

A background image showing several hands of different skin tones stacked together in a supportive gesture, with a semi-transparent white box overlaid on the left side containing text.

CONCORD

EU Delegations Report 2017

Towards a more
effective partnership
with civil society

CONCORD
European NGO confederation for relief and development



European NGO confederation for relief and development

ABOUT THIS REPORT

CONCORD has been monitoring the relationship between European Union Delegations (EUDs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in partner countries since 2005, when the EU decided to deconcentrate a large part of the management and administration of its development finance to EU delegations.

While at the beginning CONCORD's analysis has focused on the access to funding, contracting and compliance issues, since 2014 the scope of the EUD report has been broadened by integrating the role of civil society in programming of EC aid and the political dialogue between EU, partner governments and civil society.

Taking the European Commission (EC) Communication *'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations'* as a starting point, **the 2017 report aims** to contribute to a constructive, evidence-based dialogue between EUDs and civil society on how they can effectively interact and cooperate with each other, with the ultimate goal of protecting and expanding civil society's space and promoting an enabling environment for it.

CONCORD PERIODIC PUBLICATIONS

AIDWATCH

Since 2005, Aidwatch has monitored and made recommendations on the quality and quantity of aid provided by EU member states and the European Commission. With these publications, we want to hold EU leaders accountable for their commitments to dedicate 0.7% of their Gross National Income to development assistance and to use this aid in a genuine and effective way. www.concordeurope.org/aidwatch-reports

EU DELEGATIONS

The EU Delegations reports look at political and policy dialogue and programming processes, including the CSO roadmap process. The objectives of these publications are to contribute on improving the working relationship between the EU delegations and CSOs, gather examples of good practice and lessons learned, and make recommendations to the EU, member states and CSOs. www.concordeurope.org/eu-relationships-publications

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Every two years since 2009, the Spotlight reports look into the policy coherence of the EU institutions and their impact on the vulnerable communities in countries outside Europe. These reports aim to raise awareness among EU political leaders and citizens on the need to change some domestic and external EU policies to ensure a fairer and more sustainable world.

ABOUT CONCORD

CONCORD is the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development.

Our members are:

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which represent over 2,600 NGOs, supported by millions of citizens all around Europe.

Our confederation brings Development NGOs together to strengthen their political impact at the European and global level. United, we advocate for European policies to promote sustainable economic, environmental and social development based on human rights, justice and gender equality. We also work with regional and global civil society allies to ensure EU policies are coherent in promoting sustainable development in partner countries.

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The report, the methodological note, the country examples and the data analysis of the survey are available at:
<https://concordeurope.org/what-we-do/promoting-civil-society-space/eu-delegation-report>

1. Introduction

The 'EU Delegations Report 2017: Towards a more effective partnership with civil society' is the latest report prepared by CONCORD in over ten years of monitoring the relationship between the European Union delegations (EUDs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) in partner countries.

Taking the European Commission (EC) Communication 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations' as a starting point, **the 2017 report specifically assesses how EUDs support an enabling environment for civil society (CS) at country level and promote their participation in policy making and development.**

The EU's policy and institutional framework recognises and promotes the central role played by civil society in democratic governance and in building equitable, inclusive societies. In recent years the EU has been attempting to develop a more strategic engagement and structured dialogue with CSOs in partner countries. Mainstreaming this into all its cooperation instruments and programmes, and all sectors of cooperation, is an important aspect of the endeavour, in which EUDs have an important role to play. This is particularly so since the Lisbon Treaty set up the European External Action Service (EEAS) to provide a more coherent framework for the Union's external action, with an expanded role for EUDs in implementing EU external policies and in political dialogue with partner governments. At international level, the EU has been a leading partner in development cooperation and has been engaging in a comprehensive

dialogue with civil society in various global forums such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

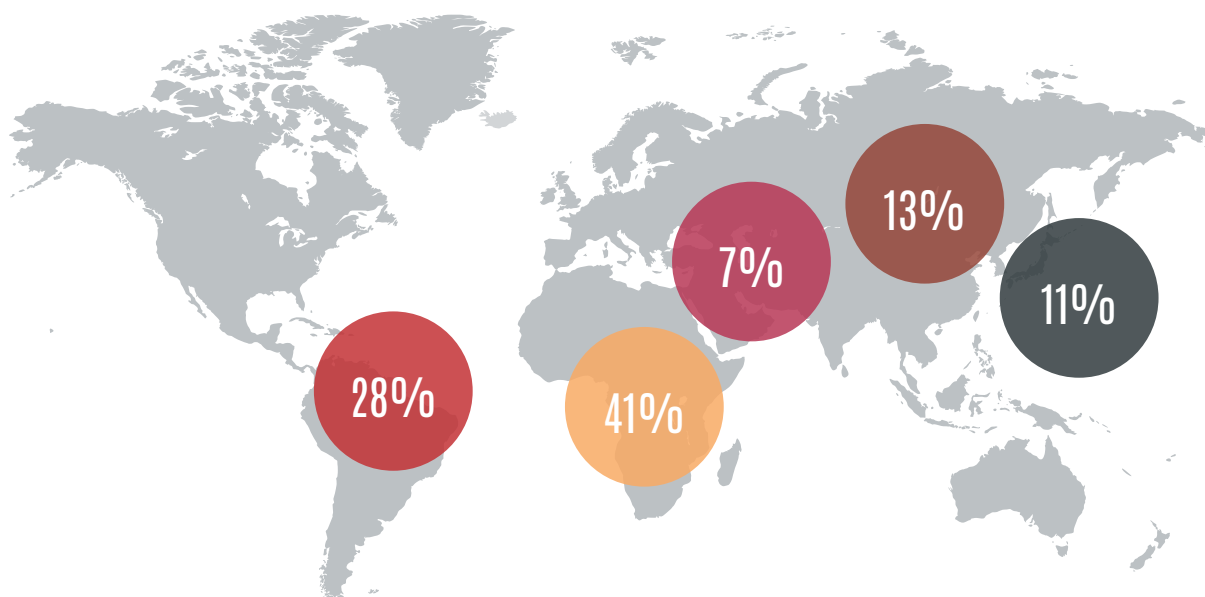
In 2012 the adoption of the European Commission (EC) Communication 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations'¹ marked the beginning of a new era for EU relations with civil society and for EU support to the multiple roles of civil society. This Communication had practical consequences for the role of EUDs in relation to civil society. In 2013, the EU launched a process to draw up Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society at country level, in order to strengthen the strategic cooperation and structured dialogue between the EU and its Member States (MSs) on the one hand and CSOs on the other.

Our analysis is primarily focused on meeting the three priorities set out in the EC Communication: **(i) to promote a conducive environment for CSOs in partner countries, (ii) to promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes, and (iii) to increase local CSOs' capacity to perform their roles as independent development actors.**

A further target of our research was to assess how far the process of preparing and implementing the Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society has helped improve relationships

¹ Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF>

FIGURE 1. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



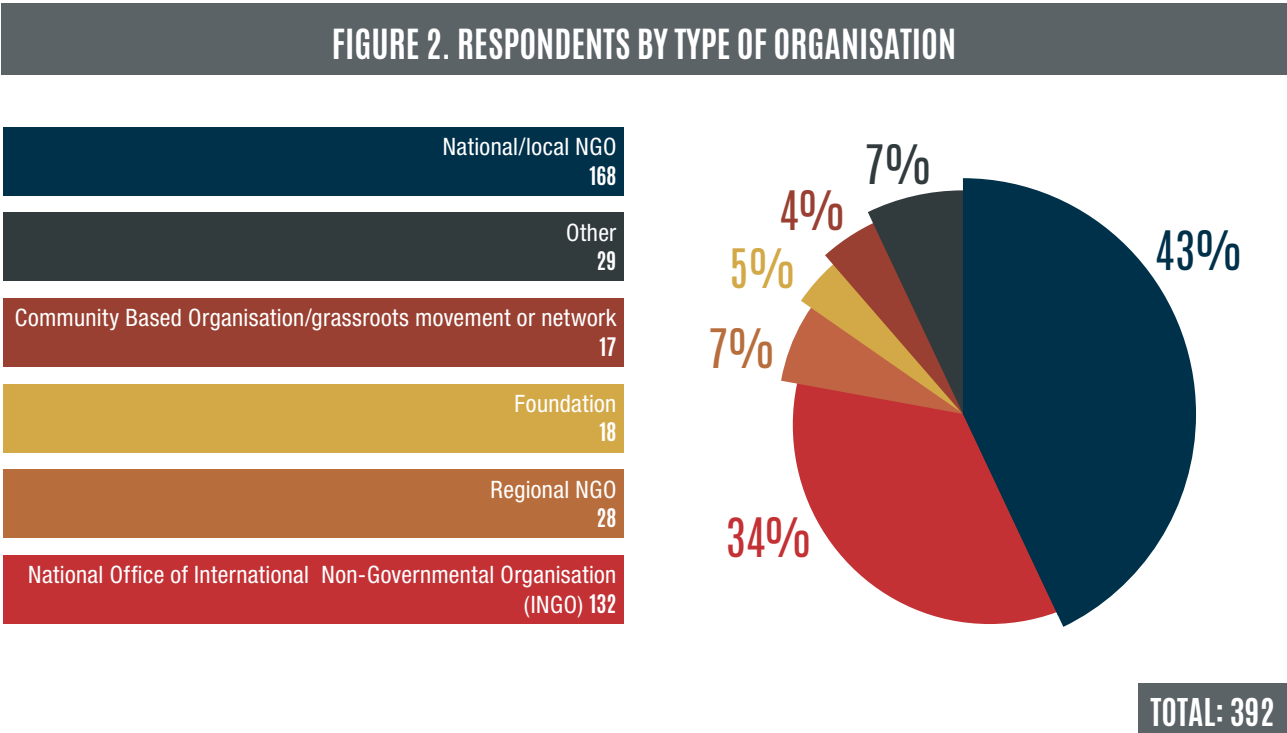
* Full list of countries is available in the methodological note at <https://concordeurope.org/what-we-do/promoting-civil-society-space/eu-delegation-report>

TOTAL: 392

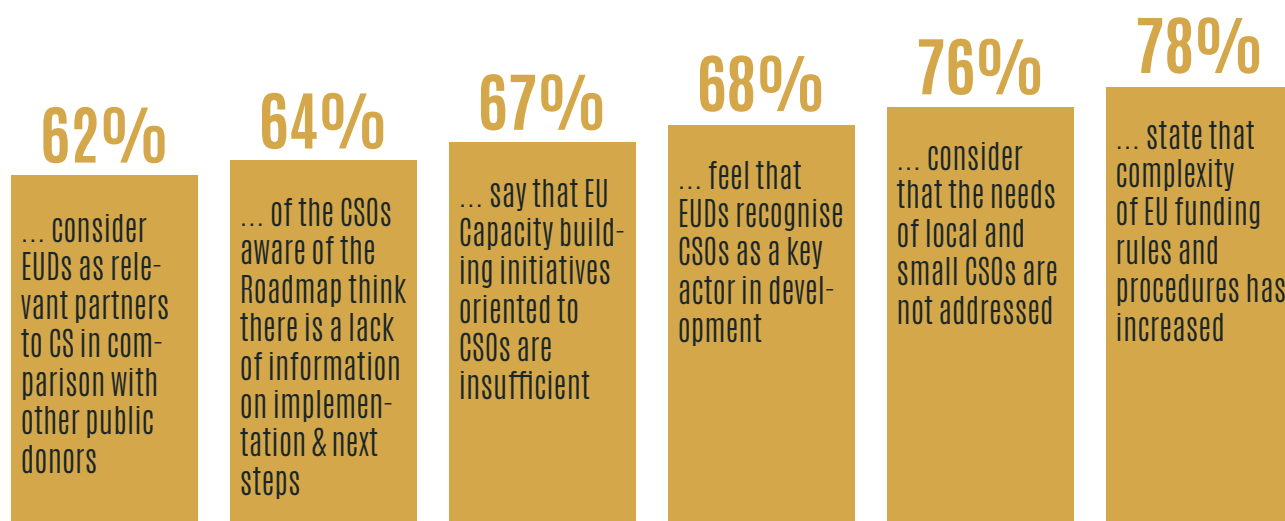
between EUDs and civil society, and whether (and if so, to what extent) it has made a difference to EU support for civil society. Conclusions were drawn from the combined evidence of quantitative data, collected through a survey distributed to CSOs worldwide in four languages, and from qualitative data in five country examples. The outcome of the survey was analysed in the broader context of trends in EU policies, priorities and funding modalities, and took into account previous reports and recommendations produced by CONCORD. A total of 450 responses to the survey were received, of which 392 replies from 86 countries were validated. Most responses came from Africa (162) and from Latin America and the Caribbean (109). National or local CSOs accounted for 43% of respondents, while some 34% were national offices of international CSOs (*Figures 1 and 2*). A significant number of responses were also provided by national and regional platforms and umbrella organisations who form the majority of the 'others' category in Figure 2. The 5 country examples from Honduras, Kenya, Mali, Cambodia and Tunisia, gathered through semi-structured interviews and written questionnaires to targeted actors both complement and back up the survey results by demonstrating the lessons learned in more detail and providing a deeper contextual analysis. They are presented in 5 country briefs on the CONCORD website.

This report aims to contribute to a constructive, evidence-based dialogue between EUDs and civil society on how they can effectively interact and cooperate with each other, with the ultimate goal of protecting and expanding civil society's space

and promoting an enabling environment for it. The report shows that a regular, structured dialogue between EUDs and civil society yields positive results and that there is good practice to be shared. Very often, however, we find that more needs to be done if the ambition behind the 2012 Communication and the roadmap process is to be achieved. In particular, we would like to **highlight a few elements in the relationship between EUDs and CSOs that are key to reaching these objectives.**



Main Highlights



Based on the survey results

- The CS perception is that the political strength of the EU and its member states could be better used to protect and promote civil society space. This should become an integral part of the EU's political dialogue with partner governments, be it in the context of human rights dialogue, electoral processes, sectoral cooperation, trade and economic cooperation or any other dialogue process.
- A structured dialogue between EUDs (and possibly EU MS embassies) and CS is essential for achieving the three objectives of the 2012 EC communication and for turning the roadmaps into real strategic processes that have an impact on the enabling environment for CS. When such a dialogue exists, it should be the place for open, frank dialogue on what can be done to protect and promote CS space under the mandate of each stakeholder.
- Many CSOs recognise the usefulness of the CS roadmap as a tool for improving the EUDs' knowledge of CS's situation and landscape, and for broadening and deepening EUD-CS dialogue – but CSOs have too little visibility, information or involvement at the implementation stage to be able to grasp and assess the strategic nature of the roadmap.
- Resources, capacity and mutual understanding are key to an effective engagement between EUDs and CS, and both sides should devote more attention and resources to establishing good, strategic relationships between all EUD departments and a broader range of CS actors.
- In donor coordination and joint programming, it is of the utmost importance to include civil society's environment and funding as key aspects of the process, and to use the donor coordination mechanism to facilitate access to political dialogue and sectoral policy making for CSOs, and to leverage their positions.
- Good communication and information that are relevant, timely and empowering for CS are essential for meaningful consultations of civil society and for maintaining strategic long-term cooperation between EUDs and CSOs.
- Continuous support for structuring, coordination and joint learning in civil society, while opening spaces for dialogue with a wide range of CSOs, is of paramount importance if CS is to play an active role in democratic governance, accountability and policy making.
- Support for CS initiatives in the sphere of capacity building, learning, research, policy work and advocacy is a good way to strengthen CSOs as development actors in their own right, at all levels from local to regional, and to empower them in defending their space and rights.
- Funding instruments and modalities must be harmonised and simplified, and their implementation must be context-specific, to ensure that all CS actors can play their role. This will help quality partnerships to develop between CSOs and between them and other development actors (local authorities, ministerial departments, academics, the private sector, etc.).

2. EU delegations' engagement with civil society in partner countries

2.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EU DELEGATIONS' SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

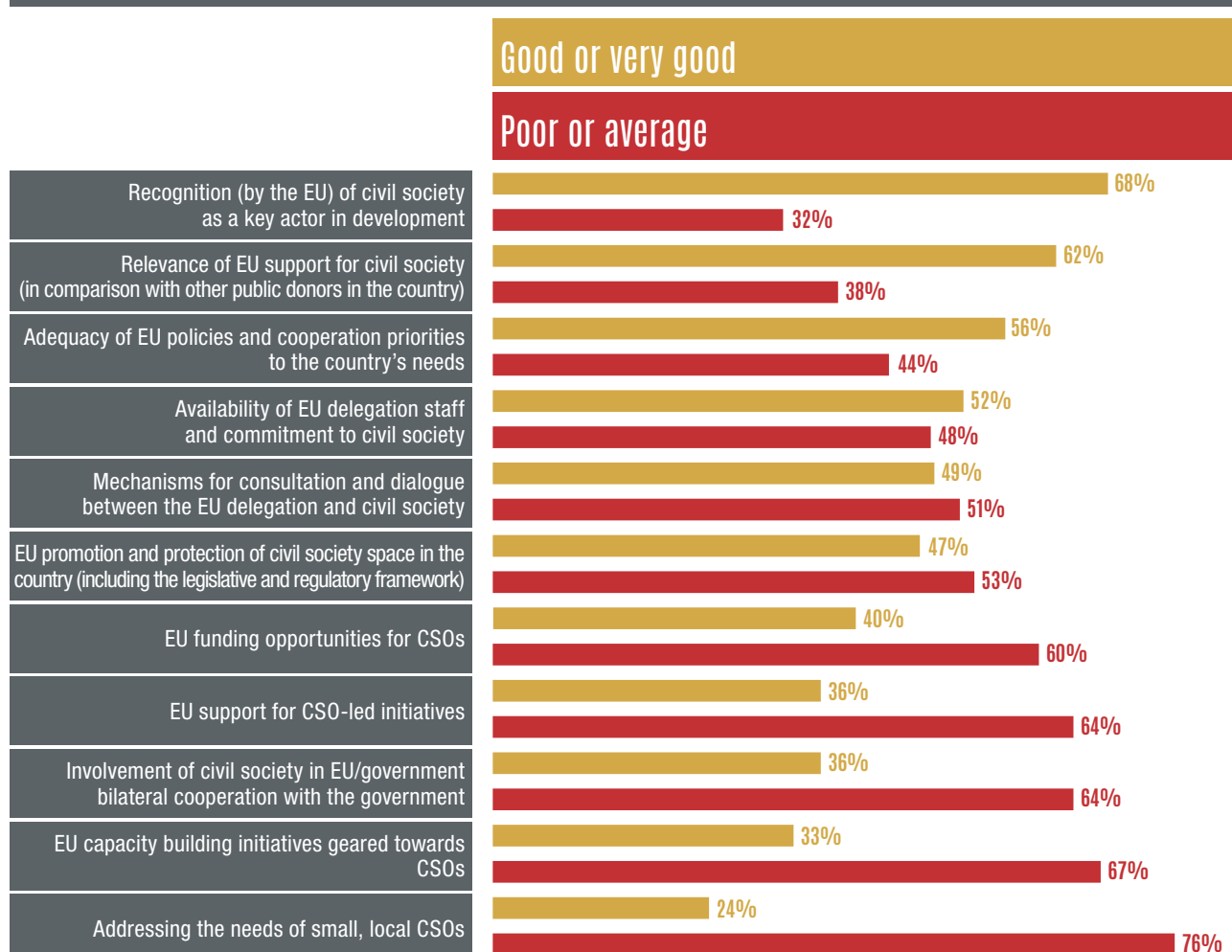
The importance of EUDs' support to civil society is recognised by the survey respondents. The majority (68%) find that the EU's recognition of civil society as a key actor in development is good or very good and that EU support to civil society is relevant or very relevant (62%) (Figure 3). The EU's institutions and MSs are generally perceived as being **important partners for civil society, particularly in comparison with other public donors in the country**. In some countries, EUDs' support to civil society in a particular political and governance context is regarded as being instrumental (e.g. Tunisia during the transition to democracy, Mali after the coup d'état).

The appropriateness of EU policies and priorities to each country's needs is acknowledged, although a lack of knowledge

about how these priorities are decided on is also expressed as a concern. When asked about some particular aspects of EU support for civil society in-country, respondents generally feel that much needs to be improved, particularly as regards meeting the needs of small, local CSOs (76% find this support poor or average), EU capacity-building initiatives (67%) and EU support for CSO-led initiatives (64%) (Figure 3).

Around 64% of respondents find the **involvement of civil society in the EU's bilateral cooperation** with their government not satisfactory (Figure 3). This is linked to a general perception that support for civil society is **not a priority for EUDs**, as it is usually public authorities that are the EU's main partners for cooperation, and most of the funding from the EU is channelled directly to governments through budget support or other co-operation modalities. In some countries, trade and economic cooperation (e.g. trade negotiations, association agreements,

FIGURE 3. HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE ROLE OF THE EU DELEGATION WITH REGARD TO DIALOGUE, ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY IN-COUNTRY ?



cooperation with the private sector) are also perceived as being more important than development cooperation. It should be noted, however, that overall focal sectors and thematic priorities for EU bilateral cooperation were agreed in the National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) 2014 - 2020 and other programming documents, including Multiannual Indicative Programmes for thematic programmes. The mid-term review of these documents, expected in 2017, could offer more opportunities for CS involvement on these issues.

In general, according to 51% of the respondents there has been a positive trend in the past three years in terms of EUDs' willingness to meet and dialogue with civil society and fewer than 10% see a negative trend instead, while the remaining 39% saw no major change. Many respondents attribute the positive trend to the human factor, i.e., the **quality of human resources** – namely the EUD staff's commitment, willingness and openness to dialogue – rather than to major changes in EU instruments or policies.

Respondents also mention the importance of human resources when the EUDs' engagement with CSOs is not so positively assessed. EUDs' areas of responsibility and tasks appear to be increasing, while at the same time they face a shortage of human resources. They are asked to perform a multitude of roles (political, diplomatic, technical, coordination, etc.), and – in particular as regards their support for and dialogue with civil society – the multiplication of strategic documents, instruments and processes is not matched by a corresponding reinforcement of resources or dedicated staff, which could obviously make quite a difference in making engagement and dialogue more structured.

The same holds for MSs, where more effective action is noted when there are staff specifically assigned to engaging with civil society (e.g. in the German and Spanish embassies in Honduras) rather than where civil society issues are spread across a multitude of projects and instruments with no identified interlocutor at the Embassies.

2. 2. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AT COUNTRY LEVEL

CSOs are confronted with an increasing range of complex issues, especially in a growing number of restrictive and repressive environments.² These are characterised by legislation and practices that restrict the ability of CSOs to access funding and/or exert extensive scrutiny and control over the internal affairs of organisations. In some countries, repression of human rights organisations or individual human rights defenders is a reality and takes many forms, ranging from administrative harassment, criminalisation, defamatory campaigns and arbitrary detention to torture or assassination.

² See CIVICUS (2016). *State of Civil Society report 2016*, at <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/socs2016>

Given the shrinking space for civil society in many countries, CSOs call on the EU to take a more active stance on defending civil society and human rights and to facilitate the political dialogue with governments. Experiences of EUDs engaging in dialogue with public authorities are very diverse, and depend on the country's internal situation (e.g. type of government and political dynamics, openness to discuss legislation and regulatory frameworks, available entry points), on the heritage and history of the EUD-government dialogue in-country, and on how these issues are prioritised and included in the EUDs' agendas. The findings highlight some important aspects and trends:

The scope of what an EUD can do is limited, but more can be done. In many countries, CSOs are realistic in terms of the limitations EUDs encounter in advocating for civil society issues in their dialogue with public authorities. European CSOs, which are often partners or supporters of national and local CSOs, also have limited leverage with governments making their sovereign decisions, and cannot replace national CSOs in their advocacy role. It is, however, important for EU actors (EUDs and EU Member States), within the scope of their mandates, to use all the instruments and entry points available to them in their political dialogue with national authorities to raise issues of concern for civil society. EUDs can support the CSOs' concerns about the shrinking space in various ways: by making the existing mechanisms for supporting activists and CSOs more flexible and quicker to use, by visiting human rights defenders in prison, requesting fair trials and an independent investigation into the assassination of human rights defenders, providing support for elections that goes beyond observation, etc. In policy dialogue, EUDs can raise sensitive issues, ranging from human rights concerns, freedom of expression and participation in national or international events to denouncing cumbersome administrative procedures and excessive control of CSOs, recognition of poverty-related issues and inequalities, and CSOs' role and their mandate to help reduce them. EUDs should also continue to stand strong in defending EU project funding for CSOs, especially in countries where this is perceived negatively as foreign funding.

It is difficult to reconcile the growing political role of EUDs, and their focus on bilateral cooperation, with taking a strong stance to protect civil society. In some countries for EUDs to be working directly with governments can be seen by CSOs as inconsistent with EU discourse on democratic accountability and transparent governance. This is most keenly felt when it is suggested (by the EUD, the MS or other international actors in country) that CSOs should take part in discussing, planning or implementing national policies they may not necessarily support. The EUDs' political work with a country's authorities, even if not usually disclosed to the public, should be clarified better to civil society actors to avoid giving the impression of inconsistency or double standards. A structured on-going dialogue between EUD and civil society is the best way to avoid misperceptions.

It is important to discuss issues to do with the enabling environment for CS at a higher level in EUDs, in dialogue with EU partners and in political dialogue. In EUDs, these issues are sometimes confined to a technical approach or are the exclusive responsibility of the civil society focal points. In some instances, however, they deserve to be discussed at a higher level. While in Cambodia, for example, the European partners have been discussing these issues within the European group, and have raised their concerns regarding the Law on Associations and NGOs (LANGO, approved in 2015) with several ministries and with the parliament, in Kenya there is no coordination between EU donors on these issues and the amendments to the PBO Act (2013)³ and other legislative hurdles are not a priority for the forthcoming EUD-government political dialogue. In Honduras there has been no high-level involvement of the EUD on such issues as the reform of CSO registration systems.

Existing national frameworks for discussion are a good place for EUDs' support to promote civil society participation in policy making and in political dialogue with public authorities. In many countries, the sectoral dialogue with the participation of public authorities, international and national partners is still rather limited. Where there are joint sectoral discussions and/or groups promoted by public authorities, however, some EUDs have been advocating for open participation by CSOs to ensure that they contribute to the policy dialogue. This also means that CSOs have to coordinate among themselves in order to put forward their positions in this dialogue, which can be sometimes very challenging. In some cases, EUDs also urge governments to set up discussion tables or technical groups on issues that are of concern to civil society in-country (e.g. the Technical Working Group on Land Issues in Cambodia, the Consultation Committee on Forestry in Honduras, or support for involvement in budget supervision or the fight against corruption in Mali). In Tunisia, in the framework of the Association Agreement, the EUD acts as a facilitator for a tripartite dialogue between the EUD, public authorities and CSOs where issues such as the rule of law or counter-terrorism are discussed and that also encompass thematic multi-stakeholder committees on issues such as migration, justice, social and economic rights or gender equality. The participation of CSOs is coordinated and supported by the Euro-Mediterranean Human rights Network thanks to an EC funded project (EIDHR). It is a unique example in the region and a best practice that allows CSOs to express their concerns and positions in dialogue with public authorities. In other cases, one possible entry point is to invite public authorities to take part in development partners' discussions and groups (e.g. participation by the Secretary of Human Affairs in a "Grupo Enlace" meeting in Honduras – a mechanism for dialogue between Honduran CSOs and a group of ambassadors from donor countries).

The EUDs' strategic use of funding is extremely important in supporting an enabling environment for CS. Their support for human rights, and on other sensitive issues, comes mainly through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) which finances civil society's projects in this area, and through the Civil Society Organisations-Local Authorities (CSO-LA) thematic programme. EUDs and EU member states are among the main donors for CSOs working on the more political and sensitive issues. They support projects designed to raise awareness of human rights, to promote gender equality, to address issues that are problematic in the national context (e.g. land eviction, the management of natural resources), to empower citizens and communities, to strengthen existing networks that defend civil society's positions, and generally to reinforce CSOs' capacity for advocacy. In some countries, the financial and technical support some EUDs give to decentralisation, sub-national democratic reforms and local partnerships (e.g. participatory budgets, NGO-local governance partnerships to address local challenges jointly, calls for proposals on decentralisation and devolution) also helps create a more favourable environment at local level. In addition to calls for proposals specifically addressing human rights and other politically sensitive issues, several organisations also highlight the financial support EUDs give to civil society networks and platforms (both general and sectoral) financed under the CSO-LA thematic programme and the European Development Fund (EDF).

All these funding instruments play a critical role in preserving and expanding the space and the role of CSOs. Nevertheless, more support is still needed to counter the trend observed in certain countries and to maintain the central role of civil society in democratic governance, in the development process and in humanitarian assistance. Governments often use anti-terrorism and other security-related laws to restrict civil society's access to foreign aid, and this is an issue where civil society considers that major donors and political partners, including the EU, could make a difference by being more vocal.

Capacity building is a weak link in engagement with civil society. Both the survey and the case studies show that, of the priorities in the EU's strategy on civil society and its EU roadmaps for engagement with CSOs, capacity building is the weakest. Even when EUDs are active in supporting CSO capacity, and consult CSOs on their capacity-development needs and aspirations, it is very difficult to put in place a coherent, medium-/long-term programme that goes beyond limited *ad hoc* training events. On the one hand, CSOs tend to focus on training for fund-raising purposes, asking mainly for technical training on proposal development and project management and showing less interest in and knowledge of other types of institutional capacity building (job learning, mentoring, coaching, advocacy, etc.). On the other hand, it is difficult for EUDs to integrate broader capacity-building initiatives into their program-

³ See the issues relating to the PBO Act and its amendments at <https://pboact.or.ke/>

ming and day-to-day work, owing to the shortage of financial and human resources.

Nevertheless, there are some positive examples of action by EUDs in this regard, e.g. boosting CSOs' research capacity to reinforce their evidence-based advocacy; institutional consolidation of umbrella organisations and networks to reinforce their leverage and capacity for advocacy (e.g. in Mali the Forum des Organisations de la Société Civile (FOSC), in Cambodia via the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), in Chile via the Chilean Association of NGOs, etc.); funding individual NGOs that work with community-based organisations (CBOs) building capacity on a particular issue or in a particular sector (e.g. the management of forests and natural resources in Cambodia); and particular training initiatives focusing on the application and interpretation of laws (e.g. a French training programme in Cambodia, an EUD justice programme in Kenya). In Mali, institutional capacity-building in CSOs is a joint initiative run by the EUD, Sweden and Denmark, as well as Canada and Switzerland which are donors that jointly fund PAOSC II – the civil society capacity building programme under the EDF. At the same time, capacity-building aspects and activities are often included in EU-funded projects implemented by civil society and in the strategic plans of many CSOs – in particular INGOs. In many cases, however, INGOs restrict technical training to the partners involved in their EU-financed projects. Furthermore, without the necessary coherence and coordination, there is a risk of duplication of effort.

Some EU member states have been actively backing INGOs or networks that provide support for national/local CSOs on capacity development, dialogue/coordination and advocacy. In Kenya, for example, Sweden supports the CSO Reference Group and two projects led freedom of expression and equality. This last programme aims to build the capacity of the local civil society through needs assessments, sub-granting and seed grants, facilitating dialogue and coordination meetings. The good practices and lessons learned in this programme should be noted by EUDs and, if considered relevant for the broader spectrum of CSOs, should be included in joint EUD-CSO plans for capacity development.

2. 3. DIALOGUE WITH CSOS AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN EU COOPERATION

EUDs are expected to engage increasingly in a more structured and more regular dialogue with CSOs on their participation in EU cooperation in-country. Although this dialogue is at a very different stage in each country, this section identifies some common aspects and trends.

Most dialogues and participation processes are conducted in an ad hoc way, and are centred on a limited number of organisations. In many countries there are no mechanisms for

regular dialogue between the EUD and civil society, and it is pursued through ad hoc, one-off events (Honduras, Kenya, Mali, and Tunisia). Moreover, the EUDs' dialogue with civil society is generally conducted with NGOs in the capital city, while actors giving a broader representation of civil society, such as trade unions or community-level organisations, are left out of the process. Some CSOs note that the CSOs consulted are usually beneficiaries of EU financial assistance, and that even in the roadmap process the organisations involved were those already in contact with the EUD. A multi-stakeholder dialogue seems even harder to promote, partly owing to a climate of competition between actors in some countries (e.g. civil society versus private sector, and competition between CSOs). New possibilities should be explored, however, because in countries where EUDs are regarded as honest brokers they can also act as facilitators in broadening the dialogue to other actors (e.g. to mark International Human Rights Day 2016, the EUD in Cambodia hosted a "Speakers' Corner" event, to provide the public, civil society and government officials with an opportunity to interact on issues relating to human rights).

Some positive experiences underline a more strategic approach to dialogue that goes beyond funding opportunities. In a range of countries, the EUDs' dialogue with CSOs is almost exclusively confined to ad hoc events and to the direct scope of funding and calls for proposals (Kenya, Mali). In the last few years, however, there have been numerous examples of civil society being increasingly approached by the EUDs as partners not only in implementing donor-funded actions, but also in contributing to the sectoral and policy dialogue. There are also examples of EUDs trying to improve participation of CSOs vis-à-vis the government (within the framework of the tripartite dialogue in Tunisia, for example, the EU proposes that official meetings of Association Council and Committee, as well as official negotiation sessions, should be preceded and followed by a meeting with CSOs).⁴ In some cases, this also means that some EUDs are playing a role in pushing for and supporting dialogue between CSOs about their roles and strategies, about an enabling environment, about how external support can contribute to their agendas, and about how to coordinate internally. Taken together, this helps civil society to be better equipped for its dialogue with public authorities and with the EUDs. This in turn has led to major improvements in the dialogue which in some cases is now far more structured and mature than it was a few years ago. Nevertheless, the inclusion of civil society in the dialogue on bilateral cooperation and programming still falls short of the proclaimed intentions in many countries, as only a tiny minority of organisations who responded to the survey were invited to take part in the process of programming EU development cooperation, and most of them were INGOs or NGO platforms.

⁴ *Joint Communication to reinforce EU support to Tunisia, September 2016.*

SUPPORTING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT: EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE*

In a number of countries, the perception is that the EUDs could do more to promote and protect space for civil society...

“The NGOs working in Bolivia perceive that in the last year their spaces for participation have shrunk and that their role is not valued or reinforced by the government and in this unfavourable situation the EU is not making enough effort to change this scenario.”

National NGO, Bolivia

“The EU delegation has not issued a single statement reflecting concerns about shrinking space for CSOs in Pakistan. We don’t see any visible efforts by the EU delegation to challenge the shrinking of CSO space or to leverage all the instruments the EU has at its disposal. The EUD has made limited efforts to engage with networks or organisations that are actively advocating against shrinking this space. Also, last year and this year many resolutions relating to Pakistan were passed by the EU parliament, but there is no mention of concerns about shrinking CSO space.”

Regional NGO, Pakistan

“The EU is supportive to CSOs but could do better in helping to improve the government’s accountability in a regular and continuous way (not only at key moments such as during elections or constitution).”

Regional NGO, Fiji

“The delegation did not react in an adequate way to the government’s increasing restrictions on national CSO activities. At the political level, despite Sombath’s disappearance in 2014, the EU decided to increase aid substantially to the government and the 2014-2020 bilateral programme. The message to the authorities is clear: their human rights violations and their increasingly hostile policy to civil society don’t matter, because EU support will continue to grow. We don’t understand this logic or the reasons behind it.”

National office of INGO, Laos

“On sensitive issues the EUD does not confront the government. This is inconsistent with the messages coming from Brussels.”

National office of INGO, Honduras

“The EUD keeps very cautious and weak approach, uses very diplomatic language and doesn’t want to pressure the government in case it is accused of political interference.”

National NGO, Honduras

“Simple actions of human rights defenders (like visiting them in prison or attending their trial) have been abandoned. The reason for this is that the EUD wants to maintain good relations with the government and is implementing what they call ‘silent diplomacy’. The problem with silent diplomacy is that it is not transparent, and you never know what EUD is doing or whether it is having an impact. In fact at the moment the situation of human rights defenders is deteriorating in Cambodia and the level of fear is growing. It is now more than ever that EUD and MS support would be needed.”

National NGO, Cambodia

... and when EUDs take a stand on defending civil society and human rights, it has been found to make a big difference.

“During the crisis in Burundi, the EU stood up and supported CSOs in advocating for fair governance, and it kept helping even the CSOs that were banned by the government. It showed its support for them without considering how the government was treating them.”

National office of INGO, Burundi

“In South Sudan, the EU has been engaging with civil society to advocate for the rights of the community, the example being gender mainstreaming workshops in Juba.”

National NGO, South Sudan

“The EU invests in institutional strengthening, though the promotion of dialogue between institutions and between the government and the sector. The EU’s visible appreciation for civil society’s role and activities is very important for the relationship between CSOs and the government.”

National NGO, Brazil

“The EU has supported the setting up of joint initiatives by civil society and the government, which has created an enabling environment for CSOs and a joint working culture.”

National office of INGO, Nepal

“Since 2013 we’ve had a fully EU-funded national advocacy and research project on an enabling environment, which has yielded interesting results. We – along with two other CSO networks – have now been approached by the EU in order to develop a new project, based on building a ‘network of networks’ from Chilean civil society. The project seeks to develop the enabling environment advocacy track further, as well as promoting civil society involvement and participation on SDG implementation, the institutional consolidation of umbrella organisations and their members, and promoting community outreach through workshops and courses.”

National Platform of NGOs, Chile

“The EU delegation plays very important roles in providing financial assistance to Cambodian civil society, to enable it to advocate for policy development, policy implementation and policy changes, to protect and defend the interests of Cambodian people. With funding assistance from the EU, civil society participates in the process of developing legislation; for example, by joining in the consultation on the draft law on juvenile justice.”

National NGO, Cambodia

* Quotes taken from the online survey

Communication, feedback and follow-up could be improved. Some CSOs point out that there is limited follow-up on dialogue processes: this can give rise to a feeling that some events are held merely because they are on the timetable, and as the participating organisations receive no feedback on the outcome of these consultations they do not know whether their inputs have been taken into account, or whether there will be continuity in the process. Specifically regarding the EU Country Roadmaps, CSOs that have participated in the consultation generally state that civil society's inputs were largely taken into account, but many also underline that they have no information on follow-up or on what is expected from them in terms of implementation. Communication is an important precondition for effective dialogue, and one in which the EUDs should invest more resources, as most CSOs reveal a general lack of knowledge about the EU's instruments and tools for engaging with civil society. For instance, more than half of the survey respondents (52%) are not aware of the existence of the EU Human Rights Country Strategy, and almost 65% are not aware of the existence of a gender analysis and/or of EUDs' plans for implementing the EU Gender Action Plan, even though many of them work on these issues. Some CSOs also report that they requested information from their EUD on several programmes but have received no response. The EUDs' communication strategies should, therefore, be improved, and multiple channels should be used for reaching CSOs.

When the dialogue and coordination between EUDs and EU member states is stronger, it usually benefits the dialogue with civil society. In countries where there is strong coordination between European partners, there are also good practices indicating a more coherent and shared approach to engagement with civil society. In Cambodia, the EU and its member states seem to be making a systematic effort to coordinate programmes, instruments and sectors through complementarity and joint decisions (including by speaking with one voice in their dialogue with the government, as demonstrated by examples relating to education, public financial management, and decentralisation). Many EU-CSO dialogue initiatives build on that background. In Mali, the dialogue between the donor coordination network and the FOSC (which takes place mainly within the EDF-funded framework of institutional capacity building for CSOs) is particularly strong and well established.

There are also examples of well-established dialogue at a high level: in Honduras, a mechanism for exchanges on human rights issues – the 'Grupo Enlace' – was introduced, in which ambassadors from the coordinating group and the EU ambassadors meet every two months to discuss these issues with local CSOs. INGOs play a role in supporting local organisations in preparing and coordinating their proposals and issues to be discussed. The EU has launched both joint programming (for donor coordination) and the roadmap process (as a donor-CSO

framework) to help increase development effectiveness. From the practices we learned about through the survey and the case studies, it seems that, unfortunately neither process yet lives up to the challenge of being the central framework in its own area, but the EU can be complimented on the leadership it has shown in trying to establish such approaches. In general, it can be said that improved donor coordination – whether within the framework of joint programming or a different framework within the country – also encourages a more strategic approach to CSOs, which is apparent first and foremost in the existence of structured processes for strategic dialogue in different areas.

The strategic vision should be that the roadmap process will, in the future, guide all those existing processes and also those that are yet to be established. It can already be noted that when EU MSs are actively engaged (Cambodia, Honduras) the positive effects appear to be stronger than when the EUD is alone in signing up to the roadmap framework (Kenya). Some roadmaps have included concrete initiatives and operational support from several EU member states, so that the focus is not only on the EUD's actions, thereby fostering co-ownership among their development partners (Cambodia, Tunisia). In Mali, this co-ownership exists in practice, within the EDF-CSO capacity-building framework.

Dialogue is easier and more effective when there are legitimate, capable counterparts from civil society. In some countries, civil society can be highly polarised and/or can be facing legitimacy and representation issues, so that it is a challenge to identify partners for dialogue. In the view of some EUDs, positive experiences seem to derive from the existence of representative NGO networks, or platforms with local membership, which act as focal points for EUD-CSO dialogue and constitute a well-identified partner for donors. The role played by these kinds of organisations has been crucial for civil society in several countries. In particular, they (e.g. CCC in Cambodia, FOSC in Mali) have helped by identifying issues of common interest; by broadening the range of actors involved in dialogue with the EU, to ensure that the voices of decentralised and grassroots organisations are also heard; by formulating proposals and joint actions involving external partners, by networking, and by and advocating for civil society's concerns in discussions with public authorities and donors. However, it is important to emphasise that diversity is one of the essential and enriching features of civil society, and is a precondition for civil society organisations to be able to promote the rights of a wide range of constituencies in the population. Regardless of whether or not there are representative CSO platforms, listening to diverse groups and organisations is important if the EUD is to do effective work that is relevant to civil society as a whole.

CAMBODIA: MORE INTENSE EU DIALOGUE WITH CSOS INCLUDING MEMBER STATES

The EUD and other European donors active in Cambodia have been reinforcing their dialogue with civil society over the last few years. One level of engagement is multi-stakeholder dialogue with the government, development partners, civil society and the private sector within the framework of high-level policy dialogue in the Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum (CDCF) and the Government-Donor Coordinating Committee (GDCC), both of which have three representatives from the largest CSO umbrella platforms (the CCC, NGO Forum and MEDICAM). There are also 19 sectoral technical working groups (TWGs) in which relevant sector-specific CSOs take part. In the TWGs in which the European partners and the EUD are most active (around half of them), strong participation by CSO representatives is actively promoted. In many cases, however, the number of CSOs engaged in these dialogue mechanisms is still limited and more mechanisms for dialogue and partnership based on genuine negotiation and mutual agreement need to be promoted, particularly on more sensitive issues.

The second level of dialogue is between European development partners and civil society. Recently, this has included:

- Consultations on joint programming: in drafting the EU's strategy for development cooperation in Cambodia for 2014-2018 (discussion on plans and priorities), on the monitoring report (meeting in 2016 on the outcomes in different sectors, and policy impacts), and on the external evaluation of the strategy.
- Extensive consultations during the preparation of the European Country Roadmap for Cambodia, mainly including Cambodian CSOs, whose inputs were reflected in the final document. A revision of the indicators was discussed at the European counsellors' retreat in 2015 and adopted in January 2016.
- Joint meetings on issues relevant to CSOs, such as the January 2016 meeting on an enabling environment for civil society in Cambodia, which focused on the legal frameworks, human rights defenders, elections, and international issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals and financing for development.

The third level is the EUDs' regular dialogue with civil society. This entails ad hoc consultations on calls for proposals and on particular programmes, such as the EU programme to support decentralisation. It also includes a regular dialogue with major umbrella organisations.

European partners are setting up a structured mechanism for consultation with civil society, matching Priority 3 of the Cambodia Roadmap ("Structure European dialogue with civil society and mainstream civil society issues in European development cooperation"), and in particular Indicator 3.1 on "establishing a specific platform for European dialogue with CSOs". This mechanism includes two main key events: (i) an annual meeting to review progress on implementing the joint strategy and thematic issues that are particularly relevant to the enabling environment and active citizenship, and (ii) decentralised dialogue through an annual provincial meeting, rotating to a different province every year (first scheduled for February 2017). The EU delegation provides the secretariat for the dialogue mechanism, and organises it in consultation and coordination with its European partners and representative umbrella organisations from civil society.

In general, the structuring of dialogue with civil society in Cambodia is at a more advanced stage than in many other countries, but some CSOs feel that this dialogue does not work for them— in particular human rights organisations, which see their space shrinking and many human rights defenders at risk. Moreover, grassroots and community-based organisations are mostly left out of these processes, and their voices are not sufficiently heard. These dialogue mechanisms focus on EU development cooperation programmes and do not cover other EU policies, such as trade, whose detrimental impacts on human rights and land rights are not sufficiently addressed or discussed. Finally, the roadmap process and accompanying dialogue are quite recent, and it will be interesting to see how they will connect with other donors' initiatives in the future, and whether they will have a positive influence on the situation of civil society in Cambodia.

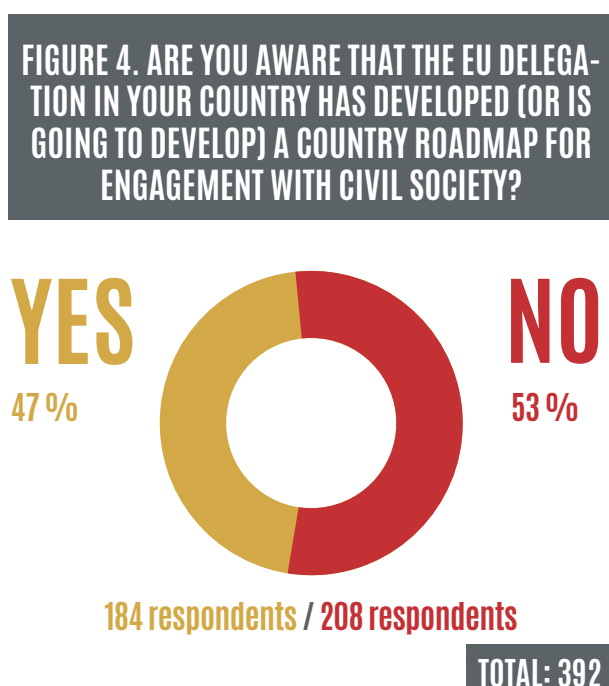
2. 4. EU COUNTRY ROADMAPS FOR A MORE STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

In the survey and the country examples, the research analysed the process of drafting and implementing the **EU Country Roadmaps**. Taking into account CONCORD's continuous engagement on roadmaps, and underlining the conclusions of previous CONCORD analysis,⁵ a number of findings can be highlighted:

CSOs' awareness of the roadmaps is still limited and any awareness and engagement seems to stem mainly from the roadmap development phase. Just over half of the 392 respondents to the survey (53%) are not aware that the EU delegation has developed or is going to develop a country roadmap for engagement with civil society in-country (*Figure 4*), and this percentage is highest among national/local CSOs. This result is comparable to that in the last survey, carried out in 2014, when 51% were not aware. This finding is interesting as it shows that even though efforts to inform people about the roadmap were stepped up, and a final roadmap is now available for many more countries (around five times as many), there appears to be little change in awareness among CSOs.

Of the 116 organisations involved in the roadmaps, 80% were involved only in the consultation or validation phases (*Figure 5*). Awareness, therefore, seems to stem largely from the development phase in which surveys, meetings etc. were organised

⁵ 'Analysis of six EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society and recommendations for the future', September 2015.



in order to consult civil society. It is interesting to note that the percentage of national NGOs involved in this phase is higher than for international NGOs: this indicates that EUDs made an effort to engage national civil society actively in this process.

Roadmap experiences and processes are diverse. Drafting varies from country to country, with different formats for the consultations and meetings held, ranging from decentralised processes in-country to online surveys or mere validation and briefing exercises. The contents of most roadmaps generally follow the three priorities set in the EC Communication,⁶ which is positive as it means that they seek a true implementation of the priorities, although some have a too general approach. Others, by contrast, include detailed implementation plans identifying activities, goals and indicators. The status of implementation is very different: in some countries, the EU Country Roadmaps are still in the process of being drafted, or have only recently been finalised, while in others there are revised versions already. The notion of respecting context and giving space to country-specific approaches and timelines is generally well reflected. At the same time it is important for any strategic process that a general framework is provided and maintained, with regular, comparable output indicators. In some countries the roadmap is not linked to the programming of EU assistance (bilateral, regional and thematic cooperation), while in others it is effectively mainstreamed in the EUDs' regular work. In the survey there are some instances where CSOs consider that the roadmap represented a step change in EUD-CS relations (Mozambique, Peru, Morocco – see box). Some CSOs also find the process of mapping CSOs very useful, mainly because it reflects a determination to find out more about the actual situation of organisations working in the country, and is a tool that can be used by EUDs and MS embassies for engaging in dialogue and funding.

Roadmaps are a useful tool for improving scoping and cooperation, but they do not yet constitute a strategic framework for engagement with civil society. In many cases they give a good analysis of what needs to be addressed, outline a strategy for tackling these issues and clarify the EUD's role and mandate in doing so. Where it has already started, the process of developing and implementing a roadmap gives a good framework for scoping CSOs' existing work and landscape and their cooperation with EUDs. The process also can foster cooperation between CSOs and also with the EUD and the EU member state, as well as with other cooperation actors

⁶ There are exceptions to this. In Tunisia, for example, a fourth priority was set: to improve the coordination between CSOs and donors/partners. In Cambodia, priorities are different from EC Communication: (1) promote HR and gender equality based approach in European development cooperation and strengthen an enabling environment for CSOs; (2) support local civil society efforts to enhance their internal governance, transparency and accountability; (3) structure European dialogue with CS and mainstream CS issues in European development cooperation.

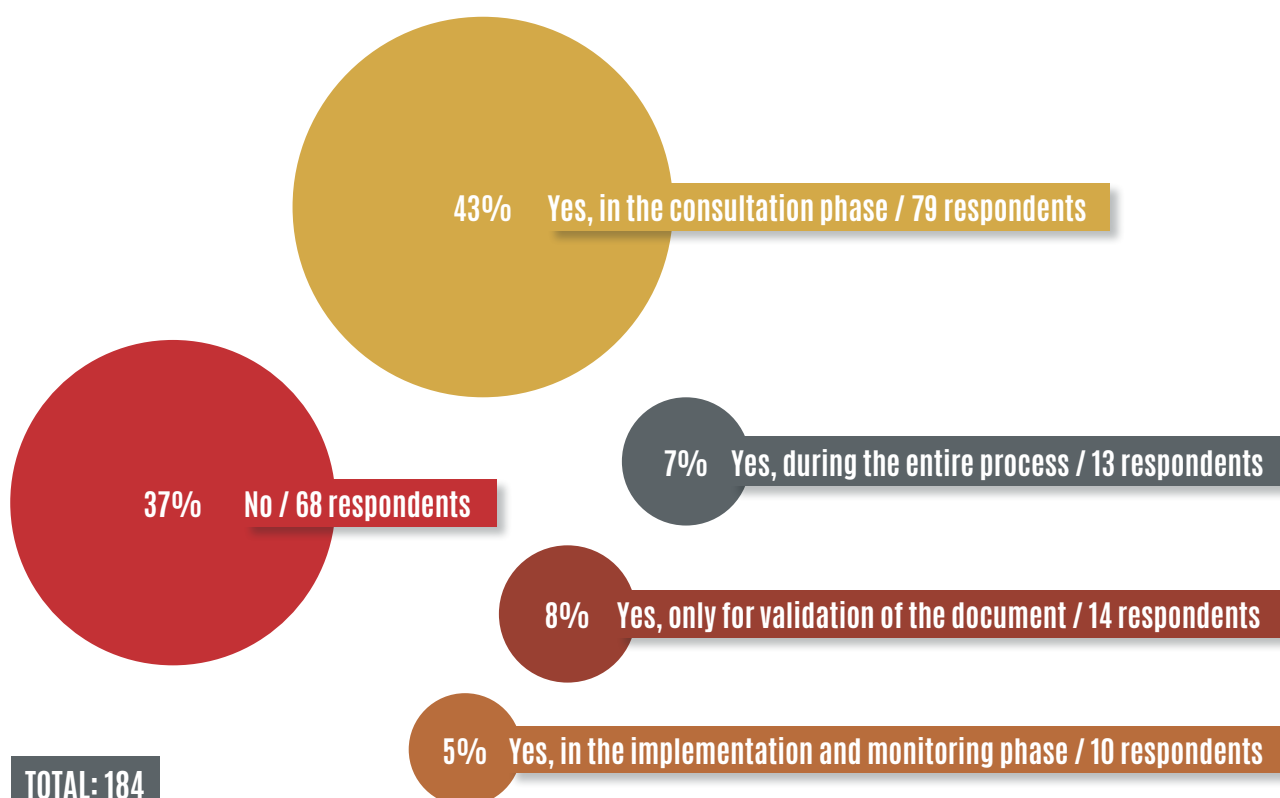
in the country. The framework has been evaluated positively in previous CONCORD work, but the feeling is that a strategic aspect is still missing in many places. Also, the roadmap can sometimes be diverted from its initial purpose (that of supporting a more strategic overall engagement and an enabling environment for CSOs) towards a focus on EUD's coordination, both internally and with EU member states or on guiding the use of funds allocated to CSOs. Funding is an important element of a CSO enabling environment, and there is good practice where the roadmap provides a framework for calls for proposals (e.g. Madagascar, Honduras), but in some countries it is not being linked sufficiently to the programming of EU assistance (bilateral, regional and thematic cooperation) or to political issues relating to CS enabling environment. The roadmaps may lose important traction in their mission to increase the visibility, predictability and impact of EU actions and to provide a sound strategic framework if matters of urgency and importance to civil society are not dealt with. A majority of survey respondents (64%) classify the roadmaps' contribution to strengthening CSOs' role as policy influencers as "poor" or "average", mainly because action in this area has limited impact unless the basic conditions needed to enable CSOs to play this role effectively and more securely are met. Such issues include a legal and

regulatory framework for CSOs, free access to foreign funding and effective dialogue mechanisms.

The most positive effect of the roadmap process so far is more systematic EUD-CS dialogue, especially in countries with existing good practice in certain sectors. In some cases, the roadmap process helped boost EUD-CSO dialogue, and provided a basis for engaging in a more systematic way. Moreover, 29% of survey respondents consider that it has had a positive effect on EUD-CS relations (*Figure 7*). Still, some EUDs are unsure about the usefulness of the roadmap in their overall cooperation in-country and feel that the process did not add value to their dialogue with civil society (some EUDs and CSOs say they regard the Human Rights Country Strategy as a more useful framework, e.g. in Kenya). It seems that in most cases the prior existence of a comprehensive sectoral dialogue (e.g. on human rights or education) contributed greatly to the success of the roadmap process, mainly because it is perceived as more comprehensive and strategic than any previous process.

In many countries CSO involvement in the roadmap's implementations is not clear. In some cases, roadmaps include specific actions to be promoted and implemented, while in oth-

FIGURE 5. WERE/ARE YOU/YOUR ORGANISATION INVOLVED IN THE ROADMAP IN ANY WAY ?



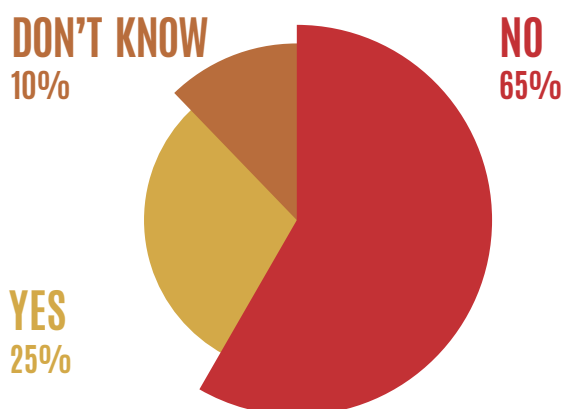
er cases the approach is to implement their objectives mainly through other bilateral cooperation programmes and by mainstreaming them in the cooperation instruments. It appears that this is not sufficiently clarified in the consultations and validation phases that benefit from CSO participation, because many respondents show an obvious lack of knowledge of the follow-up to the roadmap process and underline that they receive insufficient feedback on implementation from the EUDs. More than 64% of organisations highlight a lack of timely information on the next steps, matching their responses about their involvement in monitoring and implementing the roadmaps (some 75% of the organisations that are aware of them are either not involved in their implementation or do not know about it – *Figure 6*). Some have the perception that the EUDs lack a commitment to implementing them (Kenya), but many others (61% of the respondents in the survey) also recognise that the civil society is insufficiently coordinated for that phase. Furthermore, the roadmap process is only relevant to CSOs if they are informed about the framework for cooperation and implementation (publicly available roadmaps/roadmap implementation frameworks are essential) and if there are human and financial resources in place for the follow-up. This seems not to be the case in the majority of countries. CSO participation in the implementation (or further development) of roadmaps is crucial, as they should be involved in implementing a strategy that concerns them, and it is important to keep up the momentum from the development phase so as to have widespread participation, recognising the

variety of CSOs. Finally, more than half the respondents (53%) “don’t know” if the roadmap had any effect on relations between the EU delegation and civil society in their country (*Figure 7*), which seems to reinforce the conclusion on the lack of information about follow-up, and also indicates that it is too early to assess the impacts of the roadmap process in this relationship but not too late to re-launch interest on the CS side.

2. 5. FUNDING AND SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS

Funding is an important part of supporting an enabling environment for civil society, and the EU is the largest donor to CSOs based in its partner countries. In many of these, civil society depends heavily on funding from international donors, creating challenges for CSOs if the latter reduce their support and/or if foreign funding for CSOs is restricted. Governments often do this to undermine CSOs’ positions, accusing civil society of promoting foreign interests and agendas or being co-opted by international donors. In Low-Income Countries (LICs) that are about to graduate to being Lower-Middle Income Countries (LMICs), there are also concrete concerns that MSs’ and EUDs’ support for the country’s development in general, and to civil society in particular, is on a downward path (Cambodia, Uruguay). Even when this is not the case, dependence on and accountability to donors is an issue that should prompt further reflection among CSOs in several countries. EU funding for civil society remains crucial to helping CSOs play a key role as development actors

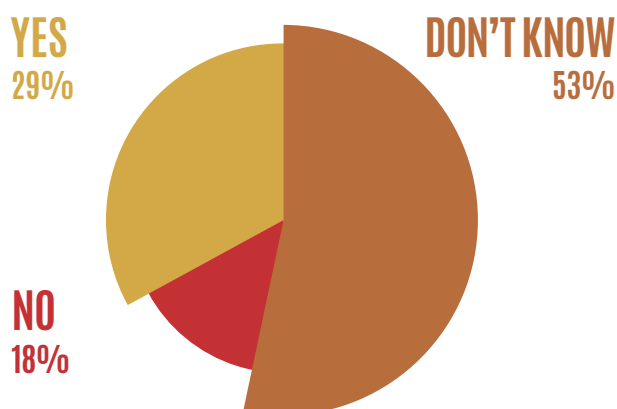
FIGURE 6. IS YOUR ORGANISATION INVOLVED IN MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTING THE ROADMAP?



YES: 45 respondents
DON'T KNOW: 19 respondents
NO: 120 respondents

TOTAL: 184

FIGURE 7. DID THE ROADMAP HAVE ANY EFFECT ON RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EU DELEGATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN YOUR COUNTRY?



YES: 54 respondents
DON'T KNOW: 97 respondents
NO: 33 respondents

TOTAL: 184

in their own right and, thereby, in promoting more democratic and inclusive societies. An assessment of recent trends, however, reveals a general perception that the volume of EU funds available to CSOs has decreased (in the opinion of 62.3% of respondents), and that access to funding for small, local CSOs is becoming more difficult (69%) (*Figure 8*). It is important to note that this is a perception based on the responses to the survey, and may not reflect actual levels of funding made available to a range of CSOs in EU partner countries through different instruments and modalities. DG DEVCO states that funding to CSOs has actually increased in recent years.⁷ However, it is possible that this is not the reality that local CSOs are seeing. First, more EU funding is being channelled through mechanisms such as trust funds, which are not readily visible to most organisations. Secondly, the political pressure on the EU to reduce bureaucracy has led EUDs to reduce the number of resource-intensive calls for proposals (including by merging funds from different instruments into one call for proposals) and, sometimes, to opt for less transparent funding mechanisms. The following section presents some findings on funding and project support that are common to many EU partner countries.⁸

While the EUDs' funding is quite relevant important aspects should be improved. The survey's results highlight the relevance of the support from EUDs and EU MSs to CSOs in-country. Most respondents give a positive evaluation of the relevance of the EUDs' calls for proposals to civil society's priorities and needs (62% considered it to be "good" or "very good"). Respondents were divided roughly in half in their feedback on the transparency of the grant award processes, on whether the EUDs' interpretation and application of the rules was coherent or not, and on the quality and timeliness of the information on EU funding shared with CSOs. This difference in perception can probably be explained with reference to the local calls for proposals managed by EUDs in the partner countries, which is the type of funding most targeted at local CSOs, compared with other types of funding modalities, and which they receive most communication about and are therefore most familiar with. It should be noted that CONCORD has raised concerns around the implementation and transparency of newer funding modalities, including trust funds.

Many respondents think there is much to be done in terms of providing a timely, better tailored and more detailed evaluation of rejected proposals, to enable CSOs to learn from the process (this would be part of capacity-building on EU rules). Furthermore, it is also suggested that the EUDs should follow up on their consultations with CSOs (e.g. explaining to what extent CSOs' feedback has been taken into account and translated

⁷ Statement from the panel at the CSO-LA Consultation on Working Trends on 20 and 21 October 2016.

⁸ The survey specifically focused on funding for civil society in-country, in other words, funds locally managed by the EUDs rather than global calls for proposals and similar funding modalities.

THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF THE ROADMAP PROCESS IN EUD-CS DIALOGUE: EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE*

"Many CSOs felt for the first time that they were helping to draw up a framework for collaboration with the EU."

National NGO, Cameroon

"The formation of working groups on specific issues (e.g. CSO-university relations) has created a dynamic of dialogue, motivating the EU and CSOs to meet more regularly."

National NGO, Ecuador

"This roadmap made it possible to do the fairly open exercise of mapping. If they are actually implemented, the lines of action announced will certainly improve EU-CSO relations and will also strengthen the role and position of civil society in the dialogue on development policies."

NGO Platform, Burkina Faso

"This new initiative has helped lead to an uncomplicated, straightforward approach by CSOs, the state and even the EU to civil society activities. It has enabled the EU and the state to have a good map of CSOs in the country."

National NGO, Niger

"The roadmap stimulated positive change: the main result was the opening up to small regional/local organisations and the organisation of decentralised consultations."

Membership organisation, Morocco

"The roadmap helped to raise the profile of the EU delegation, increase its contact with different organisations, bring about more events in which civil society took part, and promote contacts between civil society and the ambassadors of EU member states."

National office of INGO, Peru

"The roadmap has made important changes because it has brought CS and the EU closer together and improved their dialogue. Big efforts were made to involve and reinforce local CSOs through the mapping exercise. There is a renewed interest in local CSOs and there are more instruments to support them."

National office of INGO, Mozambique

* Quotes taken from the online survey

into specific EU funding opportunities). Some 60% of respondents classify these three items – feedback on proposals, capacity-building on EU rules and the inclusion of CSOs inputs on funding opportunities – as “poor” or “average”. (See Figure 9.)

In many countries, civil society is formally consulted on different aspects of funding. Almost half the respondents to the survey (49%) stated that they were consulted on how EU funding should be provided, in particular on how funding is or should be channelled to CSOs and on the thematic priorities for it. Most of the examples provided relate to calls for proposals, as most EUDs usually organise information and discussion sessions with civil society to clarify the objectives and priorities of the call and to explain the requirements for applying. There are also a few mentions of sessions in which funding approaches were discussed, such as direct award of grants and sub-granting, but these were mainly informative, rather than being focused on dialogue or listening to the experiences of CSOs.

Many CSOs apply for EU funding, but those most likely to be awarded a grant as a lead or co-applicant are INGOs. More than 75% of the 392 respondents have applied for an EU grant in the last three years as lead or co-applicant. Around half of them were awarded a grant, this share being higher among the national offices of INGOs. This is not surprising, as INGOs usually meet the requirements and have the necessary financial and technical capacity to manage larger grants and take part in large multi-stakeholder programmes. From the EUD side there is also an increased use of sub-granting, allowing the EU to reach out to national and local organisations that have a good knowledge of the target groups’ needs and which would not otherwise have been likely to access funding. However, it also means that, in order to access funds, local CSOs are required to enter into partnerships with large, often international, organisations.

Local CSOs face particular challenges. The percentage of organisations that did not apply for an EU grant is much higher among CBOs and grassroots organisations/networks (82%), although in some cases this was because the priorities set out in the particular call for proposals did not match the organisation’s main intervention sectors. It is worth noting that this is likely to apply particularly to organisations reporting that they had not been involved in consultations on funding priorities, and it is also worth noting that calls for proposals will rarely be able to cover all the important thematic sectors in a country. Local CSOs are more likely to mention a lack of information and awareness about existing calls and requirements, and to cite complex, cumbersome, time-consuming procedures and requirements as obstacles to accessing funding. One major factor limiting access to EU funding by small and local organisations is their lack of capacity, both institutional and financial, and some highlight their difficulty in securing the necessary co-funding. Local CSOs would also welcome greater engagement with EUDs in order to obtain timely

information on EU processes and upcoming calls – a concern that is increasingly shared by CSOs in general.

Bureaucratic management and the complexity of EU procedures and requirements are a matter of concern. A large majority of CSOs mention the administrative burden, inappropriate and unrealistic demands; cumbersome, time-consuming procedures and highly complex and very strict requirements as the most frustrating aspects of their funding relationship with the EU, especially when the limited chances of being awarded a grant are taken into account. The fact that the major international donors all have different priorities, timing, procedures and reporting requirements makes this workload even heavier. While ensuring that the rigour and transparency of these processes are upheld, the EU should discuss the balance that needs to be struck between the requirements for accountability on the one hand and flexibility on the other. There is a strong perception amongst CSOs (77.7%, see Figure 8) that rules and procedures are becoming more complex. Some of the reasons behind this perception might be, for example, the fact that they have insufficient information about increasingly common funding modalities, such as sub-granting and ring-fencing: the introduction of new concepts such as an “affiliated entity”, and the introduction of a new log frame template. In short, even though some rules – such as the variations allowed between budget headings, the rule of origin and the rules on exchange rates – have actually been eased in the last few years, in general they remain so complex and so numerous that for most organisations they are quite simply impenetrable. Many INGOs who are in contact with more than one EUD also report that staff in the different EUDs interpret rules differently.

EUDs focus on financial accountability rather than on impact. CSOs highlight their perception that EUDs focus excessively on the financial aspects of accountability and on formal procedures and outputs, embodied in a bureaucratic approach that seems to put a disproportionate emphasis on compliance with rules and regulations rather than assessing the impact of a proposal or project. (“It’s a bureaucratic approach, aimed at managing rather than promoting change” – National NGO, Myanmar). Some CSOs suggest that the EU should “get back to basics”: should go out and meet target groups and final beneficiaries to gain an on-site perspective and a better understanding of the project’s impact on their daily lives. This would help ensuring effective, results-oriented monitoring and evaluation. Recognising that EUD’s resources may be too limited to allow them to visit projects extensively, and that impact of EU funding needs to be transparent, and comparable between countries, it may instead be advisable to ensure an appropriate use of the diverse funding modalities available to ensure access to funding for a wide range of CSOs.

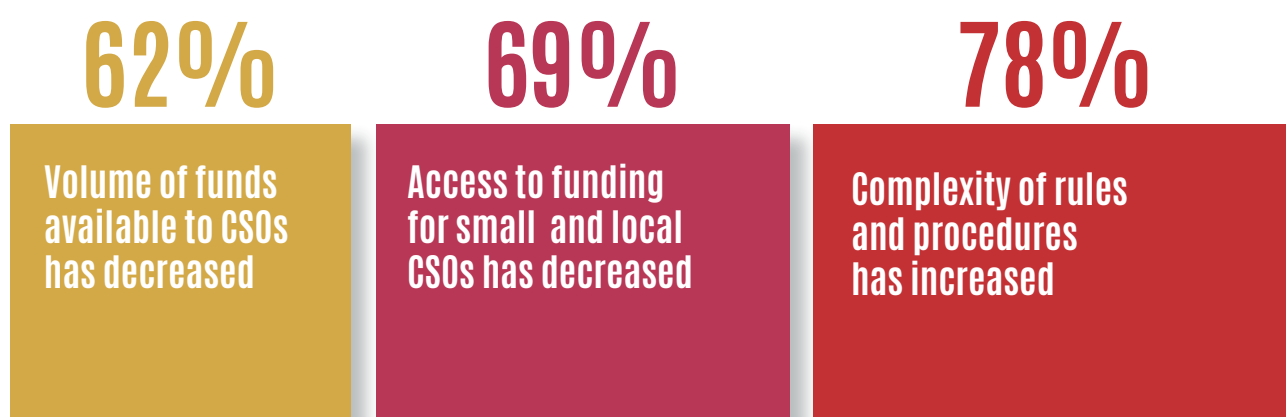
EUDs increasingly focus on fostering partnerships between CSOs, and increasingly promote sub-granting.

Under current EU funding programmes for CSOs, there are virtually always demands for partnerships between local/national and EU-based organisations, and some funding is only available when local/national organisations are the main applicants. This is a positive development which recognises the increase in the capabilities of CSOs in many countries. An important aspect, however, is the quality of these partnerships. Networking and building alliances are essential for a strong civil society, which helps make society as a whole more democratic and inclusive. Genuine partnerships are important for effective development cooperation. CSOs generally acknowledge the efforts EUDs are making to promote partnerships between CSOs through funding (55% of the respondents who gave an opinion on this item rated the EUDs' efforts as "good" or "very good") (Figure 9). Nevertheless, the quality of these partnerships is sometimes questioned by local CSOs who feel that they are co-opted by IN-GOs to satisfy EUD funding requirements. In addition to promoting large, innovative consortia, some EUDs (e.g. in Cambodia, Kenya, Honduras and Tunisia) increasingly use sub-granting schemes, where the lead applicant is awarded the grant and then distributes the funds through sub-grants to smaller local organisations. There are pros and cons to this approach. While the encouragement and/or requirement to include sub-granting in the projects is an effective way to ensure that smaller and/or grassroots organisations may access EU funding, one serious concern is that partnering with bigger organisations and/

or being sub-granted seems to have become the only entry point through which such organisations are able to access EU funding. It can also mean a change in the partnership between sub-grantees and lead applicant from that of a partner-partner relationship to a donor-partner one. If the criteria for sub-grants defined in the project proposal are too detailed or too narrowly defined, this can have negative effects on the sub-grantees' right of initiative. The way EU rules on sub-granting has been interpreted by EUDs and grant beneficiaries so far has tended to promote a "one size fits all" approach, and it would be advisable to promote a more flexible approach in terms of criteria, amounts, etc. However, it is recognised that sub-grants can be an opportunity for small, local and/or grassroots organisations to increase their financial and technical capacity to manage and implement EU-funded projects under the lead of a larger NGO, while for larger CSOs it presents an opportunity to reach out more widely through local partners.

Capacity-building initiatives centre mainly on satisfying donor requirements. Numerous studies show that lack of funding and insufficient capacity have created a vicious circle. Building the capacity of CSOs is therefore paramount to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively. In many countries, however, EUD support in this area remains ad hoc, and furthermore, it often remains limited to particular aspects of capacity. Most initiatives are geared towards satisfying donor requirements:

FIGURE 8. ASSESSING THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE LAST THREE TO FOUR YEARS, WOULD YOU SAY THAT EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CSOS HAVE INCREASED OR DECREASED? (% OF THE RESPONDENTS WHO GAVE AN OPINION)*

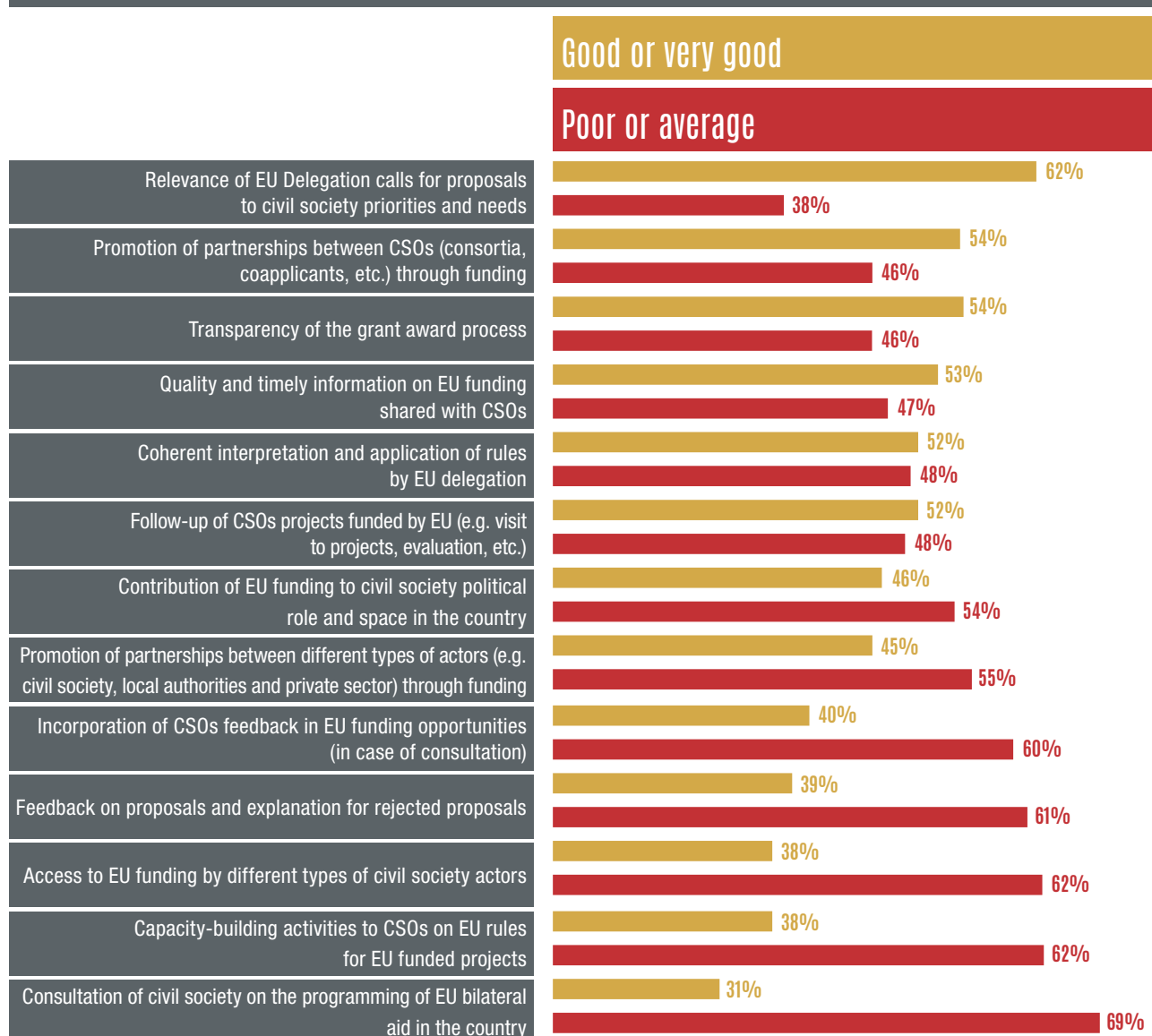


* In methodological terms, it was decided to omit the "don't know" replies and to consider the total of respondents who expressed an opinion on these issues (corresponding to 100%)

explaining calls for proposals, training on the rules for managing projects, support with registering in PADOR, and other technical requirements regarding funding opportunities. Some EUDs use all the available “support measures” under the different thematic lines for coaching on financial management, log-frame reviews and other aspects of technical procedures, in order to build their partners’ capacity in project management, which is a clear need of many CSOs. While some CSOs underline the importance of civil society support programmes financed from the EU National Indicative Programmes for the structuration and organizational development of civil society, some also mention the

need to evaluate and reformulate these programmes in order to respond better to local needs and to increase local ownership and sustainability (e.g. PASC in Tunisia, PAOSC II in Mali). As with dialogue, capacity-building measures could, where possible, be implemented through partnerships with local civil society networks. Some EUDs are looking into the possibility of signing Framework Partnership Agreements with platforms/CSOs (e.g. Cambodia): this kind of programme funding could provide an opportunity for more systematic promotion of capacity-building, but as it is a new modality it is still too early to assess the potential impact and/or challenges associated with the use of FPAs.

FIGURE 9. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF EU FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AT COUNTRY LEVEL?
(% OF RESPONDENTS WHO GAVE AN OPINION)



Complex EUD procedures and burdensome requirements are a huge concern for CSOs: examples from practical experience*

“The procedures with the EU are very cumbersome and time-consuming, there are too many formats and requirements, which, instead of administratively strengthening organisations, end up contributing to deplete them.”

National NGO, Guatemala

“The rules and procedures are stringent. I understand that a consortium has a better chance of getting EU grants, but EU should also note that managing such funds among the members is challenging. Rule and regulations should be fairly relaxed if they wish to support the work of CSOs more.”

National NGO, Uganda

“Most CSOs cannot meet the requirements for EU funding owing to their rules and procedures.”

National NGO, Gambia

“Procedures for accessing EU calls remain cumbersome, which gives the advantage to Northern NGOs.”

National NGO, Ghana

“A local NGO in Togo rarely has the capacity to meet the monitoring and administrative requirements of an EU project.”

National Office of INGO, Togo

“In most cases the organisation must pay an expert to draft the application to submit to the EU, and the organisation does not have funds available to pay this professional, and so in the end few applications are awarded a grant.”

National NGO, Paraguay

“There are too many demands, and this restricts the access for small organisations. While I value the promotion of consortiums at a regional level, there should also be an opportunity to apply through local consortiums.”

National NGO, Bolivia

“The applications have too many technicalities, which the local organisations, particularly the ones operating in the interior of the country, cannot deal with.”

National NGO, Argentina

“The complexity of procedures and guidelines for grant management are directed more at INGOs than at national actors. If the procedures do not change – complexity of documents, time – the impact of EU support for CSOs will be weak.”

Community-based organisation, Mali

“The amount of the contribution requested from the counterpart is very high, and the financial capacity is not always available. The terms and conditions of co-operation should be more flexible, and getting a project accepted is a very long, slow process.”

Foundation, Nicaragua

“Although community-based organisations produce more results, as a CBO we are not able to meet some of the requirements for getting funding from the EU.”

Community-based organisation, Zimbabwe

“In call for proposals the administrative burden and requirements are very restrictive to the young Tunisian CSOs and particularly to the ones based in the regions. CSOs are obliged to ally themselves with European NGOs, which is sometimes unnatural.”

NGO, Tunisia

“Excessive bureaucratisation of EU procedures; European funding is very complex to obtain, in particular for a number of small structures. The existing project management pattern is a sign of the administrative logic prevailing in Brussels that does not respect the diversity of NGOs organisational models, and the evaluation methods are dictated by purely financial approaches.”

INGO based in France

“The minimum budget for projects is too high and the requirements in terms of narrative and financial reporting are too burdensome; too much is demanded in the concept note and it is impossible to answer all requests by explaining the project clearly. There should be calls for proposals with lower minimum budgets and more projects should be accepted (a call for proposals that receives 1,000 applications to select 5 projects at the end is not well thought-out and generates a lot of unnecessary work).”

INGO based in Belgium

* Quotes taken and translated from the online survey (original version available on CONCORD website)

3. Recommendations

The findings of this report show that improvements are still needed in many areas, and that efforts should be stepped up to improve the enabling environment for CS and to support the engagement and dialogue between EUDs and civil society. The report also demonstrates that the more regular, more structured dialogue, and the fact that the roadmaps are being implemented strategically, are paying off in some countries. The following table sets out the most important recommendations arising from the findings, both for the EU delegations and for civil society. If implemented, all the recommendations listed below could make a big difference, greatly improving the enabling environment for CSOs. CONCORD will continue monitoring the implementation of the recommendations.

	EU delegations	Civil society organisations
Dialogue, coordination and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote meaningful and inclusive participation by CSOs in dialogue and decision making, in the ongoing political dialogue between the EUDs and national authorities; in the existing sectoral dialogue at national level; and in consultation meetings both between the EUDs and CSOs and between donor coordination networks and CSOs. Invest in more systematic cooperation and dialogue with CSOs and, ideally, take the lead in coordinating joint efforts by other donors, especially EU member states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen civil society participation in existing frameworks for dialogue and policy making, especially at local and national level, and prepare well, in particular by organising representation and coordinating CS positions. CS representative structures (networks, platforms, etc.) should put in place a coordinated, inclusive strategy for engaging with the EUD and with the representations of EU member state, with the aim of being invited to take part in their coordination and working group meetings at a sectoral and/or general level. The CS representatives should disseminate the information learned back to their members.
Roadmaps, staff and competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the visibility of the roadmap and step up both its monitoring (ideally, jointly with CSOs) and internal and external reporting, for example by introducing a chapter on the roadmap into the EUD's annual report or by preparing a one-pager about lessons learned ahead of the annual meeting of CSO focal points. Translate the institutional culture shift on engagement with CSOs – as promoted and/or implemented through the roadmaps – into a reinforcement of human resources. Especially in environments that are difficult for CSOs, make sure that all EU delegation staff are contributing to protect and expand civil society space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively seek and ask for information on the EU Country Roadmaps for Civil Society as well as Human Rights Country Strategies and the Gender Action Plan, including on their implementation, on how the results are assessed and on the role civil society is expected to play. CSOs should organise to monitor roadmap implementation and to engage with the EUDs in this regard.

	EU delegations	Civil society organisations
Information and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a friendly, timely and regular manner, share information relevant to CSOs (on roadmaps, upcoming calls for proposals, consultations, currently funded projects, follow-up of dialogue with CSOs) using all available and accessible communication channels, including online tools. • Be clear about who to contact in an EUD, for example by setting up a helpdesk for CSOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSOs with the means to do so should make their local partners aware of important developments at EUD level and should facilitate contacts between their local partners and the EUD. • Ensure better dissemination of CSOs' own work, including lessons learned and best practice, to build a collective knowledge base.
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a more inclusive, flexible approach to capacity building, with a long-term perspective that goes beyond ad hoc training events and responds to CSOs' needs at different levels, as identified with the help of umbrella organisations, networks and INGOs. • Facilitate capacity building on project management and on the financial management of EU funds, e.g. by trainings for grant applicants, including by providing feedback for unsuccessful applicants, specific capacity-building programmes (e.g. funded from the NIP CSO envelope), or by integrating capacity building into project implementation and supporting it throughout the grant period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with the EUD good practices and good experiences from capacity development programmes that are tailored to CSOs' needs; • Coordinate learning from INGO capacity development programmes better, and share with partners, making sure that there is complementarity and an effective division of labour on capacity building between international and national CSOs and other actors.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review programming processes and funding priorities to assess how well they are tailored to be supportive of national and local civil society priorities, as identified in the CSO roadmap, and to meet the Structured Dialogue objective of "strengthening the effectiveness of civil society organisations as independent development actors in their own right". • While ensuring the necessary rigour and transparency of funding processes, work with civil society to ensure that the eligibility requirements and modalities used for funding are tailored to local civil society needs and, accordingly, simplify access to funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review CSO partnership arrangements to ensure that they fully respect the Istanbul principles and are based on shared objectives and mutual accountability. • Actively engage in consultations, reviews and evaluations of funding instruments, to share input and lessons learned with the EU delegation throughout the programming cycle.

List of abbreviations

CBOs	Community-based organisations
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CDCF	Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum
CS	civil society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSO-LA	Civil Society Organisations-Local Authorities
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EU	European Union
EUDs	European Union Delegations
FOSC	Forum des Organisations de la Société Civile
GDCC	Government-Donor Coordinating Committee
HR	human rights
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LANGO	Law on Associations and NGOs
LICs	Low-Income Countries
LMICs	Lower-Middle Income Countries
MSs	Member States
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIPs	National Indicative Programmes
TWGs	technical working groups

Our members



ABOUT CONCORD

CONCORD is the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development. Its 28 national associations, 20 international networks and 3 associate members represent over 2,600 NGOs which are supported by millions of citizens across Europe. CONCORD is the EU institutions' main partner in dialogue on development policy. As a confederation, CONCORD work towards a world where people enjoy their right to live free of poverty and exploitation and their right to enjoy wellbeing and equality. More at: www.concordeurope.org

