

# Notes from the Steering Group meeting LAC-EU Civil Society Forum 2025

Online, 26-11-2025

## 1. Objectives of the meeting

The ninth and last meeting of the LAC-EU Civil Society Forum Steering Group aimed to conduct a feedback exercise and draw lessons learned from the experience of both the Steering Group itself and the Forum. These minutes will serve as a feedback report and lessons learned from the Steering Group.

#### 2. Content

The meeting was structured in four moments: a welcome to the participants and presentation of the agenda for the day; a brief review of the evaluation of the Forum by the participants; the presentation of the results of the Steering Group's self-assessment on the basis of the replies received; and, finally, a collective reflection on what aspects should be maintained and what would be appropriate to modify, both in the forms of work of the Steering Group and in the content and format of the Forum.

## Evaluation of the Forum by participants

The summary of the evaluation was shared by the participants (available in Annex I). Altogether, most of the 85 responses highly value the Forum, the most appreciated being the diversity of voices, the opportunity to meet between countries and organizations, and the quality of the contents and panelists. It was perceived as an inspiring meeting that strengthens the bi-regional link and recognizes the strategic role of civil society. The main negative point was the lack of spaces that would allow greater participation of civil society participants. The high number of panelists in relatively short sessions did not allow for substantial exchange with the audience, and only a few parallel sessions facilitated more agile exchange spaces.

#### Feedback and lessons learned

The civil society representatives of the Steering Group had the opportunity to complete a self-assessment questionnaire before the meeting (see summary in Annex II), and those who participated in the meeting reflected in groups on aspects to be maintained and aspects to change in terms of the Forum and in terms of the operation of the Group itself since its formation.

## LAC-EU Civil Society Forum

Among the elements on which there was consensus among the civil society representatives, the following were noted, among others:

• Too many topics were considered for the time available and the possibility of extending the duration of the Forum beyond one and a half days was raised.

- It was considered important to better balance the interventions of panellists, sometimes too numerous, with spaces for active public participation, incorporating more interactive dynamics (e.g. side events).
- It was proposed to have at least two days for the co-creation of the LAC-EU Civil Society Declaration with the organizations participating in the Forum, in order to deepen the contents and strengthen the collective ownership of the document.
- The need for closer links with the EU-CELAC Summit was identified: access to the agenda, more meaningful spaces for dialogue beyond the presentation of the Declaration, as well as a follow-up mechanism or advocacy roadmap between Fora and Summits, which could be supported by the DFP as technical assistance from the European Commission.
- It was suggested to better prepare those who serve as facilitators (greater knowledge of the subjects, ability to manage risks, use of inclusive language).
- Logistical difficulties (delays, late invitations, etc.) affecting the participation and inclusion of some organizations were noted.
- Greater transparency was deemed necessary regarding invitations, in particular institutional participants, especially in opening and closing.
- Emphasis was placed on improving participation in panels in terms of gender balance and regional representativeness.
- The importance of facilitating the participation of Forum organizations in the Business Forum was stressed.

On points where there were differences of opinion, the members of the Steering Group expressed different views on:

- The degree of autonomy of the Group to define the participants in the sessions (with an impact on the proposed participatory methodologies) and to work on the recommendations of the Final Declaration.
- The desirability of renaming future editions of the Forum to better reflect its multistakeholder nature, organised by civil society with the accompaniment of the European institutions and LAC.
- The level of institutional participation in the sessions of the Forum: some people considered it excessive, while others valued it as an opportunity to listen to perspectives, recognize common challenges, and explore strategic alliances.
- The real possibility of changing the agenda, with some members perceiving that it was too conditioned by the 2023 edition.
- The application of the criteria for the selection of participants (exercise led by the PFD): While some people appreciated that they allowed to have a diversity of actors, others pointed out the need to involve the Steering Group more in the selection process itself and to strengthen transparency on the list of participants.

## Steering Group

Among the elements on which there was consensus, the following were noted, among others:

- Active participation and time spent planning by its members were valued. The meeting-based working structure with clear objectives was also welcomed.
- At the same time, difficulties in adjusting to the schedule were recognized, and the desirability of starting work with the PFD at an earlier stage was noted.
- Internal work dynamics were positively assessed, although it was noted that some people were able to contribute more than others; a more balanced distribution of contributions was considered desirable.

- It was proposed to dedicate the first sessions to build trust in the group and assess the possibility of an intermediate face-to-face meeting.
- It was mentioned that certain aspects of the Terms of Reference (e.g. confidentiality and decision-making clauses) created confusion, especially regarding the possibility of sharing information with the networks of the organisations represented.
- It was requested that, in future processes, participation in the Steering Group should not limit the possibility of intervening in other spaces or related initiatives.
- More transparency and access to information on the final outcome of the Forum was requested.
- It was proposed to revise the Terms of Reference to strengthen the role of civil society in monitoring the objectives of the Forum and to consider the organisation of previous side events to feed into the agenda of the next edition.

On points where there were differences of opinion, the members of the Steering Group expressed different views on:

- The level of presence of EU and Colombian institutions: some people felt that it should be more sporadic, while others valued it as constructive in advancing the civil society agenda. The possibility was also raised to limit the facilitation to the PFD, under the mandate of the European Commission, and for the Steering Group to be composed exclusively of civil society organisations.
- The perception that the people who had already participated in the Steering Group in the previous edition had greater decision-making power than the rest.

The PFD noted that the proposal to develop new Terms of Reference that explicitly include follow-up to Forum outcomes might require a different project. He recalled that the decisions on opening and closing institutions were particularly complex, with very limited margins for the EU and Colombia, and that the list of participants was managed with last minute adjustments depending on the budget and confirmations, which made it difficult to share a final list with the Steering Group. He also explained that the advance preparation of a draft Declaration sought to facilitate the process. The importance of clearer communication on the Terms of Reference from the outset was underlined, so that organisations can decide on their participation in an informed manner.

The European Commission (INTPA) highlighted institutional participation in the meetings of the Steering Group to accompany the civil society agenda. It is necessary that in the institutional sessions they were formed in coordination with different actors. In relation to the intervention of civil society in the IV CELAC-EU Summit, the editing and follow-up exercise corresponds to that expected in such an institutional space. It was recalled that the list of participants was drawn up by the PFD, which made it possible to include a variety of organisations, in particular youth organisations and organisations of persons with disabilities, incorporating as far as possible the suggestions of the Steering Group. INTPA confirmed its intention to follow up on the Forum dialogue and start regular sessions, supported by the PFD and open to all stakeholders.

#### 3. Agreements

- These minutes serves as a feedback report and lessons learned from the civil society organisations in the Steering Group on the experience of both the Group itself and the Forum, and is reviewed and completed by the Steering Group prior to publication.
- Accompany the present minutes with the result of the evaluation of the participants in the Forum.

• Accompany the publication of the LAC-EU Civil Society Declaration in the DFP dialogue space and Capacity4Dev with the list of signatory organisations.

# **Participants**

# Members of the Steering Group

- 1. Marcosur Feminist Articulation (AFM)
- 2. Youth Council of Spain (CJE)/European Youth Forum
- 3. Forus International
- 4. GIFE
- 5. Diverse Youth for Life (Colombia)
- 6. The Coordinator
- 7. Articulation Table
- 8. EU-LAT NETWORK
- 9. Transparency International
- 10. European Union: DG. INTPA (European Commission)

# **Technical Assistance**

- Policy Forum for Development (PFD)

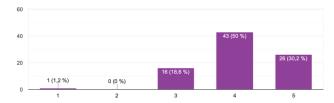
#### **Absences:**

- 11. International Cooperative Alliance (ICA Americas)
- 12. COICA
- 13. CSA / ITUC Americas
- 14. GNDR
- 15. Ministry of Equality and Equity (Colombia)
- Observer: EU External Action Service (EEAS)

## Annex I - Participants' evaluation report (86 replies as at 20 November 2025)

#### GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE FORUM

Por favor valore la reunión en su conjunto (contenido y formato) / Please rate the meeting in general (content and format) / Por favor, avalie a reunião c...ez noter la réunion en général (contenu et format) Ré resulesti



## What did you like most about the Forum? (summary generated with AI)

The responses highly value the Forum. The most appreciated was the diversity of voices, the opportunity to meet between regions and organizations, and the quality of the contents and panelists. A sense of learning, cooperation and human connection predominated. Overall, the 85 responses show that the Forum was most valued for its ability to bring diversity together, promote dialogue, open spaces for collaboration and generate meaningful learning. It was perceived as an inspiring meeting that strengthens the bi-regional link and recognizes the strategic role of civil society.

## Most mentioned topics

- Diversity of participants and perspectives (dominant theme)
  - Plurality of organizations, regions, communities and sectors.
  - Participation of indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, women and youth.
  - Wealth of looks, experiences and trajectories.
- Exchange, dialogue and networking
  - Meet colleagues, create links, alliances and new collaborations.
  - Listen to diverse experiences and share learnings.
  - Good atmosphere of respect, collaboration and constructive spirit.
- Topics and content
  - Relevance and quality of issues (indigenous governance, care, digital transition, financing, democracy, organized crime, sustainable development).
  - Panels perceived as enriching, with high-level exhibitions.
- Organization and logistics
  - 1. Good time management.
  - 2. Orderly logistics, adequate facilities and friendly atmosphere.
  - 3. Assessment of the support of the European Union for the participation of various organizations.

#### What can be improved in future editions? (summary generated with AI)

- Reform the format: fewer panelists, more time and participatory sessions (tables, workshops, thematic groups).
- **Ensuring inclusion and balance:** increased representation of the Caribbean and Afro-descendant communities; real diversity in panels.
- **Improve logistics:** travel planning, adequate food and clear communication.
- **Pre-preparation:** virtual meetings, editable drafts and presentation spaces for organizations.

¿En qué medida se han cumplido sus expectativas? How well were your expectations for the meeting met? Em que medida as suas expectativas p...entes pour la réunion ont-elles été satisfaites?

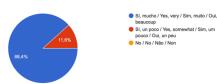


### If your expectations were not met, please briefly explain why (Al-generated summary)

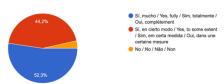
- **Little room for real participation.** There was no time to debate, listen to each other among organizations and build proposals together. The panels occupied most of the time.
- Insufficient **representation**. The low presence of the Caribbean and the lack of diversity in some panels, as well as the lack of facilitation for balanced participation, were highlighted.
- Important **issues not addressed.** The lack of discussion on the agenda of the IV Summit, the energy transition, the water crisis and other expected axes was mentioned.
- Insufficient **preparation and communication.** The statement came late and there were no prior spaces for coordination or dialogue with the Steering group.
- **Imbalance between civil society voices and governments.** Some people perceived too much government presence and little prominence of organizations.

#### **RELEVANCE**

Los temas abordados en la reunión, ¿son útiles para su trabajo? Were the agenda issues/themes being discussed in the meeting useful to your work? ...dant la réunion étaient-ils utiles à votre travail?

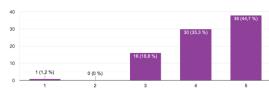


La información compartida, ¿ha sido adecuada para favorecer una participación activa? Did you find that the information shared in advance was adeq... pour permettre une participation significative?

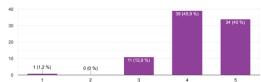


#### ASSESSMENT OF SESSIONS

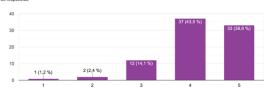
00: Apertura Institucional / Institutional Opening / Abertura Institucional /Ouverture institutionnelle 85 respuestas



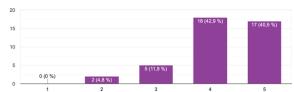
01: Entorno propicio para la sociedad civil / Enabling Environment for Civil Society / Ambiente propicio para a sociedade civil / Un environnement favorable à la société civile 85 respuestas



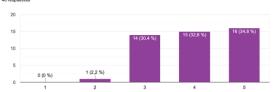
02: Financiación para el desarrollo sostenible / Financing for Sustainable Development / Financiamento para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável / Financement du développement durable



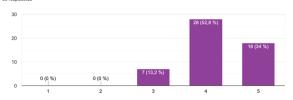
03: Transición Digital / Digital Transition / Transição Digital / Transition numérique 42 respuestas



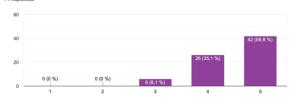
04: Resiliencia climática comunitaria / Resilience and Climate Change / Resiliência climática da comunidade / Résilience climatique communautaire



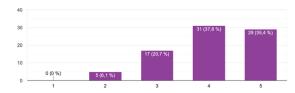
06: Pueblos Indígenas / Indigenous Peoples / Povos Indígenas / Peuples autochtones



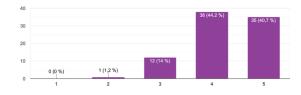
08: Pacto Birregional por los cuidados / Bi-Regional Pact for Care / Pacto birregional para os cuidados / Pacte birégional pour les soins 74 respuestas



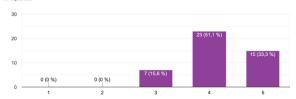
10: Conclusiones Principales / Main Conclusions / Principals conclusões / Principales conclusions



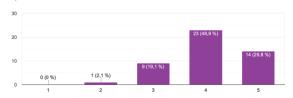
Speakers / Intervenants / Ponentes / Palestrantes



05: Crimen organizado / Organised Crime / Crime organizado / Crime organisé

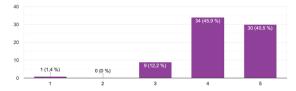


- 07: Sistemas alimentarios y hambre cero (ODS 2) / Food Systems and Zero Hunger (SDG
- 2) / Sistemas alimentares e Fome Zero (ODS 2) / Systèmes alimentaires et Faim Zéro (ODD2)

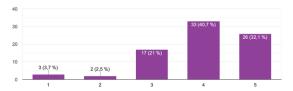


09: Desigualdades y Cohesión Social / Inequalities and Social Cohesion / Desigualdades e Coesão Social / Inégalités et cohésion sociale



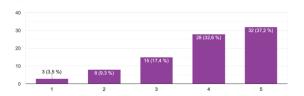


11: Cierre institucional / Institutional Closure / Final institucional / Fermeture institutionnelle

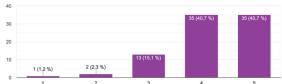


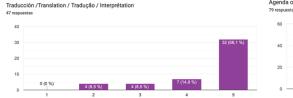
# **EVALUATION OF FACILITATION**

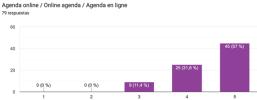
Maestros de Ceremonias / Masters of Ceremonies / Mestres de Cerimónias / Maîtres de cérémonie



Moderadores / Moderators / Moderadores / Modérateurs







#### ASSESSMENT OF LOGISTICS





## Summary - Positive and Negative Aspects of the Forum

## Positive aspects

## - Organization and logistics

- o Most valued the excellent coordination, punctuality, quality of the spaces and accompaniment of the team.
- The management of hotels, transportation and attention to the public was outstanding, as well as the professionalism of the support staff.
- o Facilitation and an inclusive environment fostered participation, respect and solidarity.

# Accessibility and Inclusion

- o Care for people with disabilities and personalised support (e.g. blind).
- o Freedom of expression and comfort in participation.

## - Professionalism and dedication of the team

- o The moderators and organizers were perceived as very attentive and committed.
- Recognition of international cooperation and human and technological effort.

#### Enriching experience

- o Productive spaces for learning, exchange of ideas and networking.
- o Possibility to represent specific communities, victims or sectors.
- o Valuation of the efforts to recover and maintain these Forums as spaces for bi-regional collaboration.

#### Negative aspects

#### - Travel and transfer logistics

- Flight problems, delays and missed connections, although some acknowledged that they
  were not the responsibility of the organization.
- Lack of services until the departure time of the last day.

### - Lack of time and participation

- Very small spaces for exchange between civil society participants.
- Little interaction in debates and limitations to contribute to the declaration or agenda.

#### Communication and pre-monitoring

- o Lack of response to recommendations sent by mail.
  - Late or insufficient information on the agenda and important documents.

#### - Minor aspects of comfort and environment

- Sudden temperature changes between salons and outdoors caused discomfort.
- o Tips on clothing to adapt to wet weather.

## List of organizations that completed the evaluation

- ACTION Chilean Association of NGOs
- Acodea
- Municipality of Mahates \_ UMATA
- the Migrant Alliance
- Colnodo Association
- Cuban Association of the United Nations
- Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forestry Technicians ACTAF
- National Association of Centres
- National Association of the Blind
- Help in Action
- Barefoot Latin America Association
- Neon Cunha House
- Cecodap
- CEJIL
- Justice and Peace Centre (Cepaz)
- CERCE (Collective of Colombian Exiles and Refugees in Ecuador)
- Environmental Policy Circle
- Alternative City
- CLAC FAIRTRADE
- CLADE
- CNV Internationaal
- National Coalition of Rural Women Ac
- Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli CISP
- Conlactraho
- Cooperative of home care Soltrecha FECOOTRA
- Cristosal
- Colombian Red Cross
- Administrative Department for Social Prosperity
- Law, Environment and Natural Resources (DAR)
- Ecolsierra Export SAS BIC
- Entreculturas/Fe y Alegría
- EU-LAC Foundation
- AGAPE FOUNDATION IN COLOMBIA
- Cap Cana Foundation
- Esquel Foundation Ecuador
- Kallpa Foundation
- FOUNDATION FOR THE DUE PROCESS
- Peace and Reconciliation Foundation
- Redubuntu Foundation I am because we are
- Foundation Sowing Hope
- Yetapa Foundation
- Global Childhood
- ONCE Social Group
- HEKS/EPER

- Hivos
- ICEPS
- IFRC
- Afro-descendant Institute for the Study of Research and Development
- Institute for Women in Migration AC IMUMI
- IRD Institut de recherche pour le développement
- United Youth in Action
- The Climate Route
- Latimpacto
- Table for Women's Life and Health
- Original Nationality A'i Kofan of Ecuador -NOA'IKE
- Ecumenical Office for Peace and Justice e.V. (Munich, Germany)
- OIKOS Cooperation and Development NGOD
- OIVA | INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION VALUES THE ENVIRONMENT
- ALLATRA COLOMBIA NGO
- NGO Amaranta
- ORG Bahamas Foundation
- Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) / FUPAD COLOMBIA
- Pater Ahlbrinck Stichting
- Pojuaju
- Network meeting of non-governmental entities for development Argentina
- HSH-Cuba Network
- Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy
- Network for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- SOLIDAR
- Sotz'il
- SwTI
- Tamukke Feminist
- TEDIC
- The Center for Non-Violence, Research and Development (CNVRD)
- Tierraviva
- Transparency for Colombia
- Union of Plain Workers
- European Union
- Venezuelan Union in Peru
- UNITAS
- University of Magdalena
- Uoafro

## Annex II. Steering Group self-assessment report (12 replies as at 28 November 2025)

#### PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

Q1: The TOR for the Steering Group defined clear objectives related to its mandate

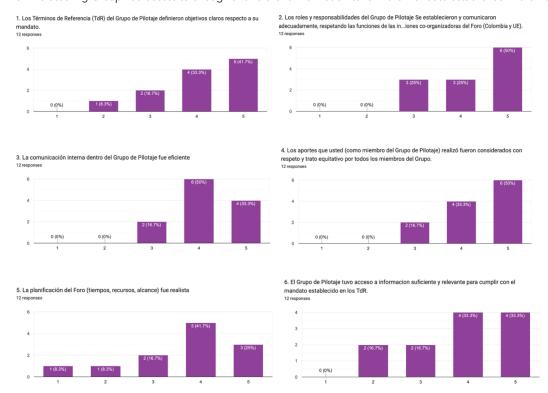
Q2: The Steering Group roles and responsibilities were adequately established and communicated, respecting the roles of the institutions co-organising the Forum (Colombia and the EU)

Q3: The internal communication within the Steering Group was efficient

Q4: Your contributions (as member of the Steering Group) were considered with respect and equative treatment by all members of the Group

Q5: The planning of the Forum (timing, resources, scope) was realistic

Q6: The Steering Group had access to enough and relevant information to fulfil the mandate established in the TOR



Summary of comments on Planning and Organisation of the Steering Group

#### 1. Group participation and dynamics

- Not everyone in the group participated with the same intensity; there were cases of limited or irregular participation; There were difficulties in creating a true spirit of teamwork.
- There was a division between those who participated in the organization of the first forum and the new members.
- Presence of prejudices towards certain issues and the new EU agenda affected dialogue, collective construction and the joint strategic outlook.

#### 2. Mandate, Terms of Reference (ToR) and decision making

- The ToRs were perceived as ambiguous on issues of confidentiality, roles and decision-making process.
- It is suggested to clarify whether the Steering group has decision-making power and in what aspects (panelists, declaration, agenda, etc.).
- It is suggested to revise the criterion of belonging to the PFD as a requirement, as well as to allow adjustments in the composition of the group during the process.
- It is proposed to better describe the nature of the Steering group and evaluate alternatives, such as a space for continuous multi-stakeholder dialogue between summits.

## 3. Composition of the Steering group

• It is suggested to review the representativeness of the group (thematic, geographical diversity, typologies of organizations).

• The continued presence of EU and Colombian institutions at all meetings was able to condition the free expression of CSOs; more timely institutional involvement is suggested.

#### 4. Planning, timing and coordination

- The preparation times for the Forum were perceived as insufficient.
- It is acknowledged that there were improvements compared to the 2023 Forum, but it is requested to start the process earlier.
- Internal operational planning (agendas, notes, follow-up) was positively assessed.
- Lack of articulation with the Summit and other forums was identified, limiting the actual incidence of CSOs.

# 6. General perception of the process

- Very positive assessment of the accompaniment of the PFD, key to the progress achieved.
- Despite the difficulties, it is considered that the Forum was successful and that there were improvements compared to the previous year.
- It is argued that the name 'Civil Society Forum' can generate confusion if civil society is not guaranteed autonomy from government institutions.

#### 7. Proposals for improvement

- Clarify mandate, roles and decision-making process.
- Review composition and selection criteria of the Steeringing group.
- Consider significantly longer working times.
- Create a permanent or continuous coordination mechanism between summits.
- Improve articulation with official processes and other sectors.
- Ensure greater sustained and equitable involvement of all organizations.

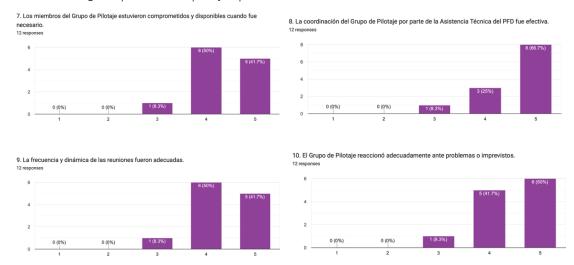
#### **IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

Q7: The members of the Steering Group were committed and available when needed

Q8: The coordination of the Steering Group by the PFD TA was effective

Q9: The frequency and dynamic of the meetings were adequate

Q10: The Steering Group reacted adequately to problems and unforeseen circumstances

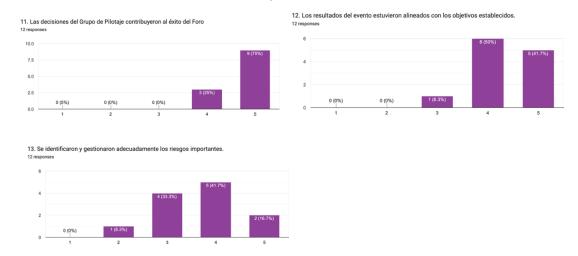


#### Summary of the comments on the Implementation Process

- The planning was executed as planned, although the excessive load of topics and the short time generated inconvenience in some panellists and participants.
- The availability of members was uneven; some took on more tasks than others.
- Tense internal dynamics and episodes of disrespectful language were reported.
- The technical coordination of the PFD was very good
- The frequency of meetings was adequate under the circumstances, but more preparation time is required for future editions.

#### ASSESSMENT OF FORUM RESULTS

- Q11: The decisions of the Steering Group contributed to the success of the Forum
- Q12: The results of the event were aligned with the objectives established
- Q13: Relevant risks were identified and managed adequately



Summary of comments on the results of the Forum

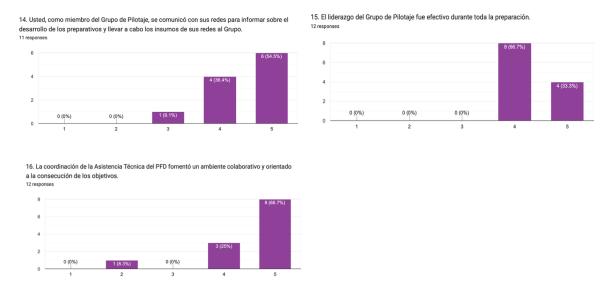
- The Forum was a diverse and enriching space, with contributions from CSOs and young people.
- There was more time for analysis and exchange, especially on Team Europe and Global Gateway initiatives.
- It is proposed to include open plenary sessions after each block of panels.
- There was little dialogue with the institutions and a lack of clear mechanisms to connect with the Summit.
- An initial risk assessment is recommended.
- Some criticism of the selection and performance of the masters of ceremonies.
- Strong disappointment with the closing panel for lack of diversity and little transparency in decision-making about the panellists.
- Accompaniment of the PFD valued very positively
- It is suggested to open the registration beforehand and share the list of participants to balance the representation.

#### ON COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STEERINGAGE GROUP

Q14: You, as member of the Steering Group, communicated with your networks to inform about the progress in the preparations and to bring inputs from your networks to the Group

Q15: The leadership of the Steering Group during the preparation was effective

Q16: The coordination by the PFD TA created a collaborative atmosphere, oriented towards reaching the objectives

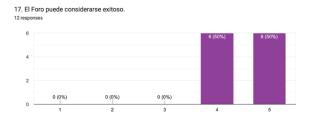


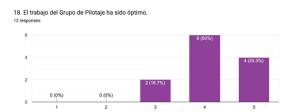
Summary of the comments on Leadership and Communication from the members of the Steering Group:

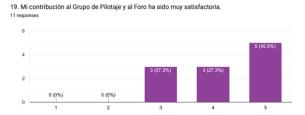
- The dedicated support of the PFD team is highlighted as a determining factor in the success of the process. The technical assistance of the PFD showed a key leadership that allowed to overcome difficulties, neutralize positions and generate synergies for a collaborative work, ensuring spaces for plural dialogue, respectful and focused on common objectives.
- Insufficient times: Preparation and consultation with networks and memberships was very tight, hindering in-depth feedback and informed participation.
- Unclear confidentiality: The lack of clarity about what could be shared limited effective communication with networks.
- Unequal commitment: On some issues, the participation of members of the Steering Group was uneven, affecting the dynamics of the group.

#### INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS

- Q17: The Forum can be considered a success
- Q18: The work of the Steering Group has been optimal
- Q19: My contribution to the Steering Group has been very satisfactory







#### Summary of learning:

- Maintain good spirits, willingness and selfless collaboration, with close and constant facilitation of the PFD, which allowed the effective organization and coordination of the Forum.
- Start the preparation earlier (at least 6 months) and maintain a continuous process to ensure real influence at the Summit.
- Ensure the autonomy of civil society in the decision-making of the Forum and limit the constant interference of institutions.
- Review the selection of the Steering group and masters of ceremony, ensuring transparent criteria and geographical, sectoral and gender diversity.
- Open registration and share the list of participants in advance to fill gaps in representation and encourage more inclusive participation.
- Increase spaces for dialogue and debate, allow parallel tables or events, and strengthen the connection between the Forum and the Summit to achieve a more direct impact.