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KEEPING TRACK

EU Roadmaps for engagement with Civil Society

'Keeping track' is the first newsletter on EU Country Roadmaps for engagement with civil society. It consists of a compilation of articles that have already been published online on the dedicated pages under "Capacity4dev" (Civil Society Group). The aim of this newsletter is to ensure visibility on the process, and exchange experiences between the various stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the Roadmaps.

ROADMAPS - STATE OF PLAY

It is now more than one year ago that the exercise to develop EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society at country level was launched. More than 80 have been received to date with several more expected later in the year. Factors such as internal conflict and humanitarian crisis like the Ebola crisis have delayed the process in certain countries.

When it comes to lessons learnt, it has become clear that the process of developing Roadmaps is at least as important as the end-product itself. Many EU Delegations have used the Roadmaps as an entry point to reach out to a broader range of Civil Society Organisations and to engage in a broader process of dialogue. Roadmaps furthermore have been instrumental in strengthening collaboration and coordination with Member States and other international players.

The EU Country Roadmaps should be seen as a strategic framework for the EU's entire engagement with civil society, including knowledge, policy dialogue and operational support. Roadmaps are therefore expected to increase coherence and impact of existing initiatives by setting out overall strategic directions. These overall strategic orientations could then be translated into specific programme and project documents and in guidelines for calls for proposals to be prepared by the EU Delegations. Mainstreaming of Civil Society support into the focal sectors of EU cooperation will also be paramount, when relevant, to implement the Roadmaps. Meanwhile, the European Commission has set up the so-called Roadmap Support Facility to support Delegations in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of these documents.

Public Roadmaps will gradually be made available via the [Capacity4Dev](#) platform, using the [public group on civil society](#). In some cases however it has been decided to restrict access to these documents.



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ROADMAPS AS A FUTURE PROGRAMMING TOOL FOR MEMBER STATES

An interview with Cornelius Hacking of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Some twenty five percent of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget of the Netherlands goes to or through Civil Society Organisations. Sometimes this is distributed directly by the Dutch embassies in partner countries, or by central thematic programmes. A third way is by capacity building programmes like the future programme "Dialogue and Dissent," established to support lobby and advocacy activities of CSOs in partner countries, starting from 2016.

Cornelius Hacking of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs has high hopes of the Roadmaps for engagement with Civil Society. "I hope we can start using the Roadmaps in the near future. We hope to use them to analyse the situation in the country, to see what are the most important issues and, very important, also learn what other countries are doing in a specific country. If we know all this, we will be able to adapt our programming where necessary in order to avoid we are supporting areas that might not be so effective, or areas that are already covered by others.

At the moment we are very concerned about the enabling environment for CSOs. Their space to operate in is shrinking: in a growing number of countries they are facing more and more obstacles, for example by the introduction of new laws against CSOs. This is for example the case in Russia and Egypt. But also in South Sudan and a number of other partner countries of EU Member States it is not allowed anymore or very difficult to receive money from abroad, therefore making external funding for CSOs impossible."



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"Now that a number of Roadmaps are finalised" Hacking continues, "we ask our embassies specifically to indicate, in their annual plans and reports, what they do or how they have engaged with the EU Country Roadmap. I would call upon all Member States to do the same, to ensure that they take good note of the importance of the Roadmaps. Our Ministry knows that most of our embassies have been involved in the development of the Roadmaps. But so far we have not seen it back in our programming yet. But I definitely hope that this will be the case in the near future. We also hope that the Roadmaps will play an important role in strengthening the enabling environments; for this we find it important that Roadmaps are publicly available. And where this is difficult or where Roadmaps are restricted, it should be ensured that there is an adapted public version available, not only for us, but also for the CSOs in our partner countries."

THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AT THE POLICY FORUM ON DEVELOPMENT

Voices from the PFD, Brussels 17 - 18 March 2015

An enabling environment refers to the conditions necessary for civil society in order to play their roles as active, effective and necessary actors of development.

Only if a set of conditions is in place to engage in a sustained and effective manner, development actors are able to fulfil an added value in their societies. This set of conditions is referred to as an enabling environment. It includes elements that are related to legal, regulatory and policy frameworks as well as to political, socio-cultural and economic factors. During the last Policy Forum on Development that was held in Brussels at the end of March, the progress in enhancing an enabling environment was discussed among all participants.

According to Antonio Tujan, of the CSO Platform for Development Effectiveness, there are three levels when it comes to providing an enabling environment for development actors. The first level is the recognition of rights and freedoms of CSOs by a legal regulating environment. The second level is the possibility for policy influencing. If this is to be ensured, full access to information is needed. The last level for providing an enabling environment is the availability of support for CSOs from



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donors as well as from private sector actors. Antonio Tujan acknowledges that there is often still only a limited space for consultation. "Although in my country the Philippines, and some others, the space for consultation is good, this is quite rare in many other countries".



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When it comes to measuring the enabling environment, Ziad Abdel Samad of the Arab NGO Network for Development told the Forum that there are five dimensions to measure this. "We need to look at how CSO's are informed, how they can operate and what are their restrictive factors. We then also need to consider whether they have access to resources and if there is freedom of expression. The last dimension we need to consider is whether there exists the right to peaceful assembly".

Also for the EU, the promotion of a conducive environment in partner countries is a priority. The Country Roadmaps focus on issues of basic legal rights, organisational and financial sustainability and participation of civil society in public life. The EU created different tools to monitor and keep track on civil society. The Country Roadmaps are a strategic tool for this as they are pointing out what the strategic goals are. The Country Roadmaps for engagement with civil society are complemented by the EU Human Rights Country Strategies and various geographical policies.

The EU supports civil society by consulting and having dialogues. It is also expressing its support, by being present and visible in the partner countries. The EU furthermore supports capacity development for CSO's and for evidence based advocacy as well as through strengthening existing platforms, coalitions and alliances. At the same time, it is engaging with authorities through political dialogue, by facilitating multi stakeholder dialogue and by leveraging international expertise that is expected to contribute to a more enabling environment.

For more information and documentation on the last Policy Forum on Development please click https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/aidco/index.php/Policy_forum_on_development.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD - THE CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION PROCESS IN MAURITANIA

"It is up to Civil Society Organisations to organise ourselves around an ideal or a theme that will give us credibility" and "Civil Society in Mauritania does not manage to achieve the critical mass in order to represent the voice of the population." Those were two of the many statements that were discussed during three workshops organised in Mauritania during the month of March 2015.

In order to contextualise the three priorities of the 'Communication 2012 Roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society' the Roadmap Support Facility organised three participative SWOT workshops plus a number of regional consultations in Mauritania. More than 110 representatives of CSO's from all over the country participated in debates around the three priorities being; 1. To enhance efforts to promote a conducive environment for CSO's, 2. To promote participation of CSO's in domestic policies and 3. To increase local CSO's capacity. For each priority a number of statements were provided. Participants were encouraged to choose sides, for or against the statement, and then to discuss the development perspectives of civil society in Mauritania and the required engagement of the EU.

One of the many findings was that CSO's which are not based in the capital Nouakchott often are excluded from the process. Amongst others this is also due to the fact that most CSOs are connected to International CSOs who are concentrated in the capital, that CSOs' coordination and representation mechanisms are weak and sometimes contested and that internet is often still not mainstream outside the capital. CSOs' representatives also indicated that a stronger political dialogue between the EU and the government is needed to support an enabling environment in the country.



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The three workshops gave many other insights, strong points and weaknesses about the role of Civil Society in Mauritania and the engagement of the EU. All in all, the input of the workshops was very useful for drafting the analytical part of the Roadmap. As a follow up and to finalise the Roadmap, more regional workshops were held during the first two weeks of April in Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, Kaédi, Boghé, Aïoun and Atar to decide upon the priorities and indicators of the Roadmap.

During those workshops, in which a total of 372 CSOs were consulted, participants indicated that 'understanding the role, rights and duties of civil society' still requires a lot of attention and should be considered as a condition to play their role effectively. The final Roadmap for Mauritania has been finalized and presented during the Europe Week in May.

Tine Veldkamp, expert of the Roadmap Support Facility on lessons learned

From the process in Mauritania we can draw a number of lessons. The first one is what I would call 'Together for better.' This is the visible engagement of the Delegation and Cooperation agencies of the Member States in terms of presence, task division, combining their efforts and insights and their openness to receive constructive feedback about the EU's current engagement. This made the elaboration of the Roadmap a worthwhile process and so much more than a document. The second lesson is that by putting an emphasis during the consultations on civil society as a whole, this has been a very valuable way to understand the CSOs' arena and the wider context in which civil society in Mauritania operates.

Another lesson is what I would call, 'Remove road blocks.' In Mauritania where people do not share a common language, cross cultural communication and overcoming language barriers are significant challenges to effectively elaborate a Roadmap for strategic engagement with civil society. Facilitating simultaneous interpretation opened the door to an inclusive dialogue. And the last lesson is that despite the EU's broad definition of civil society, the concept of civil society means in practice something different to various cultures and in various contexts and determines what is within and what is beyond civil society's current ability to change. Better tools may be required to identify CSOs' operational boundaries and to elaborate strategies to open up concrete restrictions.



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WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION



For more information, contact:

**European Commission, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development,
Unit DEVCO B2 - CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

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or visit: <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/>

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