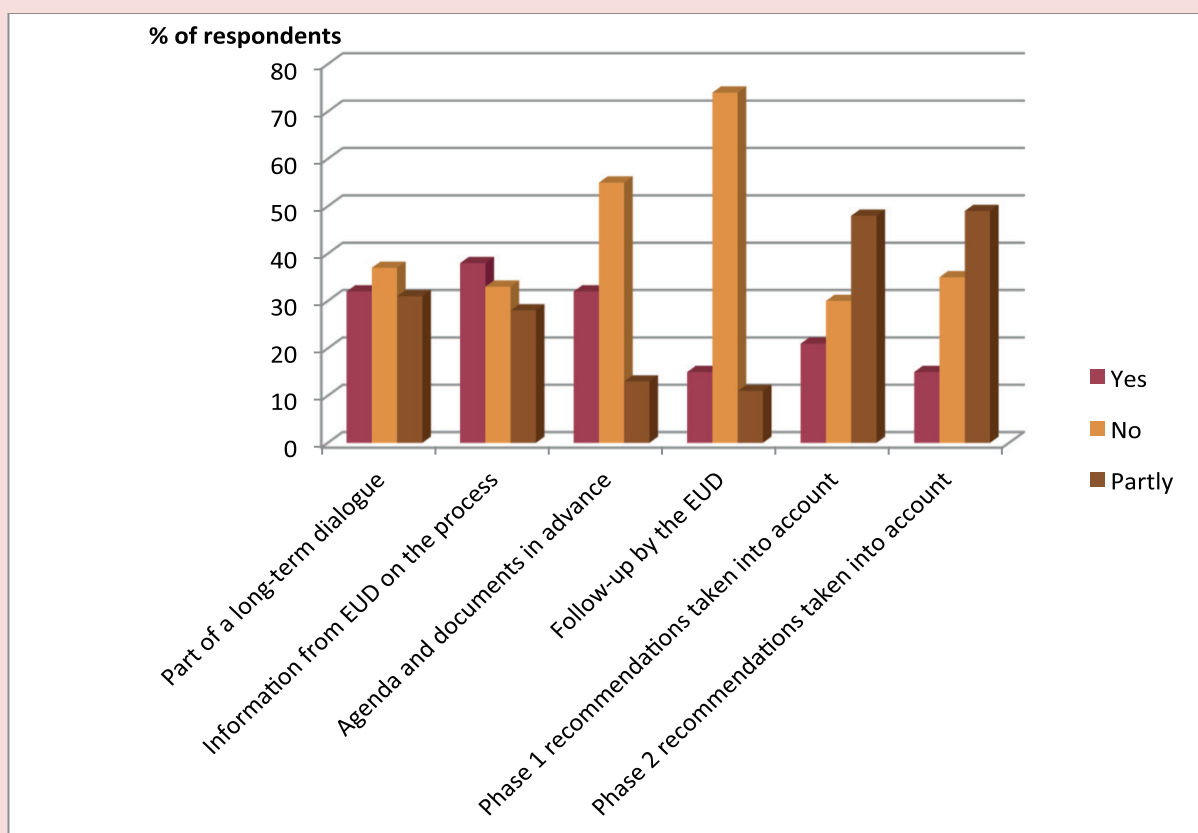


Figure 6: Quality of the consultations on programming

WHAT HAS BEEN THE EXPERIENCE OF EUDS? THE CASE OF TANZANIA¹⁵

With guidance from Brussels, the EUD in Tanzania conducted a consultative process that involved civil society partners in all the steps leading to the formulation of the 11th National Indicative Programme (NIP) (April to October 2013). Good governance, and development, energy and sustainable agriculture, were proposed as priority sectors. The consultation centred around meetings in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar, supported in its second phase by an online consultation publicised on the EU delegation's web and Facebook pages. In the second half of 2013 dedicated workshops involving civil society actors (NGO/INGOs, business associations and local authorities) were organised on energy and agriculture / rural development. These then fed into seminars that discussed both the overall analytical work done by the delegation (in coordination with other development partners, in particular EU member states) and the proposed responses in support of the government's national strategies. During the concluding seminars, at the end of 2013, the EU proposed to engage with civil society in a more structured and strategic dialogue. This proposal was welcomed, and it was agreed that further exchanges on this would take place early in 2014, in the context of the roadmap process.

¹⁴ EU Delegations' Engagement with Civil Society Organisations on Geographic Programming, 2014-2020 – August 2013.

¹⁵ Interview by Plan International: http://www.plan-eu.org/unlisted/interview-eud_tanzania/

THE WAY FORWARD

The programming of EU external action instruments for the seven years to come is almost complete. It is important for civil society to take part in programming EU development cooperation in order to ensure that the selection of priority sectors and aid modalities is properly embedded in the national context, and in reality. Unfortunately, only a minority of organisations who responded to the survey were invited to take part in the process. This is why prior coordination by civil society actors is essential, to broaden the range of actors involved and to identify issues of common interest. Civil society coordination and preparation is only possible, however, if information and documents are shared sufficiently in advance by EUDs, which was not the case in half of the situations. CSOs also identified follow-up post-consultation dialogue, and the establishment of more permanent, continuous mechanisms for engagement, as ways to improve the consultation process. INGOs present in the country and national NGO platforms played a significant role in the consultation on programming, and should look at how they can help make the process more inclusive, including by ensuring that the views and concerns of decentralised and grassroots organisations are also heard in the capitals.

The survey shows that good-quality consultation processes have been established in many places and could serve as models for EUDs and civil society actors in other countries. The whole process of EU engagement with civil society would greatly benefit from the spreading and mainstreaming of this good practice at both EUD and civil society levels.

5.2 CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BROADER NATIONAL AND EU POLICIES

In addition to their key role in implementing external assistance – a consequence of the devolution policy adopted by the EC in 2000 – EU delegations also have a diplomatic role to play, and they engage in negotiations (e.g. trade negotiations, association agreements) and in political and policy dialogue with the governments of partner countries. Moreover, the EU recognises the central role of civil society in democratic governance and in building just, equitable and inclusive societies, and EUDs are expected to support that role and to help promote an enabling environment for civil society at

country level. The survey therefore looked at how EUDs and civil society conduct their dialogue on policy issues, and on the role EUDs play in supporting the role of civil society and expanding its political space.

EUD-CSO engagement on wider policy issues

When asked if, in the last three years, they had engaged with EUDs on a policy issue not directly related to development aid, a majority of organisations (70%) answered no. Of the 30% who responded yes, almost two-thirds had approached the delegation themselves. So, some CSOs wait for the EUD to approach them – one partner from Africa said: “We have never been invited by the EUD to any consultation” – whilst others are more proactive: “The EUD was approached by us on several matters: on laws and policies that are prone to restrict operational space for NGOs and the media, on the role of the EU in election monitoring, on the role of the EU in protecting religious minorities and indigenous peoples from violence. These issues were discussed in at least 10 meetings with the EUD over the past three years”.

The range of issues CSOs discussed with EUDs is very broad, illustrating the diversity of civil society actors and their interests, and also the importance of EUDs for civil society across issues. Some talk about informal and bilateral discussions, while others mentioned more formal consultation meetings and coalition approaches. Issues specifically relating to CSO areas of work – such as children’s rights, disability, health, the country’s social and family policy, human rights violations, land grabbing, forest management (FLEGT) and environmental protection, the role of private sector, and women’s empowerment – constitute the majority of those discussed with EUDs.

In some cases, however, the discussions also included broader international processes such as the post-2015 framework, climate-change negotiations and the development and aid-effectiveness agenda. EU support for agriculture and food security, an EU association agreement or a trade agreement with the partner country, as well as more general EU policy in the region (Neighbourhood policy), were also addressed. An interesting example comes from Somalia, where one organisation mentioned “civil society engagement in the Somalia road-map and war-on-terror narrative for Somalia” as being an issue discussed with the EUD.

In Latin America and Central America, human rights violations, governance, social policies, dialogue with the government and trade agreements represent the majority of the issues discussed.

EUD support for the political role of civil society

Of 206 respondents, 85% said they receive no support from their EU delegation to facilitate their participation in policy making, in political dialogue or in monitoring government policies.

Several partners from different continents underline the importance of EU support for civil society networks. An organisation from Africa suggests: “We would like the EU to encourage networking processes in civil society by supporting unifying activities, such as working collectively towards speaking with one voice, or taking part in multi-actor consultation frameworks.» Others propose a more defined role for EUD support in national dialogue between governments and civil society, either directly or through civil society projects. In one Latin American country,

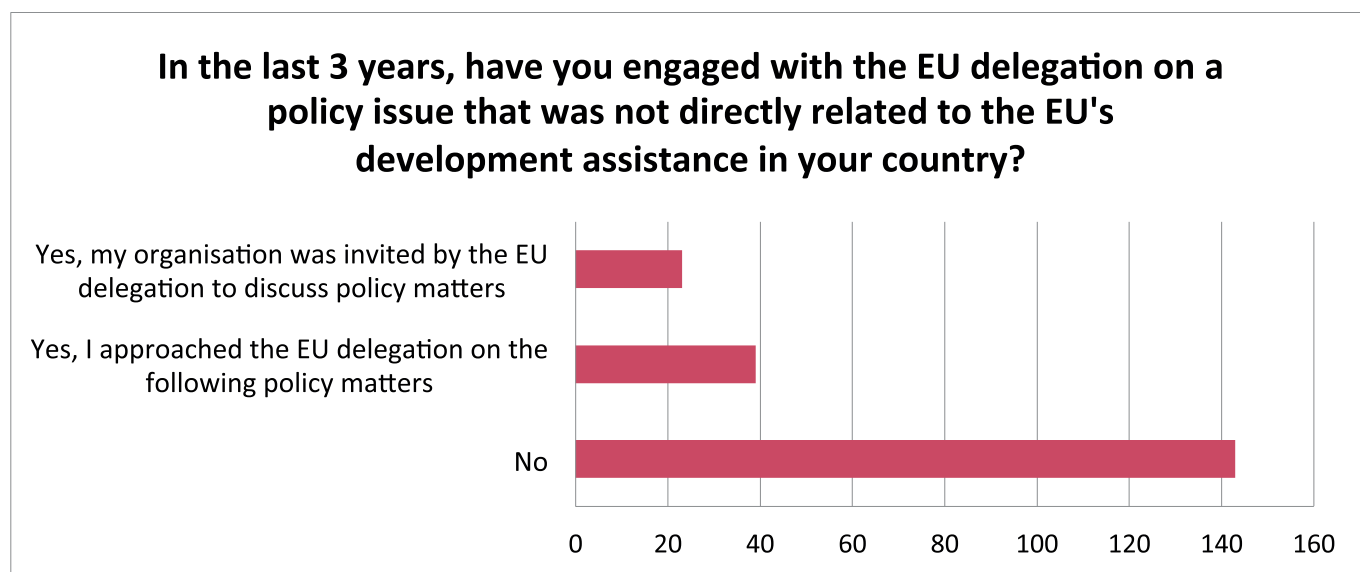


Figure 7: CSO-EUD dialogue on policy matters

Only 37 organisations said they do get such support, in one or more of the following forms:

- Involving civil society in discussing and monitoring budget support.
- Raising civil society concerns with the government.
- Financial support for organising an advocacy coalition or platform.
- Financial support for advocacy or campaigning projects.
- Establishing a tripartite dialogue with the government.
- Financial support for organising seminars and public events.

for example, partners envisage promoting EU participation in national and local “Mesas de concertación para la lucha contra la pobreza” (dialogue mechanisms established by the government and civil society) or in working groups on particular issues (such as the reform of legislation on children and youth) that would include representatives from the judicial system and civil society.

CSOs in different countries note a lack of outreach to local and national partners and smaller local organisations, and recommend that the EU should extend its dialogue to partners who are not direct recipients of its funding. In fact this is also an aim explicitly included in the roadmap guidelines: “the range of CSOs consulted should go well beyond beneficiaries of EU external assistance”.¹⁶

EU support for human rights and for an enabling environment for civil society

Asked whether they had been invited by the EUD to discuss issues relating to fundamental freedoms and human rights in the country, 22.2% of 207 respondents said yes. Only 14.6% (of 199), however, said that they had been invited specifically to discuss actions and policies that restrict operational space for CSOs in the country (e.g. administrative or financial restrictions, criminalisation, harassment or intimidation), which shows the political sensitivity of those issues.

Questioned about whether that interaction with the EUD could have an impact on the situation of civil society in the country, respondents had some difficulty in responding, although they do see the potential of EU action:

- *“Our organisation raised with the EU the issue of a parliamentary initiative to limit and control NGO activities. Specifically, we requested the EU to influence the government and the parliament to stop such initiatives. However, I do not know what the result of the discussions was. I have not heard either from members of parliament or from the government that the EU influenced the situation. The EU has a big role in this issue. It could show the role of NGOs in building of democracy and delivery of aid, based on the experience of European NGOs.”*
- *“Following an EU-CSO meeting on the CSO enabling environment, the EU delegation promised to have a meeting with office of the prime minister and the NGO board on the amendment of the NGO Act. This process did not yield much, however, because the CSO operating environment is still constrained.”*

- *“The situation is very complicated in Central America, where civil society and human rights defenders are being increasingly criminalised. Political space for civil society is being reduced, as is the opportunity for social auditing. In this regard, the impact of the EU in creating spaces for discussing these issues has been vital.”*

Surprisingly, 45% of 205 respondents were not aware of the existence of an EU Human Rights Country Strategy, and only a small percentage (5%) was involved in consultations about it.

EU human rights country strategies are important reference documents for policy development and project implementation, and it is a challenge for EUDs to improve civil society’s involvement in the drafting of them. It is also important for INGOs who may have better access to information about upcoming consultations, and the strategy itself, to share it with their national partners.

¹⁶... and to the extent possible include representation of both urban and rural organisations; secular and faith-based organisations and organisations representing minorities and marginalised groups. Outreach to research institutions, foundations, cooperatives, professional and business organisations, trade unions and employers’ organisations should also be promoted to the extent possible, and INGOs with a strong country presence will also be useful partners in the process.”

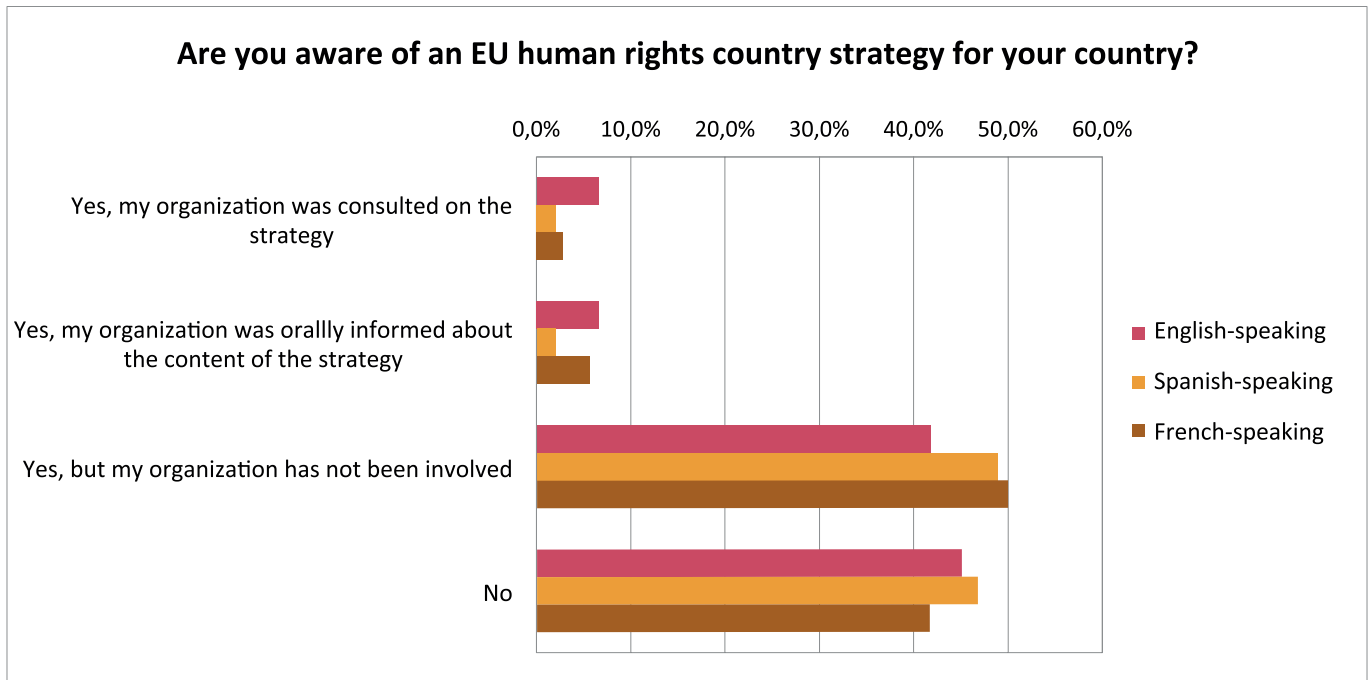


Figure 8: Are you aware of an EU human rights country strategy for your country?

CSOs represent key partners for EUDs in the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Indeed, 26.8% of respondents receive EU funding for human rights or gender actions. Parts of these actions relate directly to the political role of CSOs; others are not focused on human rights or gender: instead, these issues are mainstreamed in the project. As highlighted by some organisations, it can be risky to support civil society action in these areas directly, but it is also a way for the EU to promote the enabling environment for civil society and to enter into a dialogue with the government on these issues. In Cambodia, for example, the ambassador invited CSOs to report to the delegation if they received any intimidation relating to land issues. In Mali, CSOs receive support for capacity-building, advocacy, and budgetary and political analysis. Some express their appreciation of the way in which the EUD regularly monitors projects and puts forward recommendations on both financial and policy issues.

One organisation commented that EU involvement could have more impact *“if the delegation were to facilitate broader dialogue for cross-sharing/learning, and joint advocacy for organisations being funded to implement programmes focusing on similar issues, e.g. child rights”*. Others, on the contrary, highlighted that they were able to engage the EUD in dialogue on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and had had a positive experience:

- Bangladesh: *“The EUD in cooperation with other embassies worked on a law that was prone to restrict operational space for CSOs in Bangladesh. The EUD’s effort contributed to a more acceptable version of the law”*;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: *“We (...) were invited to a meeting about institutional mechanisms for cooperation with civil society and other related civil-society and social issues. These discussions can have a positive impact as the EU staff record feedback, thoughts and experiences from civil society and can use them to improve programming and planning processes”*;
- Colombia: *“Of course it is positive in terms of protecting the work of human rights defenders and international humanitarian law in Colombia”*.
- *“Co-financing projects with human rights sectors and national NGOs and social movements. There has been a constructive dialogue and constant support from EU officials on sometimes risky projects. Even in ‘hard times’, struggling with local NGO capacity and collaboration, EU officials were understanding and supportive”*.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE EXPERIENCE OF EUDS? THE CASE OF KENYA

Kenyan civil society faces a difficult situation. Amendments are currently being tabled on the PBO Act which restricts the conditions for civil-society funding and registration. The EUD's response to this threatening situation for civil society has been to coordinate with other donors in order to increase support for those Kenyan CSOs that work to reverse the amendments, speak up against the amendments and engage in advocacy.

The EUD takes initiatives to increase dialogue and CSOs' cooperation with their national and local authorities in the following manner:

- by financing projects at county level;
- by ensuring that projects at county level are rooted in consultations with members of local civil society;
- by ensuring that, when countries meet with donors to select policy areas and decide on future financing, NGOs are properly represented.

THE CASE OF NEPAL

The government of Nepal recently shared its development cooperation policy with its development partners. The development partners (from the international development partners group, IDPG) had several discussions on the content of this policy. While the Nepalese government's ownership was welcomed, it was noted that there were several provisions that could potentially be difficult for civil society. The implementation of the policy should therefore be monitored. The development partners agreed to collect any problems that CSOs might encounter with the government of Nepal (delays in approving projects, visas for staff, etc.), and if structural problems are identified, dialogue with the Nepalese government will be promoted.

THE WAY FORWARD

Despite a number of interesting experiences of dialogue with and support from EUDs on political and policy issues, and on the human rights situation, the commitment of EU delegations to promoting the political role of civil society still needs to be made more widespread. Situations differ greatly from one country to the other, depending on the political context, but good EUD-civil society dialogue is observed in a variety of situations and regions. Both INGOs and local organisations are engaging on these issues with EUDs, but more should be done to ensure that smaller, local, civil society organisations are also involved. This is the shared responsibility of larger national NGOs and INGOs, and a constant challenge for EUDs. CSOs view the EUDs as important actors in intensifying the

dialogue between civil society and national and local authorities and in promoting political space for civil society. Many CSOs receive EU financial support in the area of human rights and gender equality, and appreciate the quality of EUD support. In a number of countries the enabling environment and political space for civil society is problematic, and some CSOs expect EUDs to play a more proactive role in their political dialogue with government. These issues are sensitive, however, and the dialogue between CSOs and EUDs on the restriction of civil society space and actions is still relatively limited. The CSO roadmap process (covered in the next section) is often mentioned by CSOs as a way of potentially improving that situation.

5.3 EU ROADMAPS FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

The CSO Communication also envisages that roadmaps will be drawn up at country level, to develop a common strategic framework for engaging EUDs and member states with civil society in all regions, including developing, neighbourhood and enlargement countries. *“Roadmaps should be based on a sound understanding of the CSOs’ arena and the wider socioeconomic context in which they operate. This is a prerequisite for a more strategic engagement of the EU at country level, particularly if relevant stakeholders have to be identified in order to establish or facilitate effective and meaningful dialogue schemes. The roadmaps should identify long-term objectives of EU cooperation with CSOs and encompass dialogue as well as operational support, identifying appropriate working modalities. This exercise should be linked to the programming of EU external assistance, namely bilateral, regional and thematic cooperation. The human rights country strategies currently being developed by the EU will be an important reference.”*¹⁷ Roadmaps should be seen as a continuous process updated each year, and when there are major changes in context. A second generation of roadmaps will cover the period 2018-2020.¹⁸

Dialogue and consultation with local civil society is seen as a key aspect of developing and implementing an EU country roadmap. For consultations with local civil society, it is necessary to include a wide range of actors with different roles and mandates. The basic principle is that each country is unique and the approach to consultations and dialogue should respect that. EUDs are strongly advised to consult with national and local authorities, given the important role they have in defining, respecting and facilitating the legal, regulatory and institutional framework for civil society. International NGOs with a strong presence in the country are also relevant partners who should be included in the process. Where appropriate and feasible, a summary of agreed priorities and actions will be published at country level. EUDs are also encouraged to make use of press releases, websites and other media forms to increase the predictability and visibility of EU actions.

Outreach and involvement in consultations

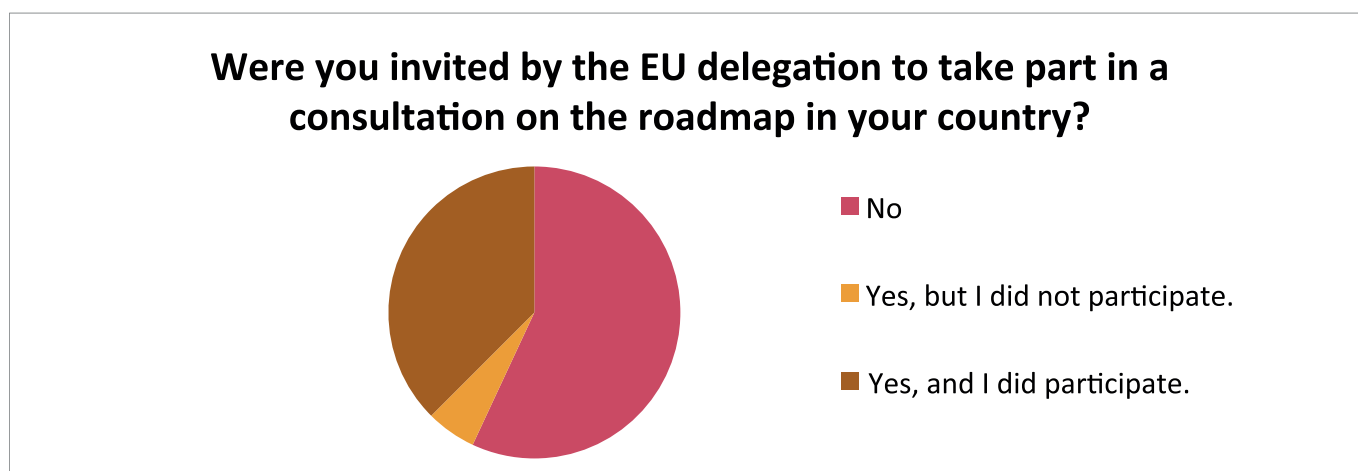


Figure 9: CSOs invited by EUDs to participate in the EU country CSO roadmap process

¹⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹⁸ <http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/310-concord-briefing-paper-on-the-eu-country-cso-road-maps-march-2014>

What has civil society's experience of the EU country roadmap consultation process been so far?

In the survey, 49% of respondents were aware that their EUD was developing an EU country roadmap for engagement with civil society. While, during the process of programming the EU's bilateral cooperation with the country, only 23.3% of respondents were invited to take part in a consultation, the percentage invited to participate in a consultation on the EU roadmap for engagement with civil society was almost double, at 43.2%. Given that the EU's country roadmaps focus on improving its engagement with civil society, and the programming process is focused on how bilateral cooperation is being translated into programmes, this difference in inclusiveness is not so surprising. The relative increase in outreach, however, is a definite step in the right direction. An INGO in an Asian country observes: *"The EU's consultative approach has improved this year since it initiated the CSO country roadmaps to strengthen the EU's strategic cooperation and consultation with CSOs at country levels. The EU must expand its outreach to CSOs (...) so that they have access to consultative processes. The online surveys are a good way of involving more CSOs – however, many CSOs may still be unaware of particular surveys and may miss the opportunity. More approaches could also be considered, to include facilitative methods of engaging with a wider network of CSOs"*. Another national NGO from an African country reported: *"Participation by CSOs from all categories was the broadest, the most open possible, and yet it was mainly the umbrella organisations and platforms that took charge of making proposals on behalf of all CSOs."*

In addition to reaching out to more CSOs, the survey reveals that the EU country roadmap process involved better representation of local organisations than the MFF programming exercise had. An almost equal number of local organisations and INGOs participated in the discussions. Nevertheless, even though it is the purpose of the roadmap process to invite a wider variety of CSOs, civil society actors note that this has not yet been achieved, and national and local organisations in particular say it is mostly beneficiaries of EU grants and INGOs that participate in dialogue with the EUD. According to 64.6% of respondents, civil society participation in the process was not inclusive enough to allow all kinds of CSOs to feel involved or represented. One national NGO noted:

"There was a very limited number of invitations. Very few participants in the meetings, and the majority were organisations who have pledged their allegiance to the EU delegation in the stances it takes on the political and economic situation in the country. Many key sectors – such as the genuine trade unions, movements representing farmers (60% of the population) and local authorities – were nearly all absent from the process".

EU country roadmap consultations took place in-house in the EUDs, in some cases through decentralised in-country workshops in addition to on-line surveys posted on the delegations' website (e.g. Kenya, Tanzania, Honduras). In addition, the EUD in Nicaragua organised decentralised in-country workshops with civil society. This could be a solution for large countries (e.g. Mexico or Kenya), or those that have a population spread over large areas (indigenous communities), where inclusive consultations might prove challenging. It is also vital for EUDs to have the necessary human and financial resources for consulting CSOs. Finally, in some countries the security situation is such that consultation with civil society can be a liability, for both the EUD and civil society, so that alternatives such as online consultations should be explored, to replace face-to-face workshops. In such cases the consultation could be organised instead by CSOs themselves – if possible with the support of INGOs or one or more national NGO platforms – without the involvement of the EUD but with the recommendations being forwarded to it afterwards. While some EUDs are able to cope with several of these difficulties, in other countries there is still a good deal of room for improvement in order to overcome these and other challenges that might restrict the inclusiveness of consultations. Some organisations said they were aware that the EUD was consulting CSOs but could not assist: *"I am sure the EU delegation must have been engaging CSOs at the national level, but those of us operating at the regional and district levels, especially in the northern part of the country, are not reached by the delegation"*. Some respondents identified challenges regarding the involvement of children and youth, sexual minorities, as well as people with disabilities.

The regular presence of private-sector actors in the consultations is also remarkable. It would be interesting to know who exactly these participants were, as it is quite surprising to see such involvement by the private sector in a consultation on engagement with civil society.

It was suggested by some respondents that consultations should be organised jointly with key representative NGO networks or platforms. *“I learned that CSOs are diverse, and to invite a dozen CSOs would not be enough. Future consultations should work with key NGO networks with local membership, to coordinate consultation for the EU. Doing this would result in good representation from all kinds of CSOs and very transparent and honest feedback for the EU. It would promote ownership by the country more, and would be seen as being more responsive to local priorities, rather than being driven by the donor’s priorities.”* Another respondent said dialogue should be organised with focal points from the non-profit, private and public sectors: *“rather than the EU doing consultation by itself with civil society actors, it could work with focal points from each sector (CSOs, private sector, government) and provide financial support for sectoral focal points to facilitate the consultation process”.*

In almost 80% of the EU country roadmap-related consultations, respondents reported that the CSO focal point had been involved, and the head of mission had assisted in one way or another in 32.1% of the cases. (In the programming process, the head of delegation was involved in 44.6% of cases.) The involvement of heads of mission in the roadmap process can still be improved, therefore, as it is important for engagement with CSOs to be mainstreamed throughout the EUDs, including at the highest level. The political advisor, the heads of operations or governance and thematic focal points (e.g. for food security) were also involved in the consultations, some of which were also attended by a delegation from Brussels, or by consultants. One respondent recommended that the EUD should *“Make managerial staff in the delegations more available to talk to the different sectors on matters of interest relating to cooperation, and reduce the lack of transparency that characterises how the delegation operates.”* The respondents to the survey were only aware of EU member-state embassies’ participation in 25.5% of the CSO consultations. While member states may have been involved in other ways in the EU country roadmaps

process, improvements can be made in the future to ensure a closer cooperation between EU Delegations, member states and CSOs. In Table 2 you can see which other stakeholders were reported by respondents to have been involved in the consultation process.

Table 2: Involvement of other stakeholders in the EU country roadmap consultations

Local NGOs/CSOs.....	81.8%
International NGOs.....	74.5%
Sector ministries.....	18.2%
Parliamentarians.....	5.5%
Local authorities.....	14.5%
EU member-state embassies.....	25.5%
Media.....	12.7%
Trade unions.....	12.7%
The private sector.....	21.8%
Don't know.....	10.9%
Other (please specify).....	3.6%

Quality of consultations

In 64.1% of cases (almost the same percentage as for the programming process), the consultation on the EU country roadmaps was to some extent part of a longer-term structured dialogue with civil society. This was not the case for 35.8% of respondents, compared to 37% during the programming process. One observed that *“selective and ad hoc consultation processes would raise certain concerns but would not be effective in including civil society as critical actors in the partnership”.*

Of the respondents who took part in the consultation, almost 40% had received information about the EU country roadmap in good time, 19.6% had partly, while just over 40% explicitly stated that they had not. This implies an increase of 4% of respondents not receiving information sufficiently in advance of the consultations on roadmaps, as compared to those on the programming process. The invitation, agenda and background documents had not been received well in advance of the roadmaps consultation by 42.9% of respondents, which is still an improvement on the programming consultations (55%).

While only 42.6% found they were able to propose items for the consultation agenda, 70.6% of respondents said they found the issues discussed there relevant. The three topics most discussed were support for CSOs with capacity-building, the dialogue between CSOs and the EUD to date and the priority actions to strengthen that dialogue, and to

that are not used to engaging with the EU or each other. Also, when information on the process, the invitation, the agenda and the background documents is not shared with CSOs sufficiently in advance, it makes it very difficult for them to coordinate with one another.



Figure 10: Did you coordinate with other CSOs at national level around...

a lesser extent, but still frequently, the political context in the country, the legislative context that enables or hampers CSO participation, and the operational support given by the EUD to CSOs. But the consultation should be about discussing these topics – it should not entail merely briefing CSOs, as some respondents said was the case. Half the respondents (51.9%) said the EUD did not inform them about the final roadmap priorities, which may be partly because many processes are still ongoing or have only recently been finalised. The latter also makes it difficult for respondents to see whether or not their recommendations have been taken into account. Several organisations again mentioned the importance of follow-up – CSOs see feedback as an integral part of an ongoing structured dialogue and strategic engagement: “The European Union delegation made a good job of organising the session for preparing the roadmap, but there was no feedback on the final version”.

CSO coordination

In comparison to the programming consultation, almost twice as many CSOs said no when asked whether there was civil society coordination for the EU country roadmap process. This might be because the EUDs managed to reach out further for the roadmap process, inviting actors

Several other elements that hamper CSO coordination at national level were also raised. One respondent from an African country said “Several coalitions, coordinations and central labour bodies were formed on the basis of visions and mandates, and they made several attempts to create a consultation framework that was intended to lead to networking, but they ended up failing because some organisations were infiltrated by politics.”

Whilst in most cases they did not (yet) coordinate, they do recognise the need to plan and work together on issues of common interest whilst keeping diversity alive. One Asian organisation said: “I learned that CSOs are diverse... Future consultations should work with key NGO networks (...) to coordinate consultation for the EU (...) and have good representation from all types of CSOs and give very transparent, honest feedback to the EU”. A Latin-American NGO noted: “We should share and hold discussions with all organisations on the various issues we are working on, particular approaches and existing or potential linkages”. An NGO based in Africa observed that it is important to “put in place mechanisms for dialogue, information and follow-up to the consultations with CSOs”.

Where CSOs they did coordinate with one another, in some cases they selected representatives who could speak on behalf of a wider network, for example of CSOs spread across the country. Sometimes CSOs also joined together to work on the same thematic priorities. In some instances, instead of coordinating CSOs ahead of an EUD consultation, or organising meetings whose

outcomes could feed into it, some NGO networks even co-organised the consultation of CSOs together with the EUD. In one Asian country, a national NGO network said it had *“facilitated and coordinated eight NGO network members (the equivalent of 340 national and international NGOs) to advocate for influence on government policy”*.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE EUDS' EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPING THE ROADMAP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY?

In Peru, civil society is well organised, is at least as professional as INGOs, and is achieving high standards in its work. CSOs' main problem is financing. They receive no support from the state: there is scarcely any institutional financing for service contracts or grants. The EUD and MSs coordinate their development activities. At the start of the roadmap process, about a year before it was finalised, the EUD set up a group with interested MSs. A local consultant was contracted to organise preparatory workshops with a wide variety of civil society actors, leading to EU dialogue with new, local organisations (linked to the chamber of commerce, trade unions and the private sector) the delegation had not previously been in touch with. The roadmap for Peru proposes a number of proactive steps for increasing engagement with civil society:

- Map the whole of Peruvian civil society;
- Set up a mechanism for EU dialogue with a variety of civil society actors. In addition to the consultation mechanisms already introduced by the embassies of Belgium and Spain (mainly round tables with their national CSOs), this mechanism would discuss not only cooperation, but also issues relating to political dialogue and trade, following the example of the EU-funded Joint Nutrition Programme, EuroPAN, which aims to speed up the process of reducing chronic child malnutrition and fighting effectively against poverty by involving different ministries (health and development) and CSOs;
- Further strengthen civil society and support it in building relations with the state and the private sector through facilitation and alliance-building;
- In view of Peru's future graduation from bilateral cooperation under the DCI, map state and private funding possibilities for CSOs;
- Observing that civil society is seen as an obstacle by both the government and public opinion, the EUD plans to support it by demonstrating the added value of its contributions to sustainable development and the democratisation of society, and showing how the government can benefit from CSOs' experience;
- Strengthen CSOs' involvement in the decentralisation process.

In Nepal, one challenge is that the civil society community is very large, with around 40,000 registered NGOs, making it difficult to select partners for dialogue. Umbrella organisations have been invited to consultations. Another challenge is the geography, with many areas remote and difficult to access, making in-country consultations costly and time-consuming. The EUD has used online surveys to reach out to more CSOs; the challenge of on-line consulting, however, is the time needed for efficiently processing the information received. The delegation is currently exploring pragmatic e-tools for broader consultation.

The consultation on the new CSP/MIP and on drafting the roadmap for CSOs included active participation by the civil society community, which put forward some interesting proposals. The EUD is constantly in touch with CSOs about ongoing projects, new calls for proposals and ad hoc meetings. Furthermore, building on the consultation on the roadmap held this summer in Nepal, the EUD intends to structure this dialogue and set regular meetings.

THE WAY FORWARD

It is crucial for the EU and its delegations, as well as civil society, to use both the positive elements and the challenges entailed in the development of the EU's first country roadmaps as aids to strengthening these roadmaps further, turning them into a framework for an ongoing, structured and strategic engagement between EUDs and civil society in all areas of concern to CSOs. The yearly updates of the roadmaps, and their second phase (starting in 2018), will represent important stepping-stones in this process.

The survey indicates some progress in EU-civil society engagement, including in the EU's sharing of information and documents with civil society. Also, the issues discussed have to a large degree been considered relevant by CSOs. The timelines for the consultations, however, and proper feedback and reach and inclusiveness, are important aspects which leave CSOs still wanting. CSOs' experience of the involvement of the EU member states in CSO roadmaps consultations has been limited and it is important for EUDs, member states and civil society to intensify their dialogue and engagement.

In light of the fact that dialogue and consultation with CSOs is crucial to both developing and implementing the EU country roadmaps, it is important for EUDs to make the roadmaps' priorities publically available. Civil society – along with the EUDs and member states' embassies – will then be able to play a major role in identifying, monitoring and implementing practical actions aimed at achieving these priority goals for each country. EUDs, MSs could hold face-to-face workshops with a representative delegation of CSOs, in addition to consultations in decentralised meetings and online (in readily understandable, jargon-free language), as a way of ensuring that smaller local organisations in the provinces are involved. The purpose of the workshops would be to set tasks and assess the progress made with taking concrete action and changing the enabling environment.

A national NGO in Latin America noted: *"It's a process that is still being set up, so it has to be reviewed and adjusted every year"*. The EUD and MS, with the support of civil society, should regularly update their mapping of CSOs operating in the country and their assessment of CSOs' enabling environment and priorities.

5.4 CSOS AS BENEFICIARIES OF EU COOPERATION FUNDS

The EU's financial support for its partner countries comes in different guises: grants for supporting projects and organisations in line with EU development objectives, public contracts (tenders), and budgetary and sectoral support. While a large proportion of EU development assistance is given in the shape of budget support, to boost a partner government's programmes in its fight against poverty, CSOs represent another important aid channel and are recognised by the EU as a development actor in their own right. But what do CSOs, as beneficiaries of EU aid, think of EUDs' cooperation and financial support?

EUD-CSO: Donor/beneficiary engagement

CSOs are active fundraisers, with almost 68% of those participating in the survey having applied for EU funding at least once in the last three years.

In addition to being fundraisers, however, they are also active implementers: over half of these applicants were successful, mainly through calls for proposals (91%) but also through calls for tenders (9%), which is less common for CSOs. Of course, obtaining and managing EU funding is no easy task, and while a significant number of CSOs acknowledged the support they receive from EUDs at the application and implementation stages, others also raised their concern about the complexity of applying for EU grants. *"The process is overly complex, the application format is too long and complex, the evaluators are not sufficiently locally experienced, and the entire system is too skewed in favour of large organisations able to recruit or outsource to specialist grant writers"*. This is especially true for local organisations. *"We recommend that the EU should review its calls for proposals to accommodate less well-resourced community groups, bearing in mind the cumbersomeness of the proposal-writing process and competition from organisations with greater resources."*

Small vs large NGOs

Partners continue to reiterate that smaller CSOs, working directly in the field, know the local situation and citizens' needs best. *"When you are small, no one cares, you are just not good enough. If you write a proposal you know it won't be accepted, until an expert writes your proposal and you have to pay him well. For a non-profit-making organisation, this is impossible"*. Under existing EU assistance schemes, the larger INGOs continue to be the main recipients of EU funding. For countries at risk, and

the majority of respondents would like to receive more of this, to help them understand their weaknesses and improve the quality of future proposals. Scores alone are not enough, and some qualitative feedback, ideally through a meeting with the EUD, would help potential applications. One organisation suggested that *"in order to develop stronger capacity for writing future proposals, it could be helpful to receive more details and reasons from the EUD concerning the rejection of the proposal submitted, and not merely the score (which relates only*

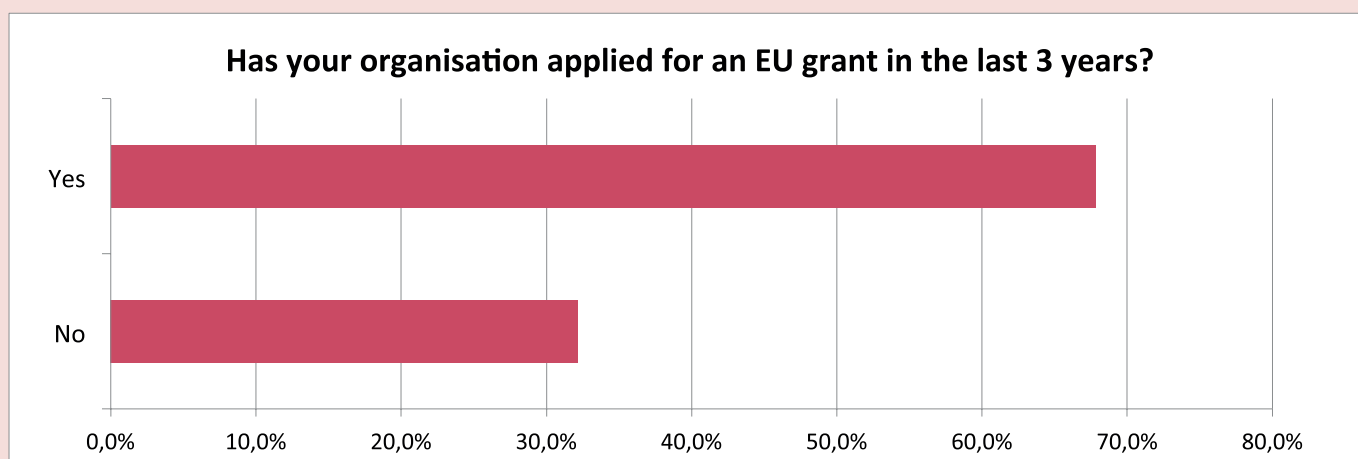


Figure 11: How many of the respondents applied for EU funding at least once in the past three years?

in areas plagued by conflict, special flexibility tools have been developed by EIDHR (Objective 1), allowing ultimate flexibility and direct rapid response (particularly to local organisations or human rights defenders) in addressing issues of grave concern without complex procedures. Access to these tools should be improved. Many CSOs observe that EU funding should be made more flexible so that local NGOs can compete in the bidding processes.¹⁹ *"We suggest simplifying the submission procedures. Indeed, the complexity of the procedure penalises CSOs whose capacity to draft complex applications is limited,"*

Granting process

An average of 76% of partners considered that the granting process was transparent and sufficiently predictable in terms of timeline, communication, interpretation of rules and feedback on rejected proposals. Nevertheless, a closer examination of detailed answers (provided by 50% of respondents) suggests that improvements could be made to the feedback given on rejected proposals:

to the relevance and design of the action)". One positive example to follow would be that of the EUD in Mozambique, which took the time to provide qualitative feedback as to why a proposal had been denied. One organisation even suggested that applicants could be given the opportunity to present their project idea to the evaluation committee. Finally, EUDs could improve their time management somewhat – whether when sharing information on funding opportunities, launching a call for proposals, announcing results or responding to grant beneficiaries. *"We have submitted various project proposals this year. At no point was the timetable respected, and it was impossible to obtain information. We received answers from the EU very late."* Some organisations also suggest organising information sessions on calls for proposals before they are launched, rather than after, when there is very little time left for designing a proposal.

¹⁹ Organisations from Africa and Latin America in particular continue to observe that local organisations have no access to EUDs.

Contract procedure and compliance with the PRAG

When it comes to contract procedure and compliance, 87% of respondents claimed that the EU did not use a different interpretation of the PRAG rules. That said, one may wonder about these respondents' familiarity with EC rules and procedures, as the question did not assess respondents' background knowledge (do they actually know whether an EUD used a different interpretation?), and 133 respondents simply skipped the question. The examples from the 13% of respondents who claimed that EUDs did use a different interpretation of EU rules indicated a good knowledge of the PRAG and of possible complaint mechanisms (one of them had used the Ombudsman). Some of the answers also showed that there have sometimes been conflicting opinions between EUDs and their Brussels HQ on the interpretation of their rules. In one case, an EUD requested monthly (narrative and financial) reports of the grant beneficiary – a request that was deemed unwarranted by the DEVCO helpdesk in Brussels. Nevertheless, the delegation upheld this requirement. Capacity-building and knowledge-sharing

Capacity-building and knowledge-sharing

More than 56% of respondents observe that they do not know whether their EUD offers capacity-building activities on EU project management to civil society, and 21% say it does not. According to the remaining 22% of respondents, who claim that the EUD did organise

capacity-building activities for CSOs, some good practices have been developed: *“Each time a new call for proposals is announced, the EUD organises meetings with potential grantees to explain EU rules for managing projects, including visibility requirements”*. In Mali, the delegation provided a training on PADOR for CSOs located in Bamako and the regions.

Nevertheless, many organisations, especially from Africa, claimed that these capacity-building/information sessions are aimed at organisations already benefiting from EU grants. Local, grassroots organisations that are not already recipients of EU aid do not get invited.

SIERRA LEONE AND CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE: TWO SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES

The EUD (in Sierra Leone), through an external organisation, provided a capacity-building training on “How to draft a successful proposal for the European Commission” for the NSAs and LAs interested in submitting a proposal under the “NSAs and LAs in Development 2013” call. After the training, the NSAs/LAs had also an opportunity to submit their draft proposals to the organisation's helpdesk for a detailed evaluation, and they received suggestions on how to improve a proposal before submitting it to the EUD. That was an interesting and helpful opportunity, in particular because it involved examining the organisation's proposal thoroughly in order to understand its weaknesses and strengths and to develop the proposal before submitting it.

In Congo-Brazzaville, in March 2013 the EUD organised a four-day workshop on grant management. The workshop covered the entire project cycle (logframe, budget, procurement, visibility plans, etc.), and also broader EU development policies such as the EU-ACP cooperation agreement, the European Consensus and the Agenda for Change.

A lesson learnt from Mozambique: *The delegation has been prepared to invest the time of its CSO focal points in providing support when requested. However, there should be greater recognition of the fact that for local CSOs capacity-building requires adequate human resources which need to be built into grant budgets – that is, staff not just from the prime recipient, who will be doing the capacity-building, but also adequate staff from sub-grantees who will be benefiting from the capacity-building. Instead, there is a tendency for the delegation to push back strongly on personnel costs, which ultimately limits the ability for capacity-building to have a long-term impact.*

Capacity-building and support for local groups from INGOs is thus becoming an ever more important task. One local organisation observed: *“How does the EU ensure better support for local NGOs, as money goes through international NGOs but there is little sustainability support for local groups?” In addition, “access to EU funds remains limited to a small group of experienced organisations, favoured by the delegation, except in a very few cases». CSOs would also like EUDs “to provide more flexible (financial) support outside the current budget lines and in addition to introducing performance-based granting systems, and to improve regional coordination”.*

A majority finds, moreover, that the EU does not provide enough technical support or capacity-building to ensure compliance with its own communication and visibility requirements. On the EU’s increased visibility as a donor, one CSO noted that in some cases (e.g. Somalia) visibility is not desirable. Another partner said: *“We were given the guidelines for EU visibility, and normally we consult with the technical advisor every time we need to prepare any major visibility programme”.* What is more important is the clear visibility of civil society’s contributions to society as a whole, as governments in many countries tend to downplay its role and make its contribution invisible. CSOs ask EUDs to support them in protecting them and increasing the visibility of their work.

Others consider that civil society needs more EU support in facilitating knowledge-sharing, cross-project learning and post-project evaluation. Respondents also invite the EUDs to visit local organisations and projects in the field. They further emphasise that direct funding to national governments should ensure a relevant role for civil society in monitoring and implementation. CSOs ask the EUDs to support long-term projects and provide more seed funding. Partners suggest that one way of promoting harmonisation and effectiveness is for the EU to support sectoral proposals – i.e., those not just from NGOs or a small consortium, but from a broader group of actors. Such an approach would be more cost-effective and sustainable, would lead to greater impacts, would increase ownership and, most importantly, would promote networking and empower local actors in responding to the needs of their country. A case in point: *“We currently receive funding through the EU delegation to promote the right of children with disabilities to inclusive education, and to protect children against violence. The support received from the delegation is focused on award management rather than programmatic aspects. The support could be improved if the delegation were to facilitate broader dialogue for cross-sharing/learning and joint advocacy for organisations being funded to implement programmes focusing on similar issues, e.g. children’s rights.”*

WHAT HAS BEEN THE EUD’S EXPERIENCE OF FUNDING CSOS?

EUD MOLDOVA

In 2013 Moldova was accepted by the EU as a candidate country. The EU’s increasingly close relationship with the Republic of Moldova goes beyond cooperation, encompassing gradual economic integration and deeper political cooperation.

The EUD in Chişinău is keen to support the strengthening of local civil society in the country. Owing to the particular history of Moldova, however, and also to the widespread migration of the younger population (in particular to Romania and Russia), a major challenge is the absence of a civil society culture and weak civil society organisations with limited absorption capacity, coupled with limited capacity in the local authorities and a slow decentralisation process. The EUD publishes three calls for proposals each year, for a minimum amount of about € 350,000. Local civil society has not yet achieved access to EU grants. On average, the financial administration capacity of local organisations is roughly between € 50,000 and € 100,000.

In order to become more inclusive, the EUD has adopted the following strategies:

- Provide technical support by implementing capacity-building workshops for local CSOs on proposal development and project management;
- Assess the possibility of launching a special action for local CSO capacity-building, adjusted to suit the local situation;
- Provide tailored technical assistance, giving guidance to the more important national NGOs, e.g. in promoting alliance-building (supporting the setting up of a consortium of national and local NGOs, business associations and trade associations), providing technical guidance to strengthen civil society's capacity for monitoring budgets, access to justice, business, and trade union support, or to step up environmentally sustainable practices and good waste management. The exact details of these actions, and the modalities through which CSOs will receive funding for them, are still being discussed.

The EUD in Kenya is taking the following steps to step up the inclusion of smaller local NGOs that continue to feel excluded:

- Support the UNDP Basket Fund for developing the capacity of civil society. (This solution was suggested by the civil society representatives during the roadmap consultation.)
- Systematically use sub-granting schemes as a means of reaching grassroots organisations. Larger INGOs with good management capacity receive EU funding that is distributed into sub-grants for smaller local organisations and individuals.

THE WAY FORWARD

CSOs are the main drivers for contextualised, sustainable change and are prime catalysts for promoting democracy in developing countries, including as implementing partners. As financing becomes increasingly difficult to find, and in some countries EU funds are shrinking, CSOs' diverse contributions need to be made visible.

It is recognised by both the EU and civil society actors that reaching out more to local civil society and smaller CBOs is a priority. The use of flexible funding mechanisms should be increased, and both EUDs and INGOs have an important role to play in building capacity and disseminating information on aid modalities and calls for proposals. Strategic networking, horizontal information-sharing and cross-actor coalition-building are the way forward if we are to strengthen the role of civil society in democracy and development. EUDs could finance more projects with networks and platforms. It is important to continue making the granting process more inclusive, accessible and transparent, including by drawing on civil society insights when drafting calls for proposals and by ensuring good feedback to CSOs on rejected proposals. EUDs are increasing their use of multiple channels – including websites, Facebook and Twitter, press releases, etc. – for disseminating information on grants and tenders, and it is important for them to continue to explore and assess how mixes of information channels can have the broadest possible reach in civil society, paying particular attention to

local civil society and marginalised communities and groups. The fact that the majority of CSOs do not think the EUDs apply different interpretations of contract regulations and procedures may be a good sign, but others have had vivid experience of different interpretations. There is a strong need to build capacity and share knowledge about managing EU grants so that more CSOs can obtain and manage EU funds.

6. GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE FIELD

The following comments have been selected as they illustrate valuable lessons learnt from engagement with EU delegations – on programming, on country roadmaps, on funding and grant management, on policy dialogues and on other relevant topics.

From Cambodia: *A recent initiative to increase coordination between grantees in a particular geographical area who have a similar project focus (indigenous people's land rights) is a good example of the delegation making an effort to address a general challenge facing these projects. The challenge is presented by government inaction on issuing indigenous peoples' land titles, which is difficult to control, but by coordinating efforts with EU support this challenge will stand a better chance of being overcome than it would without such an effort.*

From Chad: *In Chad, COOPI played a role as a decentralised organisation (OCR – PADL/GRN) facilitating and supporting the communication flow between CSOs, and capacity-building. This initiative should be replicated in other countries, to integrate and facilitate CSO networking and transparency better and to structure their role around burning social issues, basic services, vulnerable groups and minorities.*

From Ghana: *Inviting other partners to witness the financial support they give CSOs is a wonderful piece of transparency and must be encouraged among other donors.*

From Kosovo: *The real contribution of the EU is the TaCSO office. They contact us by email, and inform us regularly about open calls for proposals. We think that TaCSO should also inform CSOs about planned calls, so that we can have time to explore and meet the EU representatives before the calls are published. And the information session should be organised the week immediately after a call is opened, not the last week before the deadline for applications. Long-term training would be helpful for project writers – the info sessions are good, but for small NGOs they are not enough.*

From Burkina Faso: *After ten years, the CSO capacity-building programme (PROS), financed by the European Union and the government of Burkina Faso, is coming to an end. The programme's aim was to ensure that civil society*

organisations contributed actively and more effectively to the national and regional development process. During its lifetime, PROS enabled CSOs to develop a structure, to organise themselves, to become more professional, to consult one another and to work together with the municipal, regional and national authorities.

From Mali: *We suggest to the EU that it should ease up on its access procedures and agree to support ad hoc initiatives on political aspects of development – in particular those relating to advocacy, and civil society positioning on issues of national concern, without going through calls for proposals and other pretty lengthy, complex EU procedures.*

From Nicaragua: *The EU should draw up an inventory or list of experienced national NGOs whose work has made an impact at national and international level. There are many that do not manage to benefit from the funds because of the EU's very rigid rules, or because the NGOs' capacity isn't known. One of these is FADCANIC: our organisation has not managed to obtain direct support from the EU as a major NGO benefiting from European funding.*

From Nicaragua: *There should be mechanisms for giving continuity to projects that have distinguished themselves by their results, without having to resort to bidding in open calls for proposals.*

From Colombia: *We think that in our case they should participate more directly in the sub-regions where they have some sort of impact; our local authorities are very weak and we know that if a member of the EU delegation is in the area they can inject greater synergy into the social inclusiveness policy, especially in Colombia's Pacific region.*

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As well as being the world's most important civil society donor, EUDs are strategic partners for CSOs. By the same token, CSOs are strategic partners for EUDs. They are its eyes and ears on the ground. A stronger alliance should therefore be built, particularly with local civil society, highlighting differences and strengthening action on common ground. The EUDs have much to learn from local organisations, as they are often the main drivers of change and the ones who hold governments to account. Participation in dialogue processes by local organisations is still a challenge, but improvements have been noted by actors around the world. Smaller, national CSOs still feel excluded, however. EUDs, INGOs, local partners already engaged, and national platforms, where they exist, could step up efforts to support the engagement of local-level organisations with EU delegations.

RECOMMENDATIONS for strengthening EUD/MS engagement with civil society:

In the field of policy dialogue with and political support for CSOs:

- Improve the linkages between the different policies, strategies and instruments at the disposal of EUDs that can help support civil society's role and space in developing countries, in particular the HRBA toolkit, the EU action plan on human rights and democracy, the human rights country strategies and the EU CSO country roadmaps;
- Establish and harmonise more permanent and ongoing constructive EUD-CS dialogue to ensure regular exchanges between CSOs and EU representatives on different political, human rights and developmental issues;
- Be more explicit about how EUDs are organised and how they work, and on their availability and accessibility to civil society organisations;
- Assess what does and does not work, and the different dialogue mechanisms put in place by EUDs; collect examples of good practice and share them, both at regional level and more broadly;
- Map the different mechanisms for dialogue (between CSOs and with their governments) that are being used nationally, and see how the EUD could support or participate in them;
- Participate in and promote both tripartite (EUD-CS-GOV) and bilateral (CS-GOV) dialogue;
- Where needed, act as a liaison or facilitator between civil society and government, promoting increased participation by civil society in local, district and national decision-making processes;
- Reach out more to the wider civil society community outside the capitals, extending dialogue to partners that are not recipients of EU funding (in line with the stated aims of the EU country roadmaps), conduct decentralised consultations and use special e-tools, based on a prior mapping process;
- Share documents well in advance of a consultation meeting, to give civil society the opportunity to prepare, consult and coordinate horizontally;
- To increase transparency and reflect the outcome of dialogue processes in policy and operations, improve feedback mechanisms following a consultation process (publicising results and following up by mail, on the EUD website, Twitter or Facebook, or by organising a follow-up meeting). In the case of roadmaps, set up a system for tracking achievements;
- Strengthen multistakeholder dialogue by including academia, parliamentarians, local authorities and other CSO actors, and support dialogue and cooperation between civil society and local authorities (at both policy and project level);
- Create holistic and more targeted dialogue spaces where those concerned could discuss an issue, and bring in specialists for particular subjects (governance, human rights, an enabling environment for civil society), monitoring policy initiatives, transparency, the rights of indigenous peoples and (religious) minorities, etc.;
- In certain situations the EU should not organise the consultation itself, and platforms or focal points from civil society could take the lead and report back to the EUD afterwards. In such cases, the EU and INGOs should also provide financial and/or logistical support for the organisers;

- For reaching out to people with disabilities, consultation venues should be wheelchair-accessible and CSOs working on this issue could be asked to recommend an accessible format for information intended for people with a disability who are participating in the consultation. Similarly, in countries that criminalise certain minorities (e.g. sexual minorities), the EUD could consult the NGOs working with them to reflect on ways to overcome the difficulty of including them in the consultation process;
- Improve the coordination between EUDs at regional level, to facilitate a strategic EU approach;
- Depending on the country, MSs should participate more actively, or could even play a leading role in the EU country roadmap, to increase coordination and impact. For this, coordinating groups of relevant staff in the EU and MS delegations could be set up, to monitor the roadmap process.

In the field of project support:

- Consult civil society ahead of a call for proposals, to determine priorities, strategies and aid modalities;
- Organise information sessions on calls for proposals before the call is launched, so as to give potential applicants enough time to get organised and prepare themselves;
- Continue to support capacity development, particularly in local CBOs, including trainings on PRAG and project management;
- Recognise that capacity-building in local CSOs means that sufficient human resources must be budgeted for in the project proposals. EUDs have a tendency to ask applicants to reduce the human resources budget line (Heading 1);
- Provide more qualitative feedback on why a proposal was rejected, if possible through meetings;
- Strengthen CSO coordination and cooperation on common issues through greater support for networks and platforms at national level, and develop aid modalities tailored to networking;
- Continue to apply more flexibility in calls for proposals, tailored to the needs and capacities of smaller, local organisations, and increase the number of grant mechanisms that benefit local organisations;
- Extend support beyond the traditional calls for proposal approach, which can be a hindrance to innovative project ideas;
- Develop a modality of performance-based follow-up grants as a potential means of rewarding high performance and promoting the spread of best practice in the implementation of development activities, thereby supporting more long-term programmes rather than short-term projects that are too short-lived to produce the changes needed;
- EUDs should visit CSO programmes and EU-funded projects more often;
- Invest further in and facilitate knowledge-sharing, cross-project learning and post-project evaluation for CSOs;
- Increase transparency and the availability of data on grants awarded (how many contracts were signed, with which organisations, was the entire financial package committed, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS to CSOs for strengthening their engagement with EUDs:

- Engage constructively and consistently in the development, implementation and regular review of EU country roadmaps for civil society and human rights strategies;
- Proactively share your analyses and concerns with EUDs and invite them to the events you organise in relation to the political situation, or particular policy issues that are important in your country or in EU/government relations, at national or regional level;
- Through the EU country roadmap process, share your analysis and concerns regarding an enabling environment for civil society with the EUD, and together with them see how they can represent these concerns in their political dialogue with governments;
- Strengthen horizontal networking and coordination between civil society actors at all levels, from local grassroots movements to INGOs. Dialogue with an EUD can play a role in structuring and strengthening civil society. As one respondent said, *“Every time NGOs are called to a meeting it helps us find out what each one of us is involved in and how we can consolidate our work”*;
- Strengthen civil society’s engagement in multi-actor dialogue on national development strategies and plans and sectoral policies, including through the dialogue with EUDs on programming and priority areas for cooperation;
- Strengthen civil society’s participation in the making and implementation of policy by local and national government; and, in particular, in monitoring EU budget support and government spending;
- Develop a civil society strategy for notifying members in-country of EU funding opportunities and consultations;
- INGOs could play a more prominent role in providing access to EUDs for local civil society and making sure that the voices of all civil society actors are heard;
- INGOs also have a role to play in spreading information and knowledge about the EU’s policies and programmes and strengthening local civil society’s capacity for advocacy and policy work;
- Local civil society should take a proactive approach, seeking advice and information from INGOs and national platforms when they are unable to access this information from EUDs.

Annex 1: Countries in which respondents are based

REGION	Country
Sub-Saharan Africa	Angola Benin Burkina Faso Burundi Central African Republic Congo-Brazzaville Democratic Republic of the Congo Ethiopia Ghana Ivory Coast Kenya Liberia Malawi Mali Mozambique Niger Nigeria Rwanda Senegal Sierra Leone Somalia South Africa Sudan South Sudan Swaziland Tanzania Togo Uganda Zimbabwe
North Africa	Algeria Egypt Morocco Tunisia
Middle East	Bahrain Israel Jordan Lebanon Palestine

REGION	Country
Central and South America	Bolivia Brazil Colombia Dominican Republic Ecuador El Salvador Haiti Honduras Mexico Nicaragua Peru
Asia	Bangladesh Cambodia India Indonesia Kyrgyzstan Myanmar Mongolia Nepal Pakistan Papua New Guinea Philippines Sri Lanka
Europe	Albania Bosnia & Herzegovina Belarus Georgia Kosovo Moldova Montenegro Serbia Ukraine

CONCORD

the European NGO confederation for Relief and Development

OUR MEMBERS

Key: **NP** National Platform Member, **NW** Network Member, **AS** Associate Member

NW Action Aid International	NW EU-CORD	NW Plan International
NW ADRA	NP Finland: Kehys	NP Poland: Grupa Zagranica
AS ALDA	NP France: Coordination SUD	NP Portugal: Plataforma ONGD
NW APRODEV	NP Germany: VENRO	NP Romania: FOND
NP Austria: Globale Verantwortung	NP Greece: Hellenic Platform	NW Save the Children International
NP CONCORD Belgium	NW Handicap International	NP Slovakia: MVRO
NP Bulgaria: BPID	NP Hungary: HAND	NP Slovenia: SLOGA
NW CARE International	NW IPPF European Network	NW SOS Children's Villages
NW Caritas Europa	NW Islamic Relief Worldwide	NW Solidar
NW CBM International	NP Ireland: Dochas	NP Spain: Coordinadora ONGD
NW CIDSE	NP Italy: CONCORD Italia	NP CONCORD Sweden
NP Croatia: CROSOL	NP Latvia: Lapas	NW Terres des hommes IF
NP Cyprus: CYINDEP	NP 'LU' Lithuanian development NGO umbrella	NP United Kingdom: Bond
NP Czech Republic: FoRS	NP Luxembourg: Cercle	NW World Vision International
NP Cyprus: CYINDEP	NP Malta: SKOP	AS World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
NP Denmark: Global Focus	NP Netherlands: Partos	
NP Estonia: AKU	NW Oxfam International	

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