Consultation Paper

Preparing the European Commission Communication on
Civil Society Organisations in Development

This document - which is available in English, French and Spanish - does not represent an official position of the European Commission. It is a tool to explore the views of interested parties. The suggestions made in this document do not prejudge the form or content of any future proposal the European Commission will make.
**Respondent's Information** (mandatory)

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- **Type of organisation/ institution:**
  - Civil Society Organisation:
    - [ ] Business association
    - [ ] Faith-based organisation
    - [x] Non Governmental Organisation
    - [ ] Trade Union
    - [ ] Other: ____________________________
  - [ ] Cooperative
  - [ ] Foundation
  - [ ] Think-tank/ research institution
  - [ ] Professional/ Industrial Organisation

- [ ] Partner Government
  - [ ] National
  - [ ] Local/ regional

- [ ] International Organisation
- [ ] Other donor
- [ ] European Union Member State
- [ ] Other: ____________________________

If you answer on behalf of a Civil Society Organisation, please also complete the questions below: (indicated with an asterisk*)

- **Nationality of the organisation:**
  - [x] Belgian, with constituency from all European Union representing 1800 NGOs

If you work for a national branch of an international organisation, please fill the details below for your branch only:

- **Number of staff of the organisation:**
  - [ ] 1-3
  - [ ] 4-10
  - [x] 11-30
  - [ ] 31-100
  - [ ] More than 100

- **Sectors of intervention:**
  - [ ] Agriculture
  - [ ] Education
  - [ ] Financial services
  - [ ] Humanitarian aid
  - [ ] Other: ____________________________
  - [ ] Conflict prevention
  - [ ] Entrepreneurship
  - [ ] Governance
  - [ ] Human rights
  - [ ] Other: ____________________________
  - [ ] Decent work
  - [ ] Environment
  - [ ] Health
  - [ ] Population issues
  - [ ] Water resources and sanitation
• Geographical coverage:*  
  □ Africa  □ Europe  □ Oceania  □ America  □ Asia

• Do you consider the organisation:*  
  □ Local: grassroots organisation  
  □ National:  
    □ National CSO  
    □ National branch of an international CSO  
    □ Association or platform of CSOs at national level  
  □ Regional: network, federation  
  □ International  
  □ Other: ________________

• Has the organisation received EU funding in the past three years? *  
  □ Yes  □ No

• Has the organisation been involved in some sort of dialogue with EU Delegations in the past three years? *  
  □ Yes  □ No

➢ It is normal practice to publish contributions, together with the identity of the contributor, on the European Commission (DG DEVCO) website. If you do not agree, please tick the option of your choice below:

  □ I want my contribution to be published in an anonymous form.
  □ I want my contribution to be treated as confidential and not be published.
CONCORD reaction to EC consultation - CSOs in development cooperation

Question 1: How can CSOs apply in their activities the Aid and Development Effectiveness principles of Busan?

Acknowledging their essential role as independent development actors, CSOs have affirmed their commitment 1) to continue to take action to ensure the implementation by all stakeholders of Aid (PD and AAA) and Development effectiveness principles as well as 2) to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices in line with CSOs’ own principles which were defined through the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, and endorsed in Busan: the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness (with the vision, framework and requirements of enabling environment) and the 8 ‘Istanbul’ Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness therein. The obligation of CSOs to be accountable is also specifically emphasized in the fifth Istanbul Principle on Accountability and Transparency.

To support a contextualized application of the Istanbul Principles by CSOs worldwide, the International Framework is accompanied by the Implementation Toolkit, which proposes guidance and indicators to enable CSOs to adapt and work with the Istanbul Principles in their own organizational and local realities. Dialog has begun for the formation of a new CSO platform which will have two pillars. One objective is to hold other stakeholders accountable and seek further global commitment around CSO key asks and Human Rights. The second is an internal pillar of activities around dialog, reflection, deeper understanding and accountability for enhanced CSO development effectiveness. In Europe, this work has already begun within the NGO sector, in various National Platforms and networks, as well as in Concord and with NGOs of the broader European Region.

The Istanbul Principles are not intended to invalidate existing CSO principles or various accountability frameworks. In addition, given the huge diversity and geographic spread of CSOs, the Istanbul Principles are to be operationalized and measured in meaningful but distinct ways that are appropriate to each CSO in its local context and sector. CSOs also stress the fundamental importance of voluntary accountability mechanisms, not government or CSO-imposed “policing regulations”. In some EU Member States, CSOs have worked closely and collaboratively with governments to seek development outcomes consistent with international human rights standards, which give priority to addressing conditions of discrimination, disempowerment, poverty and inequality and to specify policy regarding government relations to and funding of CSOs. Nevertheless, these important joint efforts are not to be seen as the measure of CSO implementation of Busan agreements.

Any broad global system must take into account differences, facilitate broad implementation and provide flexibility to safeguard CSO autonomy and independence. CSOs themselves must work on defining specific context and sector related measurements and targets, and methods of verification. As per the reviews of One World Trust (with whom we collaborate) of the wide range of CSO self-regulation (see References) this work is vibrant and continuously expanding, with methods ranging from very informal to extensive and resource demanding, adaptable to the context, size and capacity of CSOs. In Europe, CSOs decided to encourage different national bodies and different types of NGOs to work on their own specific implementation. A survey conducted by CONCORD this month of its membership showed that all 30 respondents work on several of the Istanbul principles. Several organisations work on Quality Management or on gender mainstreaming. National Platforms and networks are setting up systems that work on internal accountability, with clear advances in aligning and contextualizing the key principles, information exchanges and capacity building on methods for measurement and accountability, and in some of them, systems for peer review or accreditation. CSOs are also working to bolster the alignment of existing frameworks, accountability or evaluation systems with the International Framework and increase the scale of participation. Large or International/Cross-Border NGOs who have extensive experience in internal monitoring and evaluation, and participation in peer-review accountability systems have been continuing improvements in their own systems, and working diligently with these international systems, such as for example the International NGO Charter of Accountability Company, to ensure that the they take into account the latest CSO commitments. A task force is working with IATI since last fall, to adapt the standards to CSO special requirements and concerns (such as the protection of staff in fragile states, the confidentiality of private citizen donors, etc.) and provide practical tools to assist CSOs to publish to IATI, to be completed by this summer.

But while CSOs are autonomous development actors, their capacity to make progress in realizing the Istanbul Principles is deeply affected by government and donor policies and practices - which can make or break an enabling environment
for CSO work and meaningful contribution to development. In the dimensions of other applications of Aid and Development Effectiveness beyond our own implementation, CONCORD and its members have been very active in the contributions about the Post Busan architecture, monitoring and indicators, providing leadership to the global CSO analysis and responses, as a full partner in the multi-stakeholder process and agreement. We have worked proactively to disseminate information, enable observing and engagement in the country implementation of the partnership agreements, and to ensure spaces for CSO participation of our partners around the globe in the country and regional processes, as well as global fora such as the Building Blocks (with active participation in the formation of the two new Building Blocks on Human Rights Based Approaches and the Enabling Environment), and dialog around the implementation of the New Deal on Fragile States.

**Question 2: How do you think that different actors, including the EU, could help promote an enabling environment for CSOs in a) repressive regimes b) in fragile/conflict situations c) other countries? Can you suggest good practices from your experience?**

*Considering limited space to answer, we will focus on the role of the EU although we recognize that many different actors, including EU NGOs may influence and or contribute to the enabling environment for CS.*

The EU should always take into account that supporting civil society in different countries requires different approaches. All actions should be considered as long-term and process oriented, while aiming at fulfilling the five key elements of an enabling environment defined by the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness (see question 3).

Each support mechanism needs to be strategically positioned in the social, economic, institutional, cultural, as well as political context of the country in which it is implemented. It should be noted that a CSO support programme can never be “neutral” as regards to the context in which it is intervening and, more importantly, in the context of CS.

It is essential to extend assistance to CS even under difficult conditions to educate on navigating existing legal systems in order to understand rights and responsibilities and empower local organizations for advocacy. In difficult environments, where registration may not be feasible for CSOs, it is worth exploring alternative ways to support Human Rights (HR) organizations, women’s organizations and other CS actors under threat directly to maintain space for CS action. That aspect of the EIDHR instrument should be reinforced and possibly expanded to other instruments to intervene in all situations where the space and action of CS is threatened due to governmental coercion.

In other situations the EU should make use of a more open space for CS to support its consolidation, organization and the building of regional and global CS links. Cooperation with CS could also help the EU to promote participatory democracy principles in its dialogue with partner governments so that the risk of regression is limited. By supporting CS actors when facing coercion, harassment and human rights violations the EU and its MSs can help CSOs to gain strength and build their space. In fragile states it is essential that local CS actors are involved in the country assessments, political dialogue and in the programming and implementation of development cooperation so that state building and the promotion of CS and citizenship take place in parallel and the social contract between the state and its citizens is established or reinforced. Building capacity of both CS and governments on CSO legal issues, encouraging cross-sectoral partnership and communication, supporting progressive implementation of laws on CS and providing long-term capacity support to local stakeholders on CS enabling environment through fellowships, NGO law courses and longer term engagement are crucial to countries with fragile conditions. In both environments it is important to engage with independent media and use new technologies to raise awareness and promote change.

**EU and MSs should be active and vocal in promoting and protecting CS enabling environment in 4 ways:**

- By investing in political economy and power relations analysis and in monitoring the conditions in which CS operates and the limitations to CS action (based on indicators identified together with CSOs)
- By being vocal about HR violations and the shrinking space and putting pressure on governments including through the political dialogue and the implementation of bilateral agreements
- By coordinating and adapting their modalities of support to CS in a permanent way and not only in situations of crisis and risk or when the cooperation with the state is difficult. More coordinated messages and programs from donors
in addressing constricting space can deliver much more impact in changing the behaviors of those in power, as well as helping CSOs to better organize and focus limited resources.

- By making sure that the multi-stakeholder dialogue on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment is continued and the commitments made in Busan by countries and CSOs followed up. Thus EU and its MSs should support the initiative of a Building Block on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment

**In particular:**

- Deepening the understanding of enabling environment in the context in which EU Delegations operate and investing in monitoring the conditions in which CS operates and the limitations to CS action (based on indicators identified together with CS).
- Supporting global and local monitoring of basic political rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association in collaboration with UN and relevant bilateral donors.
- Establishing more systematic approaches, trainings and incentives on engagement with and in support of CS and harmonise them in all Delegations so that engagement is not dependent on individual interest and good will.
- Mainstreaming the enabling environment and engagement with CS in all EU delegations as an integral and essential aspect of EU support to governance, democratization, gender equality and HR.
- Establishing structured and on-going dialogue with CS that covers all aspects of the delegation mandate, not only development aid and envisions a participatory approach in the elaboration of Delegation’s priorities.
- Organising (at least annually) open seminars with CS where priorities, concerns and needs of different actors are discussed and joint priorities and processes are identified.
- Refrain from imposing a model of organisation and functioning of CS but on the contrary build on existing structures, in respect of local societal and cultural factors and dynamics and in respect of CS diversity.
- Respecting the right of CSO to self-define their representation. Selection of CS representatives and interlocutors in case of dialogue and consultation should be driven by CS itself. Offering sufficient number of seats (adapted to the way CS is organised) and being transparent about the process and its objectives (public announcements through adequate communication means) are pre-conditions for fair and effective representation and for avoiding creating competition and mistrust in CS. In case of international events, facilitation of visa delivery can represent a key element of support.
- Making access to CS-funding easier for grass roots CSOs and be careful of not favoring certain aspects of CS action or certain categories of actors at the detriment of others through financing modalities and programmes.

**Question 3: What, in your experience, are good indicators to measure progress in the area of enabling environment for CSOs’ actions?**

One of the most important limitations common to all available composite indexes of governance is that they fail to capture how citizens perceive the governance environment and outcomes in their own countries. Indicators to measure progress in enabling environment (EE) for CSOs as related to the minimum standards are specified in detail in the *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*. The *minimum standards* are regrouped into **5 main elements**:

- Fulfillment of Human Rights obligations
- CSOs as development actors in their own right
- Democratic political and policy dialogue
- Accountability and transparency for development
- Enabling financing

The detailed list (see the International Framework) of minimum standards forms a good basis to elaborate a range of universal indicators as well as country-specific indicators to be discussed with CS. CS is indeed best placed to establish benchmarks and indicators on EE (both universal and country specific ones). Donors should support CS led systems of
measurement and monitoring and be open to use these benchmarks and systems as a baseline for donor and government assessments and monitoring of the situation.

When the situation allows, monitoring EE should be a joint exercise through the establishment of tripartite bodies where donors, the government and CSOs are represented. When not possible to get the partner government on board, donors should find ways to dialogue with and consult a broad and representative range of CS as indicators have no interest without access to information and data from the most concerned actors. The EU should systematically include the monitoring of the CS EE in its analysis and assessment of democratic governance in a given country.

Although the Busan monitoring system will by force be limited to the selection of very few and globally applicable indicators, we encourage the EU to provide leadership in measuring EE in a more comprehensive (qualitative and quantitative) way, in order to be able to track progress in promoting and ensuring the EE.

Some indicators of progress could be:

- Recognition of basic political rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association in legal frameworks, regulation policy and practice;
- No restriction on the types of activities and sectors of activity including in the area of HR, gender, and advocacy;
- Lightened and swifter process of registration, increasing number of registered organisations and general satisfaction of CSOs with the registration system, long term registration;
- Increasing number of CSOs, in particular those including as members or representing discriminated/excluded groups (such as people with disabilities, children, old people, minority ethnic groups) engaging in advocacy, networking and in the political dialogue;
- Increasing internal debate in CS and trust and joint work between CS actors;
- Effective dialogue between CS and the elected parliamentarians as well as state institutions and services and audit bodies;
- Space for dialogue between authorities and CS at different levels from local to national and beyond borders (regional bodies);
- Space for CS voice in the media including ‘official’ ones, existence and coverage and freedom of speech of CS media (radio, newsletters etc.);
- Existence of mechanisms for citizens to interact with state institutions and other bodies having a mandate to deliver public services (information service, complaint mechanisms, ombudsman etc.);
- Existence of reliable sources of information freely accessible to citizens regarding governmental action, budgets, laws and codes;
- Increasing number of CSOs accessing donors’ and governmental funding (disaggregated data according to their nature, capacities and sectors of activity);
- Increasing volume of CS own resources (including from domestic sources) and capacities for action.

Very recent mapping among the CONCORD and global CSO constituency about the ways to measure the Enabling Environment have also flagged the following tools which have very useful elements. We encourage the EU to expand this mapping exercise and will be able to provide further input from NGOs in the coming months:

- The USAID NGO Sustainability Index which produces NGO legal environment scores for at least 50 countries.
- The CIVICUS' Civil Society Index. And, for qualitative data, there is the ICNL NGO Law Monitor
- The "Voice and Accountability" indicator that the World Bank calculates from other indices

Finally, there is data being collected by Global Integrity on environments for NGOs working on governance and anti-corruption issues: [http://www.globalintegrity.org/report/Argentina/2010/scorecard](http://www.globalintegrity.org/report/Argentina/2010/scorecard)

**Question 4: How could the media, including the social media, contribute to an enabling environment for CSOs?**

**Information and transparency** are two key elements for an effective citizens' participation which is one of the objectives of an EE for CS. Media can play a key role in promoting both provided they are themselves fully independent and don’t suffer from control and censorship by the government and are not controlled by dominant private interests. Freedom of
media is in fact a key element of EE; independent media are at the same time a pre-condition and an actor benefiting from an EE. Free and access to social media have shown their importance during the Arab spring as an essential means of communication and mobilisation when the freedom of the traditional media and civil and political rights and public liberties are not respected.

In societies where the rate of literacy is low and access to new communication technologies is limited, radio and television are of particular importance in reaching out to the community level. This may also include traditional means of communication such as public town criers as well as theatre-action. From that point of view, community based rural or urban radio established by CS in developing countries represent a powerful tool to reach and inform the citizens and grassroots level about their rights, entitlements and obligations and a means to allow people to people exchange and learning processes (including for the spreading of technical knowledge in the areas of farming, health, children care, sanitation etc.).

**In general media can contribute to an EE by:**
- Providing the space and legal framework for CS to express itself and present its views, analyses and concerns and to strengthen people’s voices and their capacity to speak out, using media to challenge how issues are ‘framed’;
- Providing the means for CS to reach out to citizens and in particular young generations, to make awareness raising, adult education and participatory research to validate people’s knowledge;
- Providing the means for CS actors to exchange, organise debates and undertake advocacy beyond borders and to facilitate networking;
- Providing the means to CS actors to make their analyses, concerns and problems including human rights violations known inside and outside the country;
- Providing tools to overcome barriers to participation through mobilisation; gaining support amongst the population for citizens’ action through petitions and open letters addressed to the authorities as well as through information spreading on demonstrations or other types of peaceful means of pressure (strikes, assemblies, boycotts etc.);
- Providing the means for state institutions to communicate and spread information to its citizens and at the same time organising and facilitating the feedback from citizens;
- Providing the means to donors present in a given country to spread information to and communicate with CS and citizens at large.

**Specifically social media can contribute to an EE by:**
- Providing anyone with access to the internet to create multi-media content and to report and comment on what is happening on the ground. This can be empowering, particularly in repressive societies and during crisis situations;
- Providing ways to facilitate the aggregation of small individual actions into meaningful collective results. Online conversations create traffic and may well become ‘viral’ allowing the spreading of messages quickly to vast numbers of people. Co-creation fosters collaboration and may start building ‘digital partnerships’. Entries in Wikipedia, group blogs, photo pools, and video collages are all examples of co-creation. Collective action goes one step further by using online engagement to initiate meaningful actions like signing e-petitions, fundraising, or organizing ‘offline’ protests or events;
- Providing ways to facilitate sustained collaboration within an online ‘community’ around a shared idea, over time and across boundaries. In order to mobilize public support, one may focus on building an online community around a specific event or campaign;
- Providing ways to not only aggregate individual actions, but also to process that information (using complex algorithms) and make use of it as we like, which could have huge potential for nurturing digital activism;

**Examples of social media initiatives:** MoveOn.org has built a strong community around progressive politics in the US. Global Voices Online and its sister project Global Voices Advocacy aim to build a global anti-censorship network of bloggers and online activists throughout the developing world that is dedicated to protecting freedom of expression and free access to information online. Avaaz uses social media to mobilize instant campaigns.

When working with media, it is crucial that media doesn't contradict development efforts, in particular related to global justice and an approach to equal partnership and empowerment. Media and communication work should not be based on donors' or implementors' needs (e.g. to highlight successes) but contribute to a differentiated, empowering approach
to development, avoiding simple answers and a "North/South" or "powerful donor/grateful receiver" language. Therefore, we recommend basing all media and communication work on the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (to which CONCORD is committed and promotes actively for its membership and Development Education).

**Question 5: What are, in your experience, the challenges and opportunities for CSO involvement in policy dialogues including in terms of institutional mechanisms and operational rules? Can you provide good examples?**

**Key challenges:**
- Non conducive environments for CSO participation, shrinking space for CS and criminalisation of CS;
- Governments imposing its views and conditions on official cooperation partners, or being reluctant in the way to involve CS in policy dialogue, aid programming and implementation; governments often associate CS with opposition, criticism and watchdogs and are reluctant to bring CS actors (or even Parliaments) into a dialogue with donors;
- Decentralised authorities not always playing their role with regard to local governance and consultation or not having the resources and competences to do so. Often they are themselves marginalised in the decision making on public services, national budget and aid;
- Many EC staff in HQs or EU Delegations have an instrumental or limited vision of CS that is not conducive to building confidence and structured relationships. The perception of CS by the EC is very much dependent on the capacity of CS actors to organise themselves and speak with a limited number of voices. The risk is that donors and governments create and finance CS structures that are not legitimate and occupy a limited space;
- EU cooperation and programmes, particularly budget support, often fail to include adequate CSO consultation, representation and involvement in decision-making;
- No distinction is being made during consultation processes between the different types of actors (including private sector and LAs). It results in a mixture of interests that sometimes hinders the voices of the most marginalised to be heard;
- Funding mechanisms and procedures are not sufficiently adapted and responsive to the different roles played by CSOs;
- Lack of ownership and confidence amongst CS actors in dialogue mechanisms put in place by governments or donors; consultation fatigue due to multiplicity of processes and to the fact that CS views are not taken into account or are not collected in a transparent manner and made public;
- In certain cases, mistrust and competition for finance, visibility and power between CSOs may prevent the creation of sustainable platforms or networks that can play a representative and strategic role. Networking and building CS coalitions are demanding in human, financial and information sharing resources;
- Lack of capacities (policy analysis, language) and means (human and financial resources, transport, access to information and institutions) to take part in debates which require understanding of complex and of technical issues; Lack of understanding the independent and horizontal character of CSOs. When cooperating with CSOs on policy dialogue the official sector should take into account CSOs’ great diversity, and current models of organization and representation (often according to sectors), as well as the right to organize themselves and select their representation according to their own processes.

**Opportunities:**
- The reinforced role of EU Delegations in political dialogue with partner countries and the focus on governance, democratisation and human rights in the Agenda for Change;
- More flexible funding modalities and increased financing for CS in the next Multiannual Financing Framework: CONCORD calls for a greater recognition of CSOs as implementing actors in all geographic programmes, and a clear commitment to a 15% earmarking of funds for CS within the geographic programme. The EC should also include references to the conclusions of the Structured Dialogue in all instruments, including the diversification of funding modalities (toolbox) and the promotion of an EE.
- The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (BPd): The implementation and monitoring of the BPd at country level should promote multi-stakeholder processes in which CS should play its role as an independent actor in its own right. As already experienced by CSOs with the Accra Agenda for Action this offers a great opportunity to improve the dialogue on aid and development between CS and governments. There are limits to
these processes due to the weak commitment to create an EE for CSOs in the BPd and the failure by many governments to recognise the rights of CSOs. Still with the BPd, there is an opportunity for action by donors and global CS to monitor the quality and reality of country-led multi-stakeholder processes and to put pressure on governments to respect the rights and space of CSOs.

- An example of a successful policy dialogue is the multi-stakeholder task team on CSO Development Effectiveness, which at the moment is developing into a Building Block for Enabling Environment. This multi-stakeholder dimension to any EU policy dialogue would be important in terms of comprehensiveness, legitimacy and sustainability.

**Question 6: How can progress related to CSO participation in policy dialogues at country level be measured and monitored?**

Many Indicators listed for EE in the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness are also relevant for this question including:

- Existence of structured and permanent space for dialogue, systematic consultations and inclusion of CS views into decision-making processes at local, national and regional level
- Existence of systematic consultations and inclusion of CS actors’ views (including grassroots and women organizations and indigenous people’s representatives) into decision-making processes;
- Views and priorities of CS reflected in the outcome of the process
- Number and variety of CS organizations, including representatives of organizations working with discriminated/excluded groups, taking part in the dialogue at different levels and satisfaction of CSOs regarding their access to the dialogue (directly or through representatives).
- Appropriate resources to enable full participation of stakeholders
- Freedom to access information, including country strategies and program plans;
- Satisfaction of CS regarding the quality of the dialogue, which can also be assessed in terms of its predictability and timing (roadmaps and joint calendar), quality of information provided (accessibility, language, comprehensiveness, timing), modalities and format of consultation (mixing different modalities offers more opportunities for a broader range of actors to take part, e.g. call for written comments, meetings including decentralized ones, on-line consultations etc.). Quality criteria should ideally be discussed and monitored together with CS.
- Proactive engagement and initiatives of CS in view of improving its contribution in policy analysis and in dialogue and in view of improving its structuring and representativeness.
- Recognition of responsibilities and contributions of CS by other actors, especially parliamentarians and local governments;
- Mapping CS activity and capacity, based on CS reports, for example: The participation of CS of a given country in regional and global civil society networking, seminars such as the post Busan CSO platform and Building Blocks as well as other international processes (Rio+20, UN and multi-stakeholder task teams and work groups, Post MDG framework inputs, etc.), the mapping of all existing networks and coalitions (with their internal definition, criteria and modalities as well as areas of local, national and international engagement), the emergence of new CS structures or staff positions in existing organizations in the area of policy analysis, research and advocacy.

**Question 7: What are the most effective entry points for CSOs in participatory budgetary processes?**

First we would like to emphasize the need for effective promotion and support of a broader role for CSO, in “mutual accountability”, which includes participatory budgetary processes and social auditing, but also covers more dimensions and opportunities for CSO participation.

a) According to the UNDCF (April 2012):

- “DCF analysis shows that full-fledged national mutual accountability mechanisms must include the following elements: (i) an agreed national aid policy/strategy document; (ii) specific performance targets for the government and individual providers, aligned to national development priorities, and monitored and discussed at highest political level; (iii) strong programme country government leadership, including in high-level policy dialogues to review progress on aid issues; (iv) routine consultations with parliament and civil society organizations and use of independent analytical inputs; (v) comprehensive databases which cover aid quantity and quality issues; and (vi) peer pressure among like-minded providers
Survey evidence compiled by the DCF indicates that progress on mutual accountability is disappointingly slow in terms of provider targets. Of the assessed 105 countries, only 16 have basic mutual accountability defined as collective indicators and group provider targets.

b) With the EC conclusion of Dec 2010, the EU committed to implement enhanced accountability mechanism also by means of promoting “the establishment of a joint framework for monitoring respective joint commitments of donors and partner countries on aid effectiveness, building upon existing systems and processes such as the format of and lessons learned from the Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey and PEFA4, whenever possible…”

There are many examples of participatory budgetary processes. For local CSOs they are increasingly playing a key role in social accountability.

It goes back to EE, if a grant is not an open budgetary process we can start by demonstrating CSO participation with EU (EC and MS planning on budgeting processes, including on Budget Support). There have also been many good experiences in starting participatory budgeting and social auditing in collaboration between community groups and Local Authorities (where there can be simple comparisons of government policies and promises, local allocations of funding, and the visible inputs and outputs in their own community). There have also been good examples of CS participation in regards to Global Initiatives (such as the Global Fund, and the SUN movement) which can then be duplicated across other sectors or replicated in other countries. These participatory processes are particularly critical for CSOs in Fragile states.

Budget support is an effective entry point to ensure CSOs participate in budgetary processes. However, until now, budget support arrangements remain characterized by a lack of citizen and parliamentarian oversight of agreements, implementation and monitoring, with few civil society processes established to influence decision-making and frameworks, monitor implementation or assess the impact of budget support funds (see question 8). At the national level, budget analysis and oversight requires a much higher technical capacity, time and access, and is also often limited by the lack of transparency and other barriers or threats closely associated with corruption.

A number of CONCORD members have been very active in this respect. Organizations that have part of their membership in the EU have a role to play, particularly in capacity development activities, and in funding the participatory budgeting and accountability processes. See the following website for case studies and methodologies for participatory budget processes and monitoring of public expenditures:

http://www.ansa-africa.net/index.php/toolkits_and_methodologies/

**Question 8: Responding to the Communication on Budget Support, how could the EU promote CSO role in “domestic accountability and in oversight functions”? What, in your experience, are the related risks and how should these be managed?**

The CSOs role in domestic accountability and in oversight functions is broader than budget support only. Policy dialogue and CSO engagement cannot be limited to discussing the provision of development and aid programmes, it should include all aspects of the relations between the EU and third countries that have an impact on poverty reduction and respect for human rights, gender equality, including trade negotiations. Also, in the planning, programming, and execution of national development strategies, we have to make sure that CS can fulfill its role of healthy countervailing power to the state, not always in the defending modus, but where appropriate, within a legal enabling environment to do so.

This recognition bears challenges and risks. Some of the main challenges are the lack of capacity of CSOs, the poor and dispersed management of data and information, the lack of access to translation services, a lack of transparency and a lack of access to information from governments and donors about policies. It is essential for CS to organize itself to achieve a genuine people centered monitoring of domestic policies, administration, public services and resources management (and not limited to a small elite of NGOs in the capital). The main risk is to be instrumentalised by donors.
who want to control recipient states. It is therefore essential that the independence and right of initiative of CS is respected:

- In the absence of genuine CS initiatives or structures ready to hold their governments accountable, it is better to support a process of nurturing and progressive upgrading of existing CS action than to establish fictive and unaccountable structures for the sake of having them in place;
- More transparency and better information and communication towards the public in partner countries and in Europe would certainly help in raising interest of CS (both local and European). Free media, as part of the CS sphere, also have an important role to play;
- It is essential that CS creates strong and long-term dialogue and relationships with Parliaments as well as domestic accountability bodies (such as Court of auditors). Strengthening domestic accountability should be included in the EC guidelines on budget support, currently being revised. For that purpose, the EC must ensure that an inclusive group of Parliamentarians, local governments, CSOs, audit institutions and the media are involved in different stages of the budget support process (design, definition of benchmarks and conditions, monitoring and evaluation);
- Donors should set aside a proportion of their budget support to finance the ability of stakeholders to facilitate their role in holding governments and donors to account and making aid work; capacity development and consultations of CS actors. The EC could for example allocate 5% of its budget support to support CSOs doing budget tracking and monitoring at local, regional and national levels;
- The EU should support specific initiatives to strengthen CS involvement in mechanisms to monitor human rights and international obligations of States.
- The EU should support actions that help CSO identify and analyze the broad range of existing networks and coalitions, as well as work through such bodies to the maximum possible and enable the formation of joint efforts where gaps exist.

**Question 9: In your opinion, what criteria should be used to ensure that representative and legitimate CSOs take part in policy dialogue and in budgetary oversight work?**

We count on the EC to allow CSOs to further participate in the elaboration of the specific criteria of selection and hence to acknowledge, that the notion of adequate, equitable and legitimate representation must come from within the CSO constituencies and is not defined externally. The criteria for policy dialogue should allow for good balance between representativity and expertise.

**Criteria and principles that can be helpful include:**

- Organising the policy dialogue in a permanent and predictable way, with a timing that allows an informed and participatory preparation process on the side of CS helps a lot in making sure that CS representatives taking part in the dialogue speak on behalf of a broad constituency and with a legitimate voice. If and when CS is aware that a space exists where its opinion and inputs are taken seriously and have an influence on policy or budgetary processes, it will make the effort to organise itself to use that opportunity. It is much more difficult to raise interest and participation of a broad constituency when these conditions are not met.
- Expertise and competences in development issues and other issues relating to human rights and social accountability and having an impact on poverty and inequalities (environment, climate, trade, taxes, security and peace, decent work, social protection, humanitarian aid etc...)
- Contributions and participation in development debates at local, national or regional and global levels;
- Ensure representation of CSOs working including or with and representing discriminated/excluded groups such as people with disabilities, children, old people, people from ethnic minorities, etc.
- Diversity of CSOs should be respected at any level;
- Balanced representation, avoiding double representation while weighting representation on the basis of the importance of the constituency, giving priority to platforms or broad coalitions over individuals or single organisations defending only their own interest or vision;
- Retain a space where specific organizations and individuals can speak on the basis of expertise, and not just as representatives of a constituency;
- Policy dialogue should be opened up per topic for additional CSOs, as well as for academia, think tanks or media;
- More resources should be invested in bodies that have to summarize and coordinate the policy proposals and messages coming from CSOs and prepare them for further political debates;
- Be careful on both CS and donors’ sides of not establishing a closed club of interlocutors and keep the door open for newcomers and for the regular renewal of representatives.

Donors can help promote CS representativity by supporting certain initiatives and tools favouring a better knowledge of and information on CS actors and actions. For example by:
- Developing a framework to support rolling and participative mappings that reflects the diversity of CSOs and increase their visibility. It is imperative to establish a process and a long term plan to ensure that the mappings are not one time projects, but initiatives that systematically documents and makes available key data on CSOs. Mappings should be conducted in close cooperation with CSOs, should be based on a matrix of criteria including both a geographical and a sectoral approach and should be as inclusive as possible. Starting from existing structures such as sectoral networks, global, regional and national platforms or coalitions (even temporary and weak ones) and going beyond the most obvious interlocutors (grantees, NGOs and CSOs already engaged in development cooperation and dialogue, organisations present in capitals etc.) would turn mappings into effective tools for CS engagement;
- Developing open and user friendly tools (a database or an interface to access and search existing resources) to gather information on CSOs. Any mechanism should build on what already exists and works.
- Supporting the creation of public and open websites providing general information about the platforms, networks and organizations and their activities and joint initiatives.

**Question 10: In your opinion, what should be the role of European or International CSOs in supporting local CSO participation in policy processes and oversight functions including at country level**

**Role of EU NGOs in their cooperation with CSOs in developing countries:**

1) Participating in global CSO platforms or specific CSO platforms (thematic, families) enables mutual learning, identifying critical advocacy issues, global strategies and being more context adapted. As EU NGOs we fund these opportunities, facilitate them or advocate they will happen.

2) Empowering partners through supporting the development of their capacities and competences. This can take many different forms depending on context and status of CS in a given country

**Examples:**

- Nurturing small and grassroots CSOs and CBOs;
- Expanding competences of well-functioning CSOs in new areas of work such as democratic governance and citizenship, advocacy and lobbying, public awareness raising, institutional or private fundraising;
- Supporting consolidation of CS through longer term capacity-building strategy, e.g. networking, exchanges and joint studies;

3) Engaging in joint advocacy work and supporting advocacy and watchdog work of partners in full respect of the distinct roles and responsibilities of each partner. It is important in joint advocacy work to find synergies between what can be achieved by actors in partner countries and in the EU and to accept that strategies, means and targets are different and that full account of the risks and opportunities on both sides must be taken. For example, we as EU NGOs are well placed to lobby our governments and the EU who plays a key role in shaping the macro-policy agenda that has a direct influence on developing countries. It is CSOs in developing countries primary responsibility to lobby their own governments. EU NGOs can support such efforts - in particular through public campaigns in Europe, and by lobbying their own governments to intervene, i.e. in case of HR violations for example. Our partners can support EU and global advocacy by providing evidence.

4) Facilitating access of partners at 3 levels:

- **Access to funding:** through partnership relations we are in a position to identify the kind of funding our partners really need. We have a role to play to influence donors to make sure that they put in place the funding means and mechanisms that are adapted to the needs of our partners. For example, in case of the EC it may mean that
we push for more money in the EIDHR in Latin America and Asia to improve social and economic rights and that we push for more resources from the EDF to be allocated to CS in Africa. It means also that we advocate in favour of adapted funding mechanisms and of safeguards that prevent unfair competition between CS actors. Sometimes part of our role is to provide technical support to overcome the hurdles or applying directly to funding;

- **Access to information**: we have easy access to a lot of information relating to development and international policies. We have an individual and collective responsibility to make that information available to our partners;

- **Access to decision makers**: in many different ways (opening a space for CSO actors, supporting travels, visa, bringing our partners at the EU Delegation, at the aid coordination table, supporting their watchdog or monitoring work and supporting their research work).

- **Access to global forums and processes**: for example, disseminating information, identifying the opportunities of participation to partners, identifying skilled partners to the leaders of such global forums or policy consultations, and providing funding, coordination for evidence gathering, and capacity development to enable their participation.

It is important for EU NGOs to proactively explain to their partners what they can expect from them and to go beyond the mere funding relationship.

5) In terms of added value or comparative advantage of EU NGOS we identified the following:

- Proximity and long-term linkages with what is happening at field level (witness role).
- Proximity to decision makers in Europe that have a prominent role in international affairs (question of the impact of our policy and advocacy work);
- Capacity to analyze and communicate the complex mechanisms of EU decision-making and the policy and regulation aquis, and to identify appropriate targets in the Institutions,
- Capacity to mobilize the public in the EU, to make noise and put pressure on our governments and the international community.

**Question 11: What approaches should be developed to improve donor support to capacity development of CSOs?**

- As acknowledged in the Structured Dialogue, CS is very diverse. Donors should embrace this fact and refrain from any attempt to “mainstream” and harmonise CSOs into a single “model” of structuration and action.

- **Taking the point of view of future beneficiaries into account at the stage of designing the capacity development programme** is essential and means that resources and time need to be allocated for the participation of the CSOs at that stage (mapping, identification of needs and expectations, preparation of TOR for the TA, guidelines for implementation of the capacity development programme etc...).

- Such a participative approach is greatly facilitated in the case an on-going structured interaction and dialogue between the proponents of the capacity development programme (EC and other donors) and civil society is already in place. **If such dialogue doesn’t exist the programme can be used as a way to establish it** and can be designed in different phases starting with an exploratory one aiming at establishing the conditions for a good long-term capacity development programme to take place.

- In other words, instead of using part of the funding available for CS to support expensive mapping and identification studies done by foreign experts, the funds available could be used to launch a dynamic in civil society that would help CSOs to better apprehend the context and trends in which they work and identify the kind of support they need to fully play their role as development and ‘political’ actors. An example is the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, which helped CSOs in identifying their membership and to unite among common advocacy goals;

- There are many different ways of strengthening the capacities and the structuration of civil society organisations and it is the reason why flexible systems that combine various modalities of funding and promote multi-actor approaches are needed.

- Capacity development should not be seen in isolation but should be part of a broader strategy and programme of support to civil society and promotion of an enabling environement.
- A two track approach, combining mainstreaming and specific CB programmes is recommended. For example by combining concrete actions taken by CSOs with capacity development (learning by doing) and exploring other ways than the single project funding modality, for example by providing core funding or increasing the budget share of the administrative costs of a project.

- At delivery level, capacity development programmes should rely in priority on local expertise at national or regional level who have the best knowledge and understanding of the local context (cultural, political, financial) in which civil society evolves.

- Contractual procedures and rules should allow for local or EU CSOs to play an intermediary management role in capacity development programmes supported by the EC (see 9th EDF evaluation\(^1\) on the importance of choosing the right intermediaries).

- Pooling resources of different donors in view of expanding the means and increasing the scope and outreach of the CB programmes should be envisaged when available EC funding don’t match the identified needs (e.g. EC-DFID CS programme in Sierra Leone at [http://www.enciss-sl.org/](http://www.enciss-sl.org/))

- CSOs in different parts of the world are already providing expertise to governments, but governments should be encouraged more to use this expertise, and the EU should promote and benefit from this expertise for its capacity development programmes and technical assistance (especially to ensure local procurement and South South transfer);

- Take note of urban-rural gap and try to support inclusiveness: Urban- and capital based CSOs have advantages in terms of participation opportunities, access etc. Donors should help to bridge this gap and promote participation of peri-urban and rural/remote based CSOs in relevant processes, such as participation in drafting of national development, monitoring the country’s budget’s spending and elaboration, monitoring of performance in new aid modalities;

- Take note of the divide between groups who benefit from mainstream development efforts and discriminated/excluded groups who are traditionnally left out of these benefits. Specific initiatives to strengthen representatives of these groups as well as incentives for systematic mainstreaming are necessary for a general strengthening of CS that is truly inclusive of and accessible to these groups.

- Long-term engagement is needed for organizational development and for the structuration of civil society. These are processes relying on human resources and commitments that need more than single project support or on-off training events.

- Commitment to accountability both to the constituencies (i.e. the CSOs and their constituency) and to donors is key. Donors need to be ready to discuss the specificities of results chains in capacity development, which tend to be different from those in more service delivery oriented actions. They also need to be ready to consult CSOs on the selection of intermediaries in the delivery and management of CB programmes as the quality of the programme and accountability to beneficiaries very much depends on them (see Evaluation of 9th EDF CB programmes)

**Examples of types of actions to support:**

- Supporting initiatives and processes inside civil society leading to the creation of representative CSO bodies in their area, region or country;

- Building capacity of CSOs on CS and other legal issues including through supporting NGO law courses or supporting non-profit legal advisory service to CS.

- Encouraging cross-sectoral partnership and communication and information sharing inside CS.

- Development of campaigning, networking and negotiation skills (locally, at regional, cross-border, global levels) in full respect of concerned CSO and population’s understanding of these concepts and local ways and means of communicating and debating (not imposing our way), Supporting training and advice on the management of daily affairs of a transparent and accountable organization;

- Resource centers for CBOs and local NGOs, such as the EC did in India. Scaling up good practices where CSOs are already providing good practices

\(^1\) CAPITALISATION STUDY ON CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR NON STATE ACTORS UNDER THE 9TH EDF
- Capacity support to local stakeholders through fellowships; partnering stronger, more established CSOs, with smaller, weaker ones, in a ‘mentoring’ relationship, to ferment in-country collaboration and learning, and minimize risk, whilst still helping support innovation;
- Training on new communication technologies and create internet discussion forum at national level.

**Question 12: What are the role and the added value of international / EU based CSOs in this area?**

Capacity development should be based on inclusive and participatory peer learning approaches, including mutual learning between European and non-European CSOs. For example, EU CSOs are experienced with the procedures and regulations of project development, management and reporting while their partners have the deep knowledge and understanding of the context in which development actions are taking place. An interchange programme of staff between EU and local CSOs can be of benefit for both sides.

International and EU based CSOs have long-standing experience first in their own development and in the development of social structures “at home” (see the cooperatives movement in Germany and its history of more than a century), but also in partnership with local partners in developing countries. EU CSOs have gained a lot of trust with local partners. Such long-established linkages and experience qualify them to share, transform and adapt their knowledge and experience with national partners, thereby building the capacities of local partners in those specific contexts. A value added is clearly the potential of international and EU based CSOs to link different regional experiences together and facilitate such networking in order to help relevant topics reach the global agenda.

**Type of actions EU NGOs undertake or can undertake in support of capacity development:**

- Taking part in triangular and multi-actor projects and processes in response to needs expressed by partners. For example by helping partners in identifying and partnering with consultants, support services or other CSOs present in their region, or by organising S-S and S-N exchanges or actions, etc.
- Supporting and tapping in local expertise on institutional development, management, accountability etc. and facilitating the emergence of CS think tanks, advisory services, documentation and information centers.
- Funding of broad capacity development methodologies and modalities and recognition by donors of existence of S-S capacity development programmes and valuable expertise in developing countries;
- Encouraging and sponsoring research and case studies by partners and facilitating the joint work between CS and those who have the knowledge and skills (academics, think tanks, regional networks, consultants etc.)
- Involving partners in advocacy and campaigning work. For example, capacity workshops organized before JPAs and seminars organised by the CONCORD Cotonou group, and REPAOC and MESA coming to CONCords General Assembly to give awareness training. Offering the possibility of in agency training periods for partners’ staff and establishing mechanisms of exchange of staff and secondment.
- Supporting partners participation in advocacy, campaigning, dialogue processes taking place at national, regional, continental, international levels (e.g. Open Forum, Reality of Aid, Climate change).
- Promoting mutual ‘learning by doing’ when joint projects are implemented.
- Fair sharing of knowledge and responsibilities in international organisations (families) and networks, including through financial help from richer members to the poorer ones
- Playing the (backing) partner role instead of the lead agency role in submitting joint project applications and managing projects.
- Support mutual learning between the different parts of global CSOs. It’s crucial to learn from global experiences, including for projects taking place in Europe.
- We should note that European based organizations have had fruitful experiences in assisting with EC capacity development programs, as well as training of EU and delegation staff.

**Provided the adequate procedures and finance modalities are in place, EU NGOs could also play a role in EU capacity development programmes by**

- Managing block grants for small actions undertaken by local civil society
- Taking part in a “consortium” of NGOs and CSOs (EU and local) with separate tasks for distinctive parts of a broad support strategy working in a coordinated way but sharing the tasks (administrative, training, promotion of
participation in policy dialogue, exchanges with other CSOs in or outside the country etc...). It could be done with one contract and sub-contractors or as a real consortium with a lead contractor and partners. (e.g. PACS India and the IFIRST consortium http://www.pacsindia.org/ifirst )

- EU NGOs or local CSOs cooperating with a programme management unit (PMU) as a subcontractor supporting certain tasks in direct support of beneficiary organisations (training, facilitation, communication and information, consultation, monitoring and backstopping, etc...)
- Together with their partners, monitoring and watching how the programmes are or are not implemented and advocate EU institutions for improvement and for more transparency
- Informing their partners and CSOs at large of the existence of the EC support programmes and mechanisms and the way they can access information and funding.

**Question 13:** What are, in your opinion, the main challenges CSOs face in implementing these mechanisms for improving internal governance? How can CSOs monitor progress in the implementation of such mechanisms?

The Istanbul Principles for Development Effectiveness, (as noted in Question 1) imply context specific voluntary mechanisms which require flexibility to safeguard CSO autonomy and independence. Monitoring the progress of implementation must be done by CSOs themselves. This monitoring process can be supported by governments and donors, and must be done transparently and legitimately, but the independence and ownership of the principles by CSOs must be maintained and respected.

Very importantly, accountability for CSOs means maximizing efforts to take into account the views of people living in poverty and marginalization. Here, CSOs are faced with practical challenges on how to measure CSO’s efforts with the affected populations. Further, CSO accountability mechanisms should focus not only on distinct measurable development outcomes, but also on areas such as advocacy and mobilization for change, for which attribution for outcomes is rarely simple. CSO must deal with unintended outcomes shaped by changing political environments and the multi-directional demands (legal, contractual and ethical) for accountability.

Finally, as a necessary criterion for accountability, CSOs are fully committed to maximum transparency - but must ensure the privacy and protection of the rights of partners and vulnerable individuals and the need to respect equitable partnerships.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of each CSO to identify the highest standards it can set for itself in light of its resources and circumstances. Identifying these standards may include working with other CSOs, beneficiaries, constituents, donors and other stakeholders, encouraging mutual learning. Peer monitoring by other CSOs is also a valuable tool that builds capacity for development effectiveness within organizations and the CSO sector overall. See One World Trust review in the References.

In this respect, suggestions include making sure that development effectiveness is on CSOs’ regular calendar and budgets, designing indicators for each Istanbul Principle with the involvement of the intended beneficiaries, and identification and implementation of accountability mechanisms vis-à-vis relevant stakeholders.

CSOs face many unique practical challenges - internal and external - in demonstrating their accountability:

- The large number and diversity of CSO actors, the sheer number of networks and coalitions, organizations, and individuals within them is exponentially greater than any other stakeholder. CSO have different types of membership, governance, associations, and constraints. Each different sector of CS is organized differently, with some having very clear hierarchical structures, others being more open and flexible people movements, some having a high degree of participation at all levels, others having a high concentration of decision and representation rights and responsibilities concentrated among very few individuals.
- Many CSOs prioritize the use of their resources for direct effects (programmes) and are beginning to consider quality measurement, evaluation, and accountability as valid components of programme budgets;
- Many CSOs depend primarily on volunteers;
- A large amount of CSOs are quite small and informal. It will take for some of them a longer process to have systems in place for information management and even more effort for formal types of evaluation or comparison to standards. For these types of organizations, flexible and informal models are helpful. Mentoring, modelling, capacity development and information exchange by other CSOs will be critical;
- CSOs face barriers of the need for translation (a key for transparency and participation), and resources to enable broader participation and oversight of governance, both within their own organizations, and as they participate in wider coalitions and even global processes.
- There are many accountability and self-review processes that exist. These are not well known by parts of the CS community and especially by donors. See One World Trust in references.
- CSOs also have some of the same constraints that are seen among Local Authorities and Governments, with the need to have checks and balances, some lack of experience or will for appropriate governance by some actors, the tendency to turn over power to those who have certain skills, languages or international experience, competition for funding, poor management of archives and information and the lack of resources for information dissemination or broader participation. The EU can support efforts of CSOs to overcome these issues.

Question 14: Should the EU support CSOs in implementing mechanisms for improving internal governance? How?
CSOs stress the fundamental importance of voluntary accountability mechanisms which should be driven by CSOs themselves. Therefore, the EU should be flexible and work in a context-specific way to help support CSO effectiveness activities. At the same time, this should be done as a support player, and CSOs should be in the driver seat in terms of our own accountability and the implementation of our principles. Given the diversity of CSOs worldwide, it is only practical to have voluntary mechanisms, which provide a framework to improve CSO practice, with a requisite flexibility to safeguard CSO autonomy and independence. But development stakeholders can support CSO efforts by:

- Implementing donor models of support that can contribute to CSO effectiveness through policies and requirements that are appropriate to promote CSO roles as effective, independent development actors in their own right. These include: increasing core or program support; maintaining a mix of funding modalities; increasing donor coordination of country-level support to civil society, based on the local needs identified by CSOs; providing support to CSO networks and coalitions to facilitate CSO coordination, policy dialogue and capacity strengthening; and simplifying and harmonizing donor administrative requirements to reduce transaction costs;
- Acknowledging existing efforts and progress in demonstrating CSOs’ accountability while CSOs recognize the need for continued progress and commit to actively strengthen the application of self-managed accountability and transparency mechanisms and standards;
- Encouraging context-specific adoption and application of principles of aid and development effectiveness, including the Istanbul Principles, accompanying guidelines and indicators, and CSOs’ own on-going efforts to implement and monitor these self-regulating standards and tools;
- Recognizing that all development actors have a responsibility to be accountable for their aid and development efforts, and share responsibility to promote each other’s accountability;
- Encouraging efforts by all stakeholders to increase transparency in keeping with their respective access to information regulations, the scale of resources and agreement on modalities that do not jeopardize the continued operations, safety and security of CSOs or individuals associated with them;
- Identifying and promoting good practices of self-regulation by CSOs and provide funding and translation costs to enable CSOs to gather themselves
- Encouraging and supporting the respect and implementation of the law on citizen participation, if one is in place, in collaboration with other international donors.

Question 15: Are there other key elements, in addition to the ones discussed above, to be considered in building a solid and informed EC engagement with local CSO’s in a given country?
Situations for CS vary from country to country and even in one given country, the situation can deteriorate or improve with great speed. This is due to the ad-hoc nature of CS participation in many places and its dependence on good will, interest and capacity of all stakeholders, including EC staff, as well as on the general social and political climate. In building a solid and informed EU engagement with local CSOs, we recommend the following:
A training programme on the value of CS participation and participatory approaches and methods should be implemented for EU Delegation staff. EU staff should be encouraged to take CS participation seriously; through clear information, training and incentives. A dynamic exchange of learning tools should be created and staff competences and expertise to work with CS should be reinforced and promoted;

Each Delegation should prepare a roadmap in view of establishing a structured and permanent dialogue with CS. The timeframe and steps of the roadmap will depend on the national context. Wherever Delegations are engaged in dialogue, a minimum set of guidelines should be respected, for both on-going dialogue and specific policy and programming consultations, to make sure that a qualitative outcome is achieved;

In doing so, Delegations should stay in close consultation with CS to ensure that needs, concerns and expectations of CS are taken into account and that CS actors are sufficiently integrated;

Communication strategies and tools at both HQ and Delegation level should be reviewed in view of making information more accessible to CS actors on a broader scale (making better use of websites, local media, social media and CS communication tools, e.g. community radio);

Delegations should be instructed to work with local expertise and CS actors rather than relying on external consultants. Call for tender procedures should be adapted and using grants and sub-granting should be envisaged for CS programmes management tasks;

Delegations should identify the way they can use the different cooperation instruments to support CS multiple roles. This should be done in consultation with CS actors through annual workshops;

As an example: the Policy Forum on Development is a good initiative which should be maintained and strengthened.

Multi-stakeholder debates on international cooperation between EU institutions and EU CS should be promoted;

Coordination and, when relevant, pooling of funding in support of CS should be envisaged by EU donors and be facilitated by EU Delegations.

The technical fiches of the Structured Dialogue for alternative implementing mechanisms of EU funding to CSOs should be used, with a context specific approach. Delegations should have at their disposal flexible financial means allowing them to support small-scale, time-bound activities relating to CS watchdog role and participation in policy debates, budget and aid monitoring. Core funding should be envisaged for CS structures, coalitions, networks playing a role in governance and democratic ownership and accountability (as is the case in the EU). Sub-granting models could also be envisaged to allow more informal and grass-root organizations to take part in policy work, advocacy and dialogue;

The obtention of visas for Southern partners wishing to participate to events in Europe should be facilitated;

The existence of competent staff (in the EEAS, EC HQ and EU Delegations) on development issues and dialogue facilitation with CS is essential. A big effort has already been made to have one CSO focal point in each EU Delegation. But there’s still room to improve donors’ coordination at country level on CSOs support, including in situations where there’s no optimal EE;

We regret that partner governments were not part of the Structured Dialogue process. The EU should commit to and promote an EE for CSOs as independent development actors, both in law and practice, in line with internationally agreed commitments. The EU should respect and actively promote the right of initiative of CSOs avoiding unwarranted governmental interference in CSO internal affairs, particularly in non-conducive environments.

The opportunity for global CSOs to participate in training of Delegations and at HQ. For example, CSOs have been involved the multi stakeholder process to write a guiding toolkit with the EEAS on promoting and protecting Child Rights. In addition, CONCORDs Financing for Development Group organised joint workshop with HQ on contractual management and CONCORD members worked with together with the EC on the Gender Action Plan.

**Question 16: How should country level political dynamics be considered in engaging with CSOs and supporting their governance-related roles?**

Thorough CSO mapping (see question 9) is essential, in order to get a clear picture of the balance of powers in the CSO sector in a given country. In addition, the following points have to be taken into account:
- Treat CS as actors: move beyond the usual CS ‘suspects’; assess and analyze their interests, values, histories, incentives roles, functions, and governance structures;
- Analyze state-society relations systematically – development processes are inherently political processes. Land, water, opportunities, even aid resources are scarce resources. Access to them is restricted. Since new aid modalities seek to strengthen the state, it matters to know whether the state is responsive to the needs and rights of all the citizens, to the demands from organized citizens, or whether the state primarily serves the vested interests of the elites. More systematic analysis of these issues should include: shifting the emphasis from a normative to an analytical approach; introduce systematically political economy and governance analysis; incentive continued learning;
- A key point to making CS interaction with governments effective is meaningful engagement and leverage. Unless they are ‘at the table’, listened and responded to any efforts at structuring and capacity-building will be severely limited. On one hand this is an issue of space, but to make this effective, the elites and decision-makers need to not only be part of this space, but active and responsive to what is raised within this space. This ‘elite bargain’ is what many at present consider to be a main ingredient to effective development work. The EU can certainly use its leverage, as a major donor and partner to facilitate this;
- Do not harm: domestic state-society relations are at the core of development, not aid inputs or donor references. It is key for external actors to thread carefully and do not harm. With the EU Delegations playing new more political role, as facilitator, change agent, convener and innovator, it may become more strategic in its cooperation with NSAs. CS work is also too often framed in a confrontational ‘them vs. us’ model that does not take due cognizance of how change happens, and that when change does happen it is most often in a process of combined interests and incentives between all stakeholders.

**Question 17: Implications and opportunities of the social media trend for CSOs**

See Question 4 for more details on the role of media, and particularly social media.

The increased use and importance of social media tools has led to a shake-up in traditional approaches to advocacy and campaigning and opened the way to a new form of ‘digital activism’, which can have a huge potential for nurturing CSO activities. Working with new and significant stakeholders, young people (both women and men) and their leadership is important to invest in. Furthermore, there seems to be an increasing motivation of citizens all over the planet to get involved with issues of international solidarity, global justice and sustainable development. Indeed, social media can spread information and mobilize support for CSO issues quickly and across boundaries, speeding up the campaigning process and reaching out to an ever expanding public base and decision makers worldwide. However, social media and digital activism, while being relevant tools for CSOs, have their limits. Thus, traditional advocacy remains relevant because key decisions are being taken through traditional institutional channels (Parliaments etc.). CSOs should carefully construct their social media strategies based on their goals and target public. Also, these movements and initiatives often take place outside the traditional scope of development NGOs, and there is the danger of simplistic answers and activism bubbles (e.g. the Kony2012 campaign). CSOs should be conscious of the fact that online activism is not the solution to culturally and historically deeply entrenched societal issues. The crux still lies with off line changes. So CSOs need to combine innovative approaches with off line structures and relations (systems) that determine social change.

The challenge and opportunity for CSOs is to create an open and inclusive dialogue and linkage between the various actors. Important tools to do so are education (in particular development education, or global learning, in Europe and non-European countries) and a human rights based approach to development. These fields of action and principles can lead to a sustainable popular engagement with development and global justice and bring various actors with a different history more closely together.

**Question 18: How should the EU respond to these trends in your opinion?**

The EU should increase its efforts in providing high quality education programmes, in particular popular education, global learning and development education in Europe and partner countries. These approaches will contribute to empower citizens everywhere to make positive contributions to development, beyond the sometimes simplistic
activism. This is particularly important when facing the "global social question" with is an increasingly important driving force for political change and citizens mobilisation.

As stated in the Structured Dialogue concluding paper: "Tackling global challenges requires public engagement and active citizens. Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) can be instrumental in fostering this engagement and the EC has an added value in facilitating it. Fostering active citizenship and empowerment for social change through DEAR should be a worldwide endeavour, not limited to Europe. It should be based on mutual and participatory learning, linking of individuals and communities, as well as complementarity and partnership between formal state education systems, CSOs and LAs as the institutional level closest to the people. Citizens' empowerment for change would contribute to the emergence of a Global Civil Society."

Such a Global Civil Society is crucial to shape globalisation in a positive way. The purposeful interaction of responsible global citizens is the fabric of a Global Civil Society. This global dialogue should be based on respect, reciprocity and mutual learning and thus support the emergence of a global ethic and shared values. It should promote individual and collective rights and responsibilities and foster Global Citizenship. The emerging involvement of citizens provides legitimacy for political action. Any future development roadmap must include a focus on building up a strong Global Civil Society by empowering people as global citizens.

We would suggest to put mechanisms in place, that could allow also to the EC officers to note and see for themselves the effectiveness of the actions realized through the projects. The EU should also consider facilitating and assigning specific “spaces” for development education activities also for small associations, (perhaps mini-grants?) really involved in people to people programs. Projects that put in contact directly groups of social assistants, teachers, animators, development educators and migrants should be awarded.

EC representatives should use their convening power realistically and should not fear to be open about "European values", such as diversity, pluralism and inclusion. Therefore, the EC should refrain from easy (bureaucratic) solutions and should avoid to only speak with a number of carefully selected spokespeople. They need to stimulate participation of a broad spectrum of CS, including organizations that may have an antagonistic relationship with official authorities. Silent diplomacy through civil servants, CS actors and private entrepreneurs should be stimulated.

In addition, we expect the EC to take into account migrant organisations as CS actors and to support cooperation between other CS actors and migrant organisations in all aspects of their programmes, including development education. Small grants should be mobilized for helping migrant organisations to build their organisational and management capacities, and to liaise between organisations from different EU MSs countries. This would help diasporas to organise themselves in favour of development action that use remittances more strategically, as the potential of remittances is much bigger. Multi-actor programmes involving LAs and NGOs, migrant associations and community based organisations from the EU and the countries of origin, are an avenue worth to explore. Similar support programmes already exist at MSs level (see i.e. “Guide pratique du co-developpement” by CNCD) which could provide best practice information to assess how this could work at the EU-level.

**Question 19 –Additional comments**

CONCORD welcomes the preparation of the Communication on the roles of CSOs in development as a concrete step forward in implementing the outcomes of the Structured Dialogue process, particularly the recommendation to adopt a differentiated strategy on CSOs and LAs engagement, outlining their diversity and respective multifaceted roles in development, human rights, gender, democratization, governance, public awareness and peace and security. We do hope that the Communication will therefore address how to support pluralistic and active CSOs in Europe and in partner countries who are able to meaningfully fulfill all their roles as development actors, being service delivery, watchdog role, awareness raising or development education.

CSOs bring added value to the **definition, execution and evaluation of public policies** in their national context being in partner countries or in Europe. CSOs also contribute to strengthening the functioning of the EU institutions and provide a link between them and EU citizens (e.g., CONCORD AidWatch initiative or the CONCORD Spotlight report on EU Policy Coherence for Development). As acknowledged during the Structured Dialogue process, we hope that the
Communication will also embrace the concept of **global civil society**; in an interdependent world, a global civil society is now emerging, and the simplistic North / South terminology should no longer be used to divide CSOs. What is important is to respect the diversity and to promote synergies and cooperation between CSOs active and engaged at different levels whether local, regional or global (the Open Forum on CS development effectiveness offers a good example of such an approach). Within a Global Civil Society, European CSOs bring specific value added on advocating for just and sustainable global development and policies, supporting CSOs in other regions, supporting the implementation of programmes by mutual sharing of knowledge, experiences and lessons learned, building awareness for citizen’s rights and empowering and fostering the participation of all citizens to become actors of change in world-wide poverty eradication. Furthermore, European CSOs play a role in rigorous monitoring and evaluation of development activities and projects in order to lead to an improved effectiveness and involvement of their local partners. Last but not least, European CSOs also continue to work in humanitarian relief and to uphold humanitarian principles.

We expect that the support to CSOs will be framed in a **human rights based approach to development**: all development programmes should ensure that pro-poor and sustainable development prevails over short term and narrow or elite European interests. Sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights should form the basis for EU policymaking.

CONCORD would like to see proposals on how support CSOs to be translated in the future financial instruments 2014-2020, beyond the proposed thematic programme “Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities”. CONCORD calls for greater recognition of CSOs as implementing actors in all geographic programmes, and a clear commitment to a 15% earmarking of funds for CS within the geographic programmes. The Communication should include references to the conclusions of the Structured Dialogue in all instruments, including with regard to the diversification of funding modalities (toolbox of 12 technical fiches). Any detailed reference in the communication on the development of transparent, inclusive and timely programming processes of EU funds in consultation with CSOs throughout the lifetime of the MFF 2014-20 and beyond, will be highly appreciated. Such transparency and real participation are key to make full use of the potential contained in the diversification of funding modalities.

The Communication should also demonstrate the determination of the EU regarding the promotion of the right of initiative and of an enabling environment for CSOs as independent development actors in their own right – in partner countries as well as in Europe.
References:


- One World Trust issued a paper on CSO self-regulation which provides an overview of the state of CSO self-regulation worldwide: [http://www.oneworldtrust.org/csproject/](http://www.oneworldtrust.org/csproject/)


- Website of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association Available at the following link: [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/AssemblyAssociation/Pages/SRFreedomAssemblyAssociationIndex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/AssemblyAssociation/Pages/SRFreedomAssemblyAssociationIndex.aspx)

- Capitalisation study on support to CS through the 9th EDF;

- CONCORD Cotonou Group “Bottlenecks paper”

- Praxis Note 52 - Striking Oil: Blessing or Curse? INTRAC 2010;
