



CONCORD
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COUNTRY

CSO

How EU delegations can strengthen
engagement with civil society

ROADMAPS

Change

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The report on country CSO roadmaps is a continuation of Concord Denmark's work plan for the Danish EU Presidency in 2012, which included a high-level EU Presidency conference 'Engaging Civil Society and Local Authorities: Civil Society Organizations, Human Rights and Development', several lobby meetings in Denmark and Brussels around the Council conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council in May 2012 and strong coordination with the Cypress EU Presidency on the Council conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council in October 2012. I am grateful for this opportunity to take part in the follow-up.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

European development actors; the European Commission (EC), EU Delegations, national Member States and civil society organizations all have important roles to play in promoting a more strategic and systematic collaboration at all levels between EU and civil society. Everyone must recognize that the EU's new CSO communication is a paradigm shift in EU development cooperation. The collaboration must take a human rights based approach that ensures non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, transparency and accountability for all actors at all levels.

European Commission [EC]

- Must **urgently clarify the role of civil society** in the process of developing country CSO roadmaps. The lack of clarity risks undermining the CSO ownership and thereby also the quality and impact of the country CSO roadmaps.
- Must increase the financial and human resources at the EU Delegations and ensure capacity building and training of EU Delegation staff. Regular evaluations of civil society involvement in specific policy processes must be undertaken in order to **facilitate a culture of learning, which continuously improves the tools and mechanisms for civil society dialogue**.
- Must **promote multi-stakeholder dialogue approaches**, which create a space for dialogue and interaction between EU Delegations and Member States, civil society and government. This approach must be used in all areas of government policies and must also include broader EU policies on e.g. trade, migration and human rights.

European Member States

- Must **take active part in the development of country CSO roadmaps from the early stages** and support the EU Delegations with analysis, contacts and simply bring credibility to the process.
- Must build partnerships with civil society organizations and **ensure an enabling funding environment, which is long-term, predictable and supporting institutional capacity building**.
- Must be more vocal about human rights violations and the shrinking policy space and **be supportive of civil society views in the political dialogue with governments**.

EU Delegations

- Must develop **clear and predictable schedules and guidelines for consultations**, which ensure that civil society gets the necessary documentation, sufficient time for preparations and proper feedback and follow-up. The institutional mechanisms for dialogue must be described in the country CSO roadmaps.
- Must share guidelines and toolboxes for country CSO roadmaps in order to **build confidence, trust and ownership** among local and national civil society actors. Ideally, EU Delegations should initiate civil society-led assessments of the CSO context.
- Must **include Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and human rights obligations in its civil society dialogue** and ensure that civil society views are included in annual delegation reports, evidence-based PCD reports and national human rights reports.

Civil society organizations

- Must **demonstrate a strong commitment to the country CSO roadmaps** and engage in a constructive dialogue with the EU Delegations, where CSOs themselves promote broad participation from local CSOs and community-based organizations by providing technical expertise and capacity building.
- Must **contribute to the analysis of an enabling environment for civil society** by monitoring key elements such as fundamental human rights e.g. freedom of opinion and expression, right to information and freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- Must **monitor and evaluate national processes of developing country CSO roadmaps** in order to hold EU Delegations accountable to its obligations, and facilitate regional learning among CSOs as well as the EU and Member States.

DEFINITIONS

COUNTRY CSO ROADMAPS are the basis for a new and more structured dialogue and strategic cooperation between EU Delegations and civil society. Country CSO roadmaps must provide a sound understanding of a diverse local civil society, including their roles, capacities and constraints, legitimacy, interests and dynamics. Country CSO roadmaps are in principle 'EU Country CSO strategies' shared by the EU and its Member States and will be updated annually. It is the ambition to finalize country CSO roadmaps at all EU Delegations by the 1st of January 2014 (EC 2012b).

POLICY DIALOGUE is an 'open and inclusive dialogue on development policies' (Accra Agenda for Action 2008). But a genuine policy dialogue needs to be structured, institutionalized and take place at all levels of government. Holding governments accountable is vital in order to translate the principle of "democratic ownership" into practice.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs) include a wide range of formal and informal organizations created voluntarily by citizens, which can vary in structure, governance and scope. Their aim is to promote an issue or an interest, either general or specific. In a broad sense, CSOs include all non-market and non-state organizations and structures in which people organize them to pursue shared objectives and ideals (EC 2012b).

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT recognizes civil society organizations as legitimate actors in the development process. They should be enabled to express voice, participate in political, social and economic dialogue processes, demand accountability and be involved in monitoring public action (EC 2011).

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT is a functioning democratic legal and judicial system that ensures - in law and in practice - the freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the possibility to secure funding and to participate in public affairs with the aim of effectively and freely contributing to the public sphere (EC 2012).

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of Countries
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Cooperate Social Responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEVCO	Directorate General for Development and Co-operation EuropeAid
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
GBS	General Budget Support
INGOs	International Non Governmental Organizations
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NSA	Non-state actors
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SPSP	Sector Policy Support Programmes
SWAP	Sector Wide Approaches

FOREWORD

In October 2012 the EU Council adopted “The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations”, also known as the CSO communication. It was the culmination of a long dialogue and consultation process, called ‘Structured Dialogue’, organized by the EU Commission, which involved more than 700 stakeholders and representatives from civil society, partner countries, Member States, the European Parliament and the European External Action Service (EEAS), including EU Delegations.

The CSO communication has been positively welcomed and acknowledged by European civil society organizations. CONCORD Europe called it ‘the most constructive official EU document on CSOs in many years’ (CONCORD Europe 2012). The ambitious goals and objectives are shared and European civil society recognizes the significant improvement in dialogue at Brussels level. But in partner countries the implementation of the CSO communication has not yet begun. Most southern civil society organizations are not even aware of EU’s renewed commitment and EU Delegations are still waiting for instructions and guidelines.

This report analyses the EU decision to promote a more enhanced and strategic engagement with civil society organizations at EU Delegation level. It includes illustrative case studies from Ghana and Uganda in order to identify the challenges and opportunities arising from the EU decision. While Ghana is relatively democratic, but has weak and uncoordinated civil society structures, Ugandan civil society is experiencing a narrowing of the political space, but the CSOs are comparably better organized. Still, the experiences with EU policy dialogue are comparable and call for an urgent rethinking of current practices and institutional setups at EU Delegations.

It is the objective of this report to establish a solid foundation for Concord Denmark’s member organizations and European partners to support their southern partners in the dialogue with EU Delegations on country CSO roadmaps. In addition, the report should build a solid and evidence based contribution to a strong civil society perspective in Denmark’s future strategy on EU’s Development Policy and incorporation of the EU dimension in Denmark’s forthcoming policy on civil society in development cooperation.

DG DEVCO is responsible for the implementation of the CSO communication and has generally been open to discuss and meet with Concord representatives. But disappointingly, this has not been the case in this study. Requests for interviews and background information on country CSO roadmaps have continuously been submitted over a period of four months, but DG DEVCO has not shared any materials. The lack of transparency seems to be one of EU’s biggest challenges in order to enhance its cooperation with civil society. A recent study from OECD strongly recommends that donors promote a transparent and inclusive process on CSO strategies in order to create trust and ownership among CSO stakeholders (OECD 2011b).

Civil society organizations must naturally acknowledge that it takes time to translate new policies into practice. But the role of civil society in EU development cooperation and the principle of participatory development has been a formal mandate of EU Delegations since 2000. There are consequently no good excuses for lack of performance in the past – nor for delays in implementing a genuine participatory process in the future. It is time for action.

1

INTRODUCTION

Civil society in a new era

Over just a few decades, civil society organizations (CSOs) have grown massively in size and numbers and are playing an increasingly prominent role in international development assistance due to their ability to serve the needs of the poorest and most marginalized communities through grassroots and participatory approaches. Civil society organizations, movements, alliances and networks have also risen to become a global political power. The global financial crisis and the spontaneous uprisings and transformations during the Arab Spring have fundamentally changed the public perception of governments and institutions, which needs to be more transparent, accountable and inclusive.

A strong and vibrant civil society is generally regarded as important in its own right and even a public good, which promotes better democratic practices and policy outcomes. Civil society organizations have therefore gained official recognition as stakeholders, which need to be consulted and involved at national, regional and international levels. The aid-effectiveness agenda in the OECD and the post-2015 process in the UN reaffirm the consensus among governments and international agencies.

But at the same time the political space for civil society is shrinking, in particular in Africa. Two-thirds of African governments have introduced legislation that reduces the space for civil society organizations, especially affecting civil society organizations that are politically active or receive international support. National civil society is increasingly facing difficulties in accessing funding from international donors, being legally registered as national organizations or engaging in rights-based activities (CIVICUS 2013).

CSO funding trends

Global funding for civil society has increased substantially in the last decade and reached 16.2 percent of total Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2010. According to OECD, the total CSO funding for all DAC donors increased by 25 percent between 2007 and 2009 (OECD 2011b). The increase has mainly been composed of aid channeled through CSOs, while the volume of core aid has remained relatively stable (Keijzer 2011). In many countries the distribution of government funding for CSOs has been 'historically grown'. Bilateral donors have supported CSOs that had long standing relationships and based on a 'privileged' position with more or less automatic or guaranteed funding (Keijzer 2011).

Still, many donors do not see civil society actors as strategic intermediaries in reaching their own development objectives (INTRAC 2010), and CSO funding therefore tend to follow changing donor policy preferences and other opportunities (Keijzer 2011). Donors still prefer to support the urban-based CSOs and networks, which can meet the financial requirements. It also seems that there is a growing tendency to favor big projects and funding consortiums of CSOs at the expense of small-scale actions at grassroots level (Keijzer 2011). In the case of EU, the calls for proposals clearly tend to favor the best-resourced, mainly urban-based, organizations over under-resourced and mainly rural-based organizations (ECA 2009).

The decentralization of donor funds has created a push for stronger accountability and representation from the national CSOs towards local partners and constituencies. INGOs must prove their added value and comparative advantage and many donors, especially the Nordic-plus

group, are engaged in southern based funding mechanisms, which enable southern CSOs to access funds directly. But the southern-based funding mechanisms are criticized for favoring the fewer, larger and urban-based CSOs and thus undermining the donors' own objectives of supporting a sector-wide and diverse civil society. The emerging consensus to support southern civil society directly from local embassies and delegations could potentially lead to more isolated and stand-alone activities since 'embassy funds' are often small scale and targeted at a wide range of local and often very small CSOs (INTRAC 2010).

Aid Effectiveness

The Aid Effectiveness Agenda has led to a renewed emphasis on 'ownership' and state-led development strategies. This marks a radical shift from traditional project approaches to sector approaches, implemented through new aid modalities such as General Budget Support (GBS), Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs) or Sector Policy Support Programmes (SPSPs).

The Aid Effectiveness Agenda recognizes the importance of broad ownership of national development policies, transparency and accountability to citizens. Article 20 of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) and article 22 of the Busan Declaration explicitly refer to civil society organizations (CSOs) as independent development actors in their own right (OECD 2008 and OECD 2011).

But aid effectiveness initiatives have largely been donor-driven, state-centric and technocratic, most notably in the case of general budget support. EU cooperation on budget support often fails to include CSO consultation and the EU communication on budget support describes a limited role for civil society in monitoring and holding governments accountable (CONCORD Europe 2012). The aid effectiveness agenda may potentially lead to aid concentration as donors align priorities, which is a threat to a diverse and vibrant civil society in the south (INTRAC 2011 and EC 2011).

Donors move toward joint funding to align with the Paris Agenda principles of harmonization and alignment but also due to cost-saving measures and reduced transaction and administration costs. As a result, the burden of coordination is pushed onto civil society, as CSOs are expected to work in consortia with a lead agency taking the contractual responsibility (Keijzer 2011). Donors acknowledge that the use of southern based funding mechanisms and different types of intermediaries impact negatively on the strength and diversity of southern civil society and agree that the southern based funding mechanisms need to be better understood (INTRAC 2010). But a recent evaluation shows that the EC generally has a limited reflection on the impact of the new aid architecture on civil society (EC 2011).

PHOTO JONAS LEEGAARD ANDERSEN



2

BACKGROUND

EU's legal commitments

The **Cotonou Agreement** signed in 2000, was the first major EU policy document which legally committed the EC to civil society participation as a fundamental principle of development cooperation. This changed civil society from mere beneficiaries of EC funding to actors in development processes and was seen as a major step forward in EC approaches towards civil society (Keijzer 2011, EC 2008).

The EC communication on the **Participation of Non-State Actors in EC Development Cooperation** from 2002, covered all actors other than government, i.e. including local government, private sector, trade unions and economic partners (both profit or non-profit). This communication was an attempt to clarify the principle of participatory development agreed in the Cotonou Agreement. The communication reaffirms that working with non-state actors (NSAs) is a legal obligation for both EU and its developing partners (Keijzer 2011).

'... NSAs ought to be permanently and systematically involved across the definition of country strategies and the programming process' (EC 2002).

The **European Consensus on Development** was agreed on in 2005 by the EU Heads of States, the European Parliament and the EC and recognizes the vital role of civil society in particular as promoters of democracy, social justice and human rights. It also commits the EU to enhance its support for building capacity of non-state actors in order to strengthen their voice in the development process and to advance political, social and economic dialogue (EC 2005a).

The **Lisbon Treaty** was signed by the Heads of States and Governments and entered into force on 1st of December 2009. The Lisbon Treaty reinforces EU's long-term objective to eradicate poverty and actively promote an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society. It requests the EC to undertake broad consultations with relevant stakeholders in order to ensure that EU actions are coherent and transparent (EC 2009).

The **Agenda for Change** was adopted during the Danish EU Presidency in 2012, and calls for a human rights-based approach, promoting the right to universal and

non-discriminatory access to basic services, participation in democratic political processes, transparency and accountability, justice and the rule of law, and with a focus on poor and vulnerable groups. And it acknowledges that an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is an asset itself (EC 2012d).

The **EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy**, adopted in 2012, sets out principles, objectives and priorities for Europe's shared human rights work and includes a strong commitment to develop a genuine partnership with civil society. In order to respond to the particular needs of individual countries, EU-delegations will develop national human rights strategies for almost 160 countries worldwide. National human rights strategies will establish country-specific priorities and objectives in order to achieve stronger impacts on the ground (EC 2012a).

The EC's communication **'The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations'**, adopted by the Council on 15 October 2012, is EU's new CSO strategy which promotes a more strategic and systematic approach to EU's engagement with civil society. It covers EU's engagement with local CSOs in developing, neighborhood and enlargement countries (EC 2012b).

'THE ROOTS OF DEMOCRACY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT':

'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. The roadmaps should be developed taking into account the views of civil society, be regularly updated and where appropriate, made publicly available and shared with national authorities' (EC 2012b).

New institutions and new challenges

The Lisbon Treaty has fundamentally changed the organization of Europe's foreign policy, which has consequences for EU's development assistance and the mandates and responsibilities of the European External Action Service, DG DEVCO, EU Delegations and EU Member States.

The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was one of the most significant changes of the Lisbon Treaty aimed at having a more unified and coherent position on international affairs. EEAS is responsible for the programming, planning, and implementation of development assistance and is functionally autonomous from other EU bodies - but has a legal responsibility to ensure consistency with other EU policies (ECDPM 2012b). The first evaluation on the functioning of the EEAS by the High Representative in December 2011 had a narrow focus on the immediate 'Lisbon tasks' and therefore no mentioning of civil society (EEAS 2011).

DG DEVCO was created in 2011 (a merger between DG DEV and DG EuropeAid) and is responsible for the management and implementation of EU development assistance. DG DEVCO is likely to experience staff reductions and budget cuts, as a consequence of the new Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 (ECDPM 2011, APRODEV 2013). DG DEVCO and EEAS are supposed to collaborate and develop joint programming, but EU Member States have already raised concern about the lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities between DG DEVCO and EEAS. DG DEVCO is currently present in approximately 150 worldwide EU Delegations.

The Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the role of EU Delegations, which represent EU in third countries on e.g. diplomatic issues, political relations, security, and trade and development assistance. EU Delegations consist of staff from EEAS, DEVCO, Trade and other directorates, and while EEAS has the overall responsibility for the delegations, including programming, DEVCO has the administrative responsibility, including the implementation of development assistance. But EU Delegations are often understaffed to fulfill the role expected of them under the Lisbon Treaty (ECDPM 2011).

Lack of strategic civil society involvement

Government and donor interest in civil society dialogue and political advocacy has been growing substantially in the last decade, and most donors have increased their support for civil society to engage actively in policy dis-

cussions, both at country level and globally. Most bilateral and multilateral donors recognize that consultations with civil society bring added value to their policy making and they generally believe that their dialogue with civil society is satisfactory (OECD 2011).

But findings from the OECD peer reviews show that the donor satisfaction is often not shared by civil society organizations (OECD 2012a). The inclusion of civil society 'voice' is mostly ad-hoc or tokenistic (INTRAC 2010), and it appears as civil society consultations are tick-the-box exercises which undermines the donor credibility (OECD 2011a).

In 2009 the European Court of Auditors found that the EU Delegations did not systematically involve Non Stake Actors (NSAs). Instead the EU Delegations typically invited for one-shot consultations on their overall strategy development, whereas CSO involvement in implementation, monitoring and evaluation was non-existing. The European Court of Auditors therefore concluded that the EC involvement of NSAs falls short of the sustained and structured dialogue envisaged by the EU legislation and the EC's own guidelines (ECA 2009).

An EC evaluation from 2008 also found major gaps between the EC commitments towards civil society and the actual implementation. The evaluation concluded that there was limited strategic reflection and dialogue with the various stakeholders on how best to use the CSO channel in a specific country or sector context (EC 2008).

The official assessment of lack of performance of the EC is generally shared by civil society. CONCORD Europe recently described the EC staff in HQs and EU Delegations as having an 'instrumental or limited vision of civil society that is not conducive to building confidence and structured relationships' (CONCORD Europe 2012).

CONCORD Europe also analyzed the on-going consultation on the next Multi-annual Indicative Programme (2014-2020) and concluded that exercises involved little more than presentations from the delegations to civil society of their plans and left civil society participants with a feeling that they were part of a tick-the-box process (CONCORD Europe 2013). The lack of performance is generally explained by an absence of clear mechanisms for managing consultations, late invitations, delays in distributing documents, consultations at a late stage in the programming process, limited NSA participation, and insufficient feedback to NSAs on the results of the consultations (ECA 2009).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ECA (2009) AND EC (2008):

- Ensure political and managerial leadership (particularly in 'difficult partnerships').
- Adopt a country specific overall strategic approach to working with NSAs.
- Improve consultation mechanisms.
- Mainstream participation across sectors and areas.
- Invest in knowledge on civil society processes; and identify more suitable procedures to engage strategically with NSAs.

The complexity of EU funding

The OECD Peer Review of the EC (2012) found that the complexity of EU funding procedures is a serious obstacle, which must be addressed if EU wants to fulfill its goal of a stronger civil society (OECD 2012). In particular the 'Calls for Proposals' regime is an inherent contradiction as it supports and favors large international CSOs with the 'right' set-up and institutional capacity rather than small CSOs and NSAs, which are often times most in need (ECA 2009).

But even worse, EU funding is viewed as a serious hindrance due to its lack of core funding, which is key for advocacy CSOs who need legitimacy and independence

to engage in domestic political processes. Donors generally allocate earmarked funding rather than core support (OECD 2012). But the strengthening of civil society in democratic governance and the defense of human rights requires a flexible set of funding modalities, including small-scale grants and dedicated human resources at the headquarters and delegation levels in dialogue with their partners in civil society (CONCORD Europe 2013).

EU requirements are exceptionally cumbersome. In 2008, only 404 applications under the thematic budget line covering non-state actors were selected out of 5339 concept notes received, which is a success rate of only 7 percent (OECD 2012). The EU funding procedures and administrative rules have evolved into an accountant and administration based logic, to the detriment of an approach oriented towards results. This leads CSOs to dedicate a lot of time and resources to the management of EU funding and to present projects without innovative elements (CONCORD Europe 2012).

DG DEVCO is acknowledging the need for more flexibility and one of the outcomes of the Structured Dialogue was 12 technical fiches on funding modalities, but it is doubtful if the EC can become less control-orientated and rigid in order to accommodate the needs from a fluid and constantly evolving civil society (EC 2008).



PHOTO YILMAZ POLAT

3

A NEW EU PARADIGM

A number of new EU policies and strategies have created a new paradigm in Europe in terms of EU's commitment to promote and engage strategically with civil society.

An Agenda for Change

The EC communication on Agenda for Change (2011) has a rather limited and instrumental understanding of civil society mainly as 'watchdogs', when governments fail on human rights and democracy. But the civil society perspective was even worse in the EC Green Paper on EU development policy (2010) and it was mainly due to the instrumental role of civil society during the Arab Spring that the EC communication evolved from a narrow strategy on economic growth to a broad development strategy which included a focus on civil society (EC 2011).

During the Danish EU Presidency in the first half of 2012, the role of civil society was strengthened remarkably in the negotiations on EU Council conclusions on Agenda for Change (May 2012), which calls for a human rights-based approach, promoting the right to universal and non-discriminatory access to basic services, participation in democratic political processes, transparency and accountability, justice and the rule of law, and with a focus on poor and vulnerable groups. And it acknowledges that an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is an asset itself. EU and the Member States will also support and promote an enabling environment for an independent, pluralistic and active civil society (EC 2012d). EU Council conclusions on Agenda for Change therefore include stronger statements and commitments on civil society than in any previous EU documents.

EU's engagement with civil society in external relations

'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations' and the Council Conclusions, adopted on the 15th October 2012, was a result of a 18 month dialogue and consultation process, called 'Structured Dialogue'.

The CSO communication promotes a more enhanced, strategic and systematic approach to EU's engagement with civil society. It adopts a human rights-based ap-

proach to development and recognizes civil society as an asset for any democratic system and its role in building just, equitable and inclusive societies. EU encourages and supports partner countries in promoting a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs, in the context of their domestic policies' dialogue as well as budget processes (EC 2012d).

According to the CSO communication, local civil society is at the heart of EUs future development assistance and EU will promote civil society participation in domestic policies, although many governments in partner countries is not necessarily sharing EU's commitment to 'transparent and accountable governance'.

EU'S THREE PRIORITIES FOR SUPPORT (EC 2012B):

- 1: Promoting a conducive and enabling environment for CSOs**
 - Strong focus on the country level and empowerment of local actors
 - CSOs in regional and global settings
- 2: Promoting meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in:**
 - Domestic policy making
 - EU programming cycle
 - Policy processes and debates
- 3: Increasing the capacity of local CSOs to perform their roles more effectively**

Interestingly, the CSO communication, which affects the EU's external actions as a whole, was only issued by the EC. This raises some concern that the European External Action Service (EEAS) is not fully committed to the strategic inclusion of civil society and it is notable that the EU High Representative has not yet taken a huge interest in EU's development policies and the role of civil society. In the 2012 Peer Review of EU development assistance, the OECD also recommends that EEAS build its knowledge on CSOs and integrates this into its own agenda (OECD 2012).

The first reporting on progress and implementation of the CSO communication is set for 2016.

4

CSO ROADMAPS

The CSO communication has a strong emphasis on civil society at country level. The contribution of local CSOs as partners in dialogue and oversight is 'at the heart of the EU engagement'. EU Delegations are therefore requested to develop country 'CSO Roadmaps' - a new way of working for EU Delegations, allowing for a more structured dialogue and a strategic cooperation with civil society (EC 2012d).

The CSO communication affirms that a sound understanding of local CSOs is a first step for a meaningful engagement with CSOs and promotes CSO mapping as a tool for gaining better understanding of a diverse local civil society, including their roles, capacity and constraints, legitimacy, interests and dynamics. It may also include an analysis of their relationship with the state and other stakeholders and their enabling environment (EC 2012b).

Many donors mention the importance of conducting CSO mapping exercises in order to make more informed partner choices (INTRAC 2010). But CSO mapping is seldom done as an exercise in itself and is often linked to specific sectors or programmes. CSO mapping exercises may also have a limited scope and will not necessarily grasp the local dynamics between CSOs or between local and northern CSOs. It takes ongoing dialogue to understand a fluid and rapid changing civil society sector.

In the 2009 evaluation of the 9th EDF it was highlighted that the EU needed to view the civil society sector 'from a systems perspective' rather than the classical project approach (INTRAC 2010). A civil society analysis must therefore consider the entire landscape and enabling environment, including the relationship between different actors, rather than mapping individual CSOs independently.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COUNTRY CSO ROADMAPS [DG DEVCO 2012]:

- Sound understanding of the CSO arena
- Dialogue schemes are country-, sector- and actor-specific
- Dialogue happens at all levels
- Dialogue must be timely, predictable, transparent
- Importance of multi-stakeholder dialogue

EU Delegations must enhance their dialogue beyond the usual actors or 'top of the pyramid civil society' (ECDPM 2012c), e.g. faith-based organizations, unions, and the less formalized groups such as social movements. A sound understanding of the civil society landscape must derive from a broad dialogue with various categories of CSOs, which include both local and international CSOs.

New operational guidelines on "how to engage more strategically with civil society" are currently being developed to support the EU Delegations. The plan is to finalize templates and guidelines as soon as possible and have country CSO roadmaps ready at all EU Delegations **by the 1st of January 2014**. Roadmaps are intended to be updated annually in parallel with the annual programming process. It is still being discussed if and how country CSO roadmaps can be made publicly available. DG DEVCO argues that the country CSO roadmaps are likely to have analysis of sensitive issues and must be handled with care.

'The roadmaps should be developed taking into account the views of civil society, be regularly updated and where appropriate, made publicly available and shared with national authorities'(EC 2012b).

The process has already been seriously delayed, due to the delay in the programming process and concerns from EU Delegations that the country CSO roadmaps are too comprehensive and resource demanding. DG DEVCO therefore recently changed the language on country CSO roadmaps and now talks about a lean exercise which focuses on mainstreaming and synergies and capitalization of existing programming cycles. It might be a pragmatic and practical solution, but it will not deliver the more comprehensive paradigm shift envisaged in 'The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations'.

There still seems to be a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities between DG DEVCO and EEAS on the implementation of country CSO roadmaps. While the development of country CSO roadmaps is being supported and guided by DG DEVCO staff in Brussels, the overall responsibility at EU Delegations lies with the staff from the EEAS. This raises concerns, since the EEAS has not yet shown any interest in a more strategic inclusion of civil society in its policymaking. Moreover, EU member state staff at embassies is generally not aware of the EU process for country CSO roadmaps and due to the limited timeframe, this raises serious concern about national member state involvement.

A joint EU approach to civil society

Most donors have a more comprehensive understanding of civil society than previously and see the development of strong civil societies in the south as an end in itself. But the new EU consensus on increased support to southern civil society demands a more in-depth analysis and understanding of the civil society landscape.

A more structured and strategic EU cooperation with civil society will potentially improve the impact of EU actions and ensure consistency and synergy. Country CSO roadmaps are in principle **'EU Country CSO strategies'** shared by the EU and its Member States. Country CSO roadmaps are therefore likely to replace individual donor analysis and strategies and could potentially lead to an in-country division of labour and even joint CSO programming and joint CSO funding mechanisms.

'Civil society participation in public policy processes and in policy dialogues leads to inclusive and effective policies'(EC 2012b)

From a donor perspective a joint CSO analysis and strategy would bring significant efficiency gains, reducing transaction costs and administration, and increase coordination, coherence and capacity. EU Country CSO strategies are therefore likely to get strong political support from EU Member States at country level. But staff at national embassies is not yet updated on neither the CSO communication nor the envisaged process on country CSO roadmaps.

While CSO roadmaps can potentially improve the coordination, synergy and impact of EU support, they need CSO ownership in order to work. Lessons from reviews of CSO strategies from OECD members are clear; the design of CSO strategies must take place in close consultation with CSOs and donors must foster understanding and ownership, identify common goals and opportunities for partnerships, and ensure matching expectations. In addition, civil society strategies must be based on analysis of the civil society sector and an understanding of how civil society organizations contribute to development (OECD 2012).

The concept of national CSO studies already featured in the guidelines to the EC communication on the 'Participation of Non-State Actors in EC Development Cooperation' (2002), which recommended that the EC delegations undertook a detailed situation assessment or mapping study to assess the capacity, constraints and potential of local and national NSAs, as well the work of other donors (EC 2004).

It naturally takes time to translate new policies into practice. But the role of civil society in EU development cooperation and the principle of participatory development has been a formal mandate of EU Delegations since 2000, and the previous CSO communication also encouraged the EU Delegations to undertake CSO mappings, which in the accompanying guidelines appear comprehensive and detailed, similar to the country CSO roadmaps.

In a period of 10 years the EU Delegations have been engaged in a total of 64 CSO mappings, of which 70 percent took place in ACP countries (EuropeAid 2012). This raises a serious concern about resources, since Europe now has more than 160 EU Delegations which must develop country CSO roadmaps before the end of 2013 and be updated on an annual basis. The EC must therefore substantially increase the financial and human resources at the EU Delegations and ensure capacity building and training of EU Delegation staff. The EC must also urgently clarify the role of civil society in the process of developing country CSO roadmaps. The lack of clarity risks undermining the CSO ownership and thereby also the quality and impact of the country CSO roadmaps.



5

EU DELEGATIONS

The European Commission is among the few donors, which legally requires delegations to involve civil society in developing and monitoring programmes, and EC has for years requested delegations to consult civil society on the development of national strategies and has provided guidelines and instructions. But the guidelines give the Heads of Delegations maximum flexibility in the design of such a dialogue (EC 2004).

Until this date, the EU Delegations have mainly consulted civil society in the development of national strategies, policy dialogue on sector-interventions, implementation of programmes and monitoring and evaluation. The Court of Auditors concludes that the EC has not yet invested the sufficient time and resources to really engage EU Delegation staff with NSAs at all levels (ECA 2009). The DAC Peer Review from 2012 also notes that the EU Delegations dialogue with CSOs has increased, but is not yet sufficiently structured, systematic or strategic (OECD 2012).

'Colleagues in Delegations are overburdened by paperwork; they are so concerned about doing things right (procedures), that they have little time to think about whether they are doing the right thing' (from EC online consultation 2012).

A blog post from ECDPM called the new CSO communication for 'Innovative on paper, conservative on the ground' (ECDPM 2012c), and this might be EU's biggest challenge. Without a transformation of the mindset of civil servants at the EU Delegations, new comprehensive and resource demanding approaches are likely to be met with skepticism and reluctance. In addition, the lack of clear guidance could even generate institutional divergence and potentially weaken civil society support to the process. It is thus of fundamental importance to create transparent and structured dialogue in relation to country CSO roadmaps to avoid 'consultation fatigue' and to build trust and confidence in EU Delegations among CSOs.

EU AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN GHANA

With economic growth rates consistently above 6 percent, and six democratic elections, including two peaceful transitions of power since 1992, Ghana is being promoted as an African success story. Ghana scores high on participation in the 2012 Mo Ibrahim Index and is ranked as the seventh most democratic country in Africa.

The rule of law and the principles of participation, transparency and accountability are generally recognized and the space for participation and policy influence has increased substantially in recent years. Civil society is increasingly invited to contribute in policy and legislation processes and government and donors send invitation letters and sometimes even make follow-up phone calls for civil society to attend meetings (Alliance 2015 2011).

CSOs are free to publish research reports and comment or criticize government policy and interventions without fear of being harassed. And the Ghanaian government must be commended for its commitment to improve transparency and accountability, e.g. the Freedom of Information Bill and the signing up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (STAR Ghana 2013).

Still, government accountability and responsiveness is generally directed towards the donors rather than the public. Ghana's public service is exceptionally weak and suffers from poor capacity, lack of resources and inefficiency. The accountability at district and municipality levels is also very weak (STAR Ghana 2013).

A weak and uncoordinated civil society

There are about 3,600 organizations registered with the Department of Social Welfare and the majority of organizations is found in the rural areas, and have limited financial resources, few staff and considerable capacity building needs. Still, visibility of urban-based CSOs' is high and they generate the bulk of civil society activity that is visible to the public (STAR 2013).

Despite the enabling environment for participation, civil society organizations are generally not actively involved in policy and decision-making processes. Even when civil society participation is institutionalized, e.g. in the policy formulation, planning and monitoring of Ghana's decentralized planning system, civil society has not fully utilized the space for participation (IMF 2012 and STAR Ghana 2013).

A major challenge for Ghanaian civil society is the fragmented nature of CSOs and the lack of overall coordination. INGOs have tried to establish national umbrella networks in the past, but not very successfully. In addition, the linkages between the urban-based policy networks and the grassroots organizations are very weak and governments and donors often question the legitimacy of organizations talking on behalf of the poor and excluded. It is evident that civil society is missing key policy opportunities due to the lack of a structured and strategic collaboration.

EU Delegations

CSOs are being invited for meetings with the EU Delegation in Accra, but often do not have time or simply do not prioritize the meetings. Many CSO representatives characterized the EU dialogue as ad-hoc and the window for influencing was almost non-existing. The dialogue is often demand driven, e.g. when high-level EU representatives are visiting Accra. Civil society typically does not receive background information before meetings and seldom receives feedback or follow-up.

Many CSOs stress that the EU Delegation is not their first choice of donor and expressed serious reservations against the EU Delegation taking a lead role in the EU civil society dialogue. They described the EU Delegation as being focussed on the government, whereas civil society is mostly under their radar. The EU Delegation in Accra has not undertaken any recent analysis or mappings of Ghanaian civil society and some CSO representatives warned

against a speedy process on the country CSO roadmaps, arguing that ownership takes time and cannot be rushed.

Multi-donor financing

Funding remains a key challenge and civil society organizations are heavily dependent on international donors. Donors are increasingly pooling their support in basket funding arrangements for civil society, e.g. the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC), the Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme (G-RAP) and the Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana). Many civil society organizations felt that they are implementing donor priorities instead of their own and they have limited influence on the priorities. Civil society has tried to introduce core-funding in STAR Ghana but donors disapproved.

LIMITED CSO OWNERSHIP IN STAR-GHANA (STAR 2013):

STAR Ghana is a multi-donor pooled funding mechanism funded by EU, DANIDA, DFID and USAID to increase the influence of civil society. It has rightfully been criticized for being donor-driven, since the priorities and work plans for STAR Ghana were developed exclusively by the donors without prior consultation. Consequently, civil society views STAR Ghana as a funding facility rather than a political platform. The EU delegation acknowledges the lack of civil society involvement in the start-up and agrees that it has affected the CSO ownership. A mid-term review of STAR Ghana in mid-2013 intends to address the issue of local ownership.

Conclusion and recommendations;

The space for Ghanaian civil society to participate in national policy processes has expanded in recent years. But due to weak civil society structures and the lack of national umbrella networks (e.g. a national NGO-forum), Ghanaian CSOs are generally not actively engaged in policy processes and the limited policy capacity among local civil society organizations impacts on CSOs' participation.

Although Ghanaian civil society is being invited for meetings with the EU Delegation in Accra, most CSOs do not prioritize the meetings and many CSOs stress that the EU Delegation is not their first choice of dialogue partner. The EU dialogue is described as demand driven and civil society typically do not receive background information before meetings and seldom receives feedback or follow-up. Some civil society organizations directly warned against the EU Delegation taking the lead and raised concerns about a rushed process on the country CSO roadmaps.

EU Member States must actively contribute to the development of country CSO roadmaps and as a pilot country for EU joint programming, the harmonization and alignment among EU donors is already fairly advanced. The chances for a successful EU Ghana CSO strategy are therefore relatively high. But the EU Delegation and EU Member States must seriously consider establishing a formal EU-civil society dialogue forum, to ensure a strong civil society participation in the development of country CSO roadmaps.

European civil society organizations must provide technical expertise and capacity building to partner organizations in order to strengthen their policy dialogue on country CSO roadmaps, including the impact of other EU policies on e.g. trade, migration and human rights.

EU AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN UGANDA

Uganda scores medium on participation in the 2012 Mo Ibrahim Index and is ranked number 19 among African democratic countries, however Freedom House's annual report on political rights and civil liberties only ranked Uganda as 'partly free'. Freedom House expresses its concern about the governments increasing harassment of the opposition and the systematic campaign to obstruct and shut down civil society groups that engage the government on sensitive issues such as gay rights, corruption, term limits, and land rights (Freedom House 2013).

Donors are increasingly harmonizing their CSO funding in different basket mechanisms, e.g. the Democratic Government Fund (DGF), Independent Development Fund and the Civil Society Fund (UM 2012). This limits the exposure of individual donors and can potentially create a stronger platform for CSO agendas.

Civil society under pressure

Uganda is experiencing a narrowing of political space, both legally and in practice. There have been several examples of political intimidations of national civil society organizations that oppose the government position on controversial issues such as corruption, gay rights or oil. Many civil society representatives described the policy environment as undermining the rule of law and the freedom to exercise civil and political rights in important areas and used expressions such as 'disenabling' and 'disempowering'.

Government involvement of civil society in policy making is generally weak. Civil society and other non-state actors are represented in thematic donor coordination committees, but their level of influence is fairly limited (EC 2009a). Government sees civil society as part of the opposition and a close partnership with international organizations is perceived by government as foreign agents promoting non-Ugandan interests. The Uganda NGO Act is by many CSOs seen as directly undermining the right to full and meaningful civil society participation.

The collaboration between local and international civil society is a challenge and while local organizations meet

in the Uganda NGO-forum, the international organizations have created their own forum.

Rigid and inflexible civil society funding

It is estimated that 95 percent of civil society funding comes from international donor agencies and with the harmonization and rationalization of funding facilities, civil society organizations are likely to become even more dependent on donor priorities (UM 2012).

Donor funding in Uganda is commonly described as overly programme specific or linked to particular policy agendas rather than core funding for organizations or for CSO capacity building (UM 2012). The lack of strategic funding for civil society was highlighted in a 2009 evaluation of EC aid to Uganda which concluded that 'the interventions and sub-projects of the EC are overly spread out over too many recipients and will not, in all likelihood, have much of a long-term effect'. The evaluation also noted that the EU Delegation has overly-limited formal working relationships with civil society (EC 2009a).

CSO representatives describe the EU Delegation as very technocratic and some CSO representatives even found it difficult to become a close partner with the EU, as long as the financing instruments are so rigid and inflexible. INGOs explained that their local partners were not capable of administering EU financing and pointed out that they often considered other donors before applying for EU funding due to administrative burdens.

Opposing views on civil society dialogue

Most CSOs argue that they are hardly ever invited for meetings with the EU Delegation in Kampala and the dialogue are mainly demand driven, e.g. when high-level EU representatives are visiting Kampala. Most CSO representatives characterized the EU dialogue as ad-hoc and one-way. Even CSOs with long-term financing relationships with EU described the EU dialogue as unstructured and not institutionalized. Civil society is typically asked to present their views at EU meetings, but never receives

feedback and there is no preparation or follow-up. When civil society participates in meetings with the EU and members states, they feel that the EU Delegation is not always acting constructively and some feel that the EU Delegation dominates the discussion. Generally, CSOs were of the clear opinion that the EU Delegation's dialogue with CSOs had to be taken to a new level.

This is in stark contrast to statements from the EU Delegation in Kampala. The EU Delegation has an open-door policy and all meetings with CSOs are welcomed. EU Delegation representatives characterized their dialogue with civil society as both structured and institutionalized, in particular in the thematic working groups on e.g. Northern Uganda. But the EU Delegation believed that the government policies on CSOs might have impacted on the general CSO dialogue. They acknowledged that the dialogue could improve, but could not identify specific areas which needed improvement. The EU Delegation has not undertaken any recent analysis or mappings of Ugandan civil society.

CSO representatives also criticize other donors for their lack of civil society involvement but the EU Delegation was highlighted for its particular poor performance. None of the CSO representatives interviewed described their dialogue with the EU Delegation as a partnership and most did not see the EU Delegation as an obvious dialogue partner and preferred bilateral donors like Denmark, Sweden and the UK. Many pointed to the lack of civil society background and knowledge as an explanation for the EU Delegation's limited understanding of civil society.

BLACK MONDAY MOVEMENT

Ugandan civil society was recently invited to a donor meeting to present the Black Monday movement, which promotes anti-corruption by wearing black clothing every Monday. The meeting was hosted by the Dutch embassy, but after the presentation, civil society representatives were thanked and asked to leave the room. They never received feedback or follow-up.

Trust and confidence building is a common feature in civil society responses and even small things could potentially make a considerable change. Some CSO representatives e.g. suggested that dialogue meetings were hosted on neutral ground or rotated among donors and civil society.

The EU Delegation in Kampala hosted a series of three Structured Dialogue meetings in 2011 inspired by the

global process, which was well received by CSOs in Uganda. After the meetings, the Uganda NGO-forum, a national CSO platform with over 400 members, developed a concept paper for a structured dialogue process in Uganda and even committed to allocate own funds and resources to engage in the process. The concept note was sent to the EU Delegation in 2011, but they never received any response. When we asked the EU Delegation about the NGO-forum proposal, they could not recognize the lack of response and suggested that it was a misunderstanding. Whatever the cause, the stranded proposal seems like a missed opportunity for the EU Delegation to revitalize its dialogue with civil society.

Conclusion and recommendations

Ugandan civil society is not consistently invited for dialogue meetings with the EU Delegation in Kampala and dialogue is generally characterized as ad-hoc, one-way and demand driven. CSOs do not receive information beforehand and rarely receive feedback after meeting with the EU Delegation in Kampala. Many CSOs expressed a lack of trust and confidence in the EU Delegation in Kampala, which is a serious challenge on the brink of a more enhanced and strategic cooperation.

There is clearly a need for more self-reflection among donors and CSOs. A mutual partnership is a two-way relationship and both parties must invest in order to gain. It is necessary to rethink the CSO dialogue at the EU Delegation in Kampala and introduce institutional changes and mechanisms. An obvious first initiative would be a discussion on the Uganda NGO Forums proposal for a new Structured Dialogue forum, formed and steered jointly by the EU Delegation and the Uganda NGO Forum, e.g. with the support from the Democratic Government Fund (DGF).

EU Member States must take active part in the development of country CSO roadmaps from its early stages and support the EU Delegation in Kampala with analysis, contacts and simply bring credibility to the process. Ugandan civil society is facing enormous challenges from a repressive government which is likely to worsen in the run up to the national elections in 2016. This reemphasizes the need to strengthen the policy dialogue between civil society and donors.

European CSOs can potentially play a pivotal role in providing technical expertise and capacity building on EU development assistance and responsibilities of EU Delegations. But support must be responsive to CSOs needs and requests.



CIVIL SOCIETY ANALYSIS AND DIALOGUE

The EC is eager to identify good practices and successful examples on policy dialogue. But there are few shared guidelines, benchmarks or documented good practices that donors can learn from when partnering with civil society (OECD 2012). Internal monitoring and evaluation systems are therefore vital to improve the dialogue. But until now, the EU has conducted no formal evaluations or lessons learned on civil society involvement, although CSO involvement has been a legal commitment for more than 10 years (ECA 2009).

In order to avoid a repetition of previous tick-the-box dialogues, future dialogue sessions must be evaluated on the basis of formal evaluations of the quality of the dialogue, which could include issues such as modalities and format of consultations, predictability and timing, access to background material etc. Indicators should ideally be developed and monitored in collaboration with civil society.

It seems relatively straightforward to improve EU's performance on CSO consultations based on the experiences from Kampala and Accra. But EU Delegations must develop systematic and harmonized engagement mechanisms which cover all aspects of the EU Delegation mandate, so that civil society involvement is not dependent on individuals.

ANALYTICAL ELEMENTS OF COUNTRY CSO ROADMAPS:

Mapping of the legal and regulatory framework

Mapping of funding resources for CSOs to engage in policy dialogue

Analysis of government dialogue and responsiveness to policy interaction with civil society

Analysis of coalition building and collaboration among civil society actors, both local and international

Analysis of donors dialogue with civil society

In order to ensure the necessary political focus and support, CSO dialogue must be a key indicator in the EU Delegations' annual performance review and a key objective for all staff at EU Delegations, most importantly the Head of Delegation and the governance and civil society teams.

The main objective of the country CSO roadmaps must be civil society involvement in key policy issues and processes, such as development of country CSO roadmaps, development of national development strategies (e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers), EC programming processes (either national development strategies or Country Strategy Papers), EU Delegations reporting on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) and human rights and development of EC supported capacity building programmes.

A strategic and systematic inclusion of civil society must always be founded on a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities for strengthening the civil society involvement in key policy issues and processes.

FUNDAMENTALS IN AN INSTITUTIONALIZED CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE:

Clear institutional mechanisms

Inclusion of all relevant civil society actors

Jointly agreed agendas

Rotating venues for dialogue meetings

Sufficient time provided for participation

Preparatory resources delivered timely beforehand

Feedback on results from dialogue

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CONCLUSION

This study clearly shows that the **EU Delegations are not consistently involving civil society in a strategic dialogue beyond aid-programming**. The civil society consulted criticized the EU Delegations for being too ad-hoc, one-way and demand driven. CSOs did not receive relevant information on time and rarely received feedback from the outcome of consultations. This is far from the 'strategic and sustained political dialogue', which is envisaged in EUs new CSO communication.

A strategic civil society support must always start from a comprehensive context analysis of the diversity of roles and agendas in civil society. But the EC and most EU Member States apparently do not undertake regular analysis or mappings of civil society. As pointed out in a number of evaluations, **donors lack a nuanced understanding of the civil society landscape**, which consequently affects the overall impact of their civil society support.

Working with civil society is no longer an option – but a prerequisite for development. EC and the EU Member States must recognize that the **CSO communication signals a paradigm shift in EU development assistance and demands a change in the mindset at all levels**. The genuine improvement in the dialogue at HQ level in Brussels must be translated to the EU Delegations.

There is generally a **lack trust and confidence in EU as an institution** among CSOs in Uganda and Ghana and if the development of country CSO roadmaps does not improve the dialogue there is a serious risk of 'consultation fatigue'. This is a major challenge and to restore trust, the EU Delegations must allow civil society to take an active part in the development of country CSO roadmaps from its early stages. In some instances civil society organizations must even be allowed to lead the analysis, e.g. in self-assessments of the CSO context.

There is clearly a need for more self-reflection among donors and civil society organizations. A mutual partnership is a two-way relationship and both parties must invest in order to gain. It is necessary to rethink the civil society organization dialogue in both Kampala and Accra and EU donors and civil society must jointly introduce **institutional changes and the establishment of new dialogue forums**.

The capacity constraints at the EU Delegations is a serious hindrance for a more systematic and strategic CSO involvement. The EC must therefore substantially increase the financial and human resources at the EU Delegations and ensure capacity building and training of EU Delegation staff. The EC must also **urgently clarify the role of civil society** in the process of developing country CSO roadmaps. The lack of clarity risks undermining the CSO ownership and thereby also the quality and impact of the country CSO roadmaps.

Civil society dialogue must become a **key indicator in the EU Delegations annual performance review** and a key objective for all staff at EU Delegations, most importantly the Head of Delegation and the governance and civil society teams. Civil society dialogue should not be assigned to a CSO focal point, but must be a key priority and responsibility for all.

Despite the poor track record, EC and EU Member States have a common interest in making the country CSO roadmaps a success. Europe has a long tradition in supporting civil society and EU civil society cooperation could potentially become a **comparative advantage** which would contribute immensely to EUs development objectives.



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