

# The EU Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society in Vietnam for the period 2021-2025

## Summary

### Introduction

The EU Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society in Vietnam for the period 2021-2025 is a follow up of the previous Roadmap documents, which were prepared back in 2014 and 2018. The new Roadmap takes account of the evolving nature of EU relations with Vietnam and provides a strategic approach to the engagement with civil society, which cuts across the political, trade and cooperation dimensions of the EU engagement in Vietnam.

Relations between the EU and Vietnam are strong and deepening. Major developments in the intervening period since 2018 include the entry into force of the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and the preparation of the new Multi Annual indicative programme for the period 2021-2027. Of particular importance for the present Roadmap are the sustainable development provisions of the EVFTA, with the establishment of a Domestic Advisory Group (DAG). The roadmap also takes account of the new roles and importance acquired by Vietnam at ASEAN and global level, as well as the changes in the civil society landscape in Vietnam, including the emergence of new actors.

The aim of the Roadmap, in line with its predecessors, is to consider the key trends in the context of Civil Society in Vietnam, and to identify priority areas for the EU and its Member States (MS) in their engagement with Civil Society.

### Key lessons learnt from past EU engagement

Over the past years, and since the elaboration of the first Roadmap back in 2014, the EU has ensured a comprehensive approach in its engagement with Civil Society, combining both operational and political support to CSOs in Vietnam.

At the policy level, the EU Delegation has taken a strategic approach, engaging with both existing EU grantees and non-grantees, whilst ensuring a broad engagement with all segments of CSOs working on different topics and from different geographical locations, ranging from international organisations and local NGOs, to quasi -governmental organisations, professional organisations, community-based organisation, cooperatives, the youth, cultural hubs, and recently extending its engagement with business associations. Consultations have been deepened in the framework of the elaboration of the new Roadmap, but also for the drafting of the new Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy and the new Country Level Implementation Plan for the gender Action Plan, as well as in the Multiannual indicative Programme (MIP) 2021- 2027.

Operational support to CSOs has been channelled through two main envelopes, the bilateral programme, and thematic programmes. On the policy level, the EU Delegation continues to lead and coordinate the EU CSO Working Group which meets quarterly. The quarterly meetings of EU CSO Working Group have served as an informal platform for EUD and EU MS to get better coordination and collaboration on CSOs topic in Vietnam.

At the initiative of the EU Delegation, four editions of the EU Grant Beneficiary Forums were held since 2016. The event aims to reinforce the mutual engagement between the EU and EU CSOs grantees in Vietnam and to leverage the EU-CSO partnership that goes beyond the mere donor funding recipients' relationship. The forum also serves to foster the collaboration between EU CSO grantees and EU MS and to improve the cooperation among EU CSO grantees. Both the EU and its Member States are also active development partners in the Like-minded Donor Working Group (LMDG) on CSOs.

## The strategy and action plan for the engagement with CSOs in the framework of the new Joint Strategy 2021-2025

The new Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society in Vietnam for the period 2021-2025 will be articulated around four key priority areas, as follows:

- II. Promote an enabling environment allowing Civil Society in Vietnam better engage in the development and governance perspectives of the country
- III. Promote a stronger voice and participation of CSOs in domestic policies at national and local levels (from dialogue to PPP), with a particular emphasis on the areas of EU engagement in Vietnam.
- IV. Promote networking, partnerships and alliance-building (within the sector and with other stakeholders, both state and non-state actors) to amplify the collective voice of Civil Society and their contributions to development and governance.
- V. Promote a structured dialogue between CSOs and the EU

The first table hereafter provides an overview of the four priorities, with an indication of possible types of actions that can be implemented for their implementation.

The second table provides indicators for the follow up of the Roadmap

**Table I: ACTION PLAN**

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
<p>1.Promote an enabling environment allowing Civil Society in Vietnam (both formal and informal organisations) better perform their roles and engage in the development and governance perspectives of the country</p>	<p><b>Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Support CSOs efforts to monitor and assess the trends in the enabling environment, including the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the right of association, assembly and free speech and collective values.</li> </ul> <p><b>Policy and Political dialogue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Strengthen joint EU-GoV political dialogue (also with other DPs) to advocate for an Enabling Environment and the due implementation of international treaties and conventions (i.e., including in the framework of the EVFTA (i.e., on the set up of the DAG and involvement of independent CSOs)</li> </ul> <p><b>Operational support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Support CSOs to develop (and exchange on) strategies and systems to adapt to cope with the legal and institutional systems in place regulating their registration and operation.</li> <li>◁ Support CSOs in their efforts to enhance their financial sustainability, with a focus on local income generation/fundraising possibilities (visa-s vis the public sector, individuals, and the private sector).</li> <li>◁ Adopt innovative funding mechanisms (e.g., block grants; etc) to reach out to emerging actors, non-registered CSOs, SEs, CBOs etc.</li> <li>◁ Support education and public awareness campaigns, and engagement with the media engagement around fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to access to information, access-to-information legislation, and responsibilities of state agencies in ensuring the right to be fulfilled are supported.</li> <li>◁ Support CSOs skills development to: (i) be more results oriented; (ii) develop internal governance and accountability systems; (ii) enhance storytelling and develop counter narratives; (iii) connect with constituencies and with public in general</li> </ul>
<p>2. Promote a stronger voice and participation of CSOs in domestic policies at national and local levels (from dialogue to PPP), with a particular emphasis on the areas of EU engagement in Vietnam.</p>	<p><b>Policy dialogue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Support Civil Society involvement in the identification, formulation and monitoring of EU supported green deal initiatives to address climate change, energy transition, protection of biodiversity, green and smart cities, et</li> <li>◁ Support Civil Society involvement in the identification, formulation and monitoring of EU supported initiatives to promote a resilient economy and social inclusion, including the adherence of the private sector to social and environmental standards</li> <li>◁ Play a brokering role and promote exchanges with Vietnam authorities, at national and local level, on an Open Government to engage more constructively and inclusively (ensuring the participation of women, youth and minority groups).</li> </ul> <p><b>Operational support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Support Civil Society led bottom-up green deal initiatives to address climate change, energy transition, protection of biodiversity, green and</li> </ul>

	<p>smart cities, etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Support Public-private partnerships and alliances with Civil Society and the private sector to promote a resilient economy and social inclusion, including the adherence of the private sector to social and environmental standards</li> </ul> <p><b>Support the strengthening of -based advocacy and engage constructively and effectively with the authorities at local and national level.</b></p>
<p>3. Strengthen the capacities and promote networking, partnerships, and alliance-building (within the sector and with other stakeholders, both state and non-state actors) to amplify the collective voice of Civil Society and their contributions to the development and governance of Vietnam.</p>	<p><b>Operational support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Provide adapted funding and technical support to networks, Working Groups, coalitions, and alliances, advocating for policy changes for a better socio-economic development and governance arrangements in Vietnam, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cross-sector alliances and those involving formal and informal actors; traditional and new.</li> <li>○ Coalitions promoting gender equality, youth participation in decision making and the rights of the most vulnerable groups (including ethnic minorities) are supported</li> <li>○ Collaboration and exchanges between Vietnam CSOs and ASEAN peers; with research institutes, academia &amp; think tanks; with the media</li> <li>○ Developing new generation of leaders (youth)</li> </ul> </li> <li>◁ Support CSOs skills development to: (i) be more results oriented; (ii) develop internal governance and accountability systems; (ii) enhance storytelling and develop counter narratives; (iii) connect with constituencies and with public in general</li> </ul>
<p>4. Promote a structured dialogue between CSOs and the EU</p>	<p><b>Policy dialogue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◁ Organise the EU Grantee Forum in 2021. Some of the topics which could be discussed are: (i) the latest developments in the EE and advocacy efforts towards resuming the process to draft an association law; (ii) financial sustainability: strategies and innovative approaches and (iii) the set-up of a more Structured Dialogue (see below)</li> <li>◁ Building on the 2021 and previous editions experience of the EU Grantee Forum, set-up a more structured dialogue mechanism between the EU and CSOs to discuss regularly relevant issues about the EE and cross cutting issues.</li> <li>◁ Promote systematic engagement efforts to reach out and involve in the dialogue non-Hanoi based CSOs, Women groups and ethnic minorities.</li> <li>◁ Establish a Community of practice across EU grantees and other CSOs, in the relevant sectors of EU engagement in Vietnam and in governance in general.</li> </ul>

**Table II: FOLLOW-UP OF THE RM**

PRIORITIES	OUTCOME INDICATORS	TARGET	BASELINE INFORMATION (if available)	SOURCES OF INFORMATION & MEANS OF VERIFICATION
1. Promote an enabling environment allowing Civil Society in Vietnam (both formal and informal organisations) better perform their roles and engage in the development and governance perspectives of the country	World Press Freedom Index	Improvement in the ranking	In 2021: 175 out of 180	World Press Freedom Index: <a href="https://rsf.org/en/ranking">https://rsf.org/en/ranking</a>
	Freedom House Index	Improvement in the ranking	In 2002: 20/100 (Not free) < Political rights: 3/40 < Civil liberties: 16/60	Freedom House: <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/vietnam/freedom-world/2020">https://freedomhouse.org/country/vietnam/freedom-world/2020</a>
	EEI Civicus	Improvement in the ranking (if a new measurement is undertaken)	In 2013: 0.37 (restricted)	EEI: <a href="https://www.civicus.org/eci/">https://www.civicus.org/eci/</a>
	Number, type and level of CSOs participation in political and policy dialogues initiated/facilitated by the GoV, i.e: VDF, EPG, LPF <sup>1</sup>	Representatives from various CSOs segments in VDF Increasing number of CSOs' participation in LPF Representatives of CSOs in EPG and 5 Working Group	Representatives from INGOs and VNGOs in VDF Limited number of CSOs participation in LPF	VUFO NGO reports, VDF report/minutes LPF report/minutes EPG/Working Groups reports/minutes OXFAM reports EU JULE programme reports Energy Budget Support Programme reports
	Number, type and level of CSOs participation in the DAG/EFVTA	Representatives of CSOs in DAG/EFVTA	None (new process)	EFVTA implementation reports
	Level of diplomacy efforts deployed by the DPs on the regulatory framework on CSOs in Vietnam	Increasing joint efforts by DPs on CSOs regulatory framework	Joint letters signed by Ambassadors	Letters signed
	Level of CSOs participation/engagement prior to Human Rights Dialogue	Increasing number and segment of CSOs engagement	Meeting with 5-6 INGOs and VNGOs	Reports/Minutes
2. Promote a stronger voice and participation of CSOs in domestic policies at national and local levels (from dialogue to	Level of engagement of Civil Society in the identification, formulation and monitoring of EU supported Green Deal initiatives to promote climate-responsive digital circular economy	Policy papers led by CSOs on Green Deals Policy initiatives led by CSOs on Green Deals	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics. EUD and MS reporting
	Number of EU supported Civil Society led bottom-up green deal initiatives to promote climate-	EU projects supporting Civil Society led bottom-up Green	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics. EUD and MS reporting

<sup>1</sup> VDF – Vietnam Development Forum, EPG – Energy Partnership Group, LPF- Legal Partnership Forum

PPP), with a particular emphasis on the areas of EU engagement in Vietnam.	responsive digital circular economy	Deal initiatives		
	Level of Civil Society engagement in the identification, formulation and monitoring of EU supported initiatives to promote responsible entrepreneurship and decent employment	Policy papers led by CSOs on Responsible entrepreneurship and decent employment. Policy initiatives led by CSOs on responsible entrepreneurship and decent employment	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics EUD reporting
	Number of EU supported Public-private partnerships and alliances with Civil Society and the private sector to promote responsible entrepreneurship and decent employment	Responsible entrepreneurship and decent employment	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics. EUD and MS reporting
	Level of Civil Society engagement in the identification, formulation and monitoring of EU supported initiatives to promote governance, rule of law and institutional reform	Policy papers led by CSOs on governance, rule of law and institutional reform	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics EUD and MS reporting
	Number of EU supported Civil Society led bottom-up initiatives to strengthen governance, rule of law and institutional reform	EU projects supporting Civil society led governance, rule of law and institutional reform initiative		CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics
	Number and level of EU brokering initiatives to promote exchanges between CSOs and Vietnam authorities.	Increased brokering role	No systematic data collated	EUD and MS reporting
3. Strengthen the capacities and promote networking, partnerships, and alliance-building (within the sector and with other stakeholders, both state and non-state actors) to amplify the collective voice of Civil Society and their contributions to the development	Capacity of CSOs to conduct evidence-based advocacy and engage constructively and effectively with the authorities at local and national level.	Increased number of CSOs engaged in evidence-based research and advocacy	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics. EUD and MS reporting
	Number of EU supported cross-sector alliances/ coalitions, networks/etc advocating for policy changes for a better socio-economic development and governance arrangements in Vietnam, including with research institutes, academia & think tanks; with the media	Increased number of coalitions and alliances Increased exchanges between Vietnam CSOs and ASEAN peers	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics. EUD and MS reporting VUFO NGO reports
	Number of EU supported coalitions promoting gender equality, youth participation in decision making and the rights of the most vulnerable groups (including ethnic minorities) are supported	Increased number of coalitions and alliances supporting gender equality and youth participation Increased number of initiatives developing new generation of	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics EUD and MS reporting

and governance of Vietnam.		leaders (youth)		
	Level of development of internal governance and accountability systems	Internal governance and accountability systems developed	No systematic data collated	CS reports VUFO NGO reports
	Number of EU initiatives supporting storytelling and the development of counter narratives; better connections between CSOs with constituencies and with public in general	Increased number of initiatives supporting communication	No systematic data collated	CSOs and EIDHR projects on relevant topics. EUD and MS reporting
4. Promote a structured dialogue between CSOs and the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU CSO Day</li> <li>- EU-CSO roundtable on strategic thematic topics</li> <li>- EU CSO Working Group</li> </ul> <p>EU facilitation CSO-private sector networking involve in the dialogue non-Hanoi based CSOs, Women's groups and etc</p> <p>Organise the EU Grantee Forum in 2021. Some topics which could be discussed are: (i) the latest developments in the EE and advocacy efforts towards resuming the process to draft an association law; (ii) financial sustainability: strategies and innovative approaches and (iii) the set-up of a more Structured Dialogue (see below)</p> <p>Building on the 2021 and previous editions experience of the EU Grantee Forum, set up a more structured dialogue mechanism between the EU and CSOs to discuss regularly relevant issues about the EE and cross cutting issues.</p> <p>Promote systematic engagement efforts to reach out and involve in the dialogue non-Hanoi based CSOs, Women's groups and etc</p> <p>Establish a Community of practice across EU grantees and other CSOs, in the relevant sectors of EU engagement in Vietnam and in governance in general.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One event per annum</li> <li>At least 3 roundtable discussions per annum</li> <li>At least 1-2 meetings per annum</li> <li>At least one per annum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>02 events, each held in 2016 and 2017 respectively</li> <li>6 discussions held in 2016 and 2017 on health, energy and trade topics</li> <li>One meeting per annum</li> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU CSO Day (or EU Grant Beneficiaries Forum) reports</li> <li>- EU-CSO Roundtable Discussion Reports</li> <li>- EU CSO WG meeting's Minutes</li> <li>- Reports</li> </ul>