EU country roadmaps for engagement with civil society: status update and way forward

CONCORD membership briefing, December 2015

This briefing aims to inform CONCORD members and their partners about the status and next steps concerning EU country roadmaps for engagement with civil society. It follows up on a briefing published by CONCORD at the beginning of the roadmaps process in early 2014, which contains further information on background, purpose and structure of the roadmaps.[1]

1. EU country roadmap preparation, implementation and review: where are we now?

Preparation: With a view of implementing the EU's CSO policy in external relations from 2012 ((COM (2012) 492)), the EU country roadmap process has been launched at the beginning of 2014 by the European Commission (DG DEVCO - Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development) in Brussels. Based on guidance and a template, EU Delegations (often in cooperation with EU member state or other donor country embassies) in developing, neighbourhood and enlargement countries held consultations with civil society organisations (CSOs). The aim was to discuss priorities that were then translated into EU country roadmaps for engagement with civil society for a period of 6 years, from 2014-2020. Roadmap finalization and sign-off happened between July 2014 and December 2015; around 100 out of 119 country roadmaps are now ready for implementation.

Implementation: Implementation of the roadmaps has started and is guided by the roadmap action plan that is a specific part/section of each roadmap. First experience with roadmap implementation is documented on the European Commission's capacity4dev website[2]. Notably civil society mapping studies, which are a part of many of the roadmap action plans, have already been finalized, for example in Mozambique[3] and Lebanon[4]. In Cambodia[5], the EU country roadmap process has led to a structured dialogue between CSOs and the EU Delegation, which is listed as a good practice on the website.

Roadmap implementation is supported by a roadmap facility, which is a team of consultants that supports

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[1] See http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/310-concord-briefing-paper-on-the-eu-country-cso-road-maps-march-2014 (available in English, French, and Spanish)

[2] See http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/minisite/eu-country-roadmaps-engagement-civil-society-introduction

[3] See http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/document/mapping-study-civil-society-organisations-mozambique

[4] See http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/document/mapping-civil-society-organisations-lebanon

[5] See http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/blog/cambodia-experience-establishing-consultation-mechanism

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EU Delegations in implementation and facilitates knowledge sharing between the different EU Delegations, for example via communication activities on the capacity4dev website.

The European Commission's vision for roadmap implementation is a dynamic, pragmatic and flexible approach that allows for country based solutions and best possible alignment with other EU or member states' processes that concern civil society in the different countries. In light of this, the roadmap tool might also be simplified to have an implementation oriented dashboard at hand that will be action oriented, where progress can easily be monitored and responsibilities are clearly allocated on a timeline. Also continued coordination with EU member states and buy-in of the political sections of EU Delegations into roadmap implementation is a priority that EU Delegations are further pursuing.

Monitoring of implementation and Review: The monitoring, reporting and review process will be lighter and less frequent than initially foreseen. A first review of the roadmaps is foreseen in combination with the mid-term review of multi-annual indicative programmes for EU thematic and geographic funding programmes (MIPs) at EU Delegations in 2016/2017. In countries where substantial changes affect the roadmap action plan and implementation, an update of the roadmap can be done at any time.

2. Accessibility of roadmaps: where to find them?

All EU country roadmaps that are publicly available are listed on the capacity4dev website. In certain cases, they can also be found in the civil society section of EU Delegation websites and also further dissemination channels are used such as social media. Publication of EU country roadmaps is at the EU Delegation's discretion. In countries where human rights country strategies are referenced in the roadmaps or in particularly difficult country contexts, EU Delegations chose not to publish the roadmaps at all or only summaries are available. Summaries usually list the action plan section of the roadmap and are therefore also a useful reference.

3. CONCORD analysis of roadmaps and recommendations for the future: what does CONCORD say?

CONCORD has been actively involved in the EU Country Roadmap process since the beginning and is pleased to see increasing institutionalised dialogue between EU Delegations and civil society. EU Delegations' and CSOs' efforts in this regard are very much welcomed.

Building on the findings of CONCORD's Mutual Engagement Report, CONCORD decided to analyse six roadmaps in detail (Honduras, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, Palestine, Senegal)[6].The roadmaps were selected and analysed according to a specific set of criteria, via a desk analysis followed by consultation with a selected number of local NGO offices and partners who have been involved in the roadmap process.

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[6] Lead of analysis per organization: ACT Alliance EU; AVSI; SOS Children's Villages International; Plan International; Care International; World Vision.
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During the analysis period (April-June 2015), the implementation of the roadmaps was in its early stages or had not yet started. The analysis therefore focused on the roadmap document and its action plan, and the role of civil society in its elaboration, rather than progress in its implementation.

A seminar gathering all Civil Society Focal Points of EU Delegations in Brussels at the end of June 2015 was the first opportunity for CONCORD to present the outcome of its assessment and discuss it with EU Delegations. EU Delegations welcomed CONCORD's work and were interested to discuss about how to best implement the roadmaps.

The aims of the recommendations are to make suggestions as to how the roadmaps can be strengthened as a tool for engaging with civil society. They can be summarized[7] as following:

Regarding the process
- The **roadmap as a tool is very promising and the process needs to be kept alive**. It is important to ensure a regular dialogue with civil society on the implementation of the roadmap and on developments regarding an enabling environment at national level.
- The spectrum of **CSOs involved in the roadmap process could be enlarged** and an effort should be made to better involve small local CSOs, including addressing their needs and expectations. Mechanisms that proved useful in certain countries could be replicated in others, for example in relation to online consultations.
- Inclusiveness and participation of CSOs is also directly connected to accessibility and the level of information provided on the roadmaps' process, which was often structured around ad hoc consultations. **Simple and user friendly information about EU strategies and engagement with civil society should be made available**, for example via the EU Delegation website. Posting a calendar for CSOs' consultations and related information on the EU Delegations' websites, including specific agendas, would favour inclusiveness, and make the process more effective and concrete.
- The **link with both national and thematic programming needs to be strengthened** and the 2017 mid-term review offers an occasion to do so.
- **Greater engagement and involvement of the EU Delegations Political section, different Cooperation Sections and Head of Delegation and Missions from Member States in the roadmap process is needed** in order to maximise the impact of the roadmap and civil society engagement.

Regarding the content:
- While roadmaps are useful in highlighting existing processes and tools regarding EU support to civil society, **their strategic value could be enhanced by integrating more concrete and country specific objectives, indicators and actions.**
- **Implementation needs to be process and context oriented** which means that the roadmap action plan, while being as specific as possible, also needs flexibility and regular review and adaptation.

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[7] The full set of recommendations and also the country analysis is available via concordnet or on request from CONCORD; secretariat@concordeurope.org; Tel: +32 2 743 87 60

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- **The action plans should be more explicit about the roles and responsibilities of different actors** including CSOs, local and governmental authorities and other donors.
- **Integrating a section on risks and assumptions, a timeline for the implementation of the action plan and information on the financial means and tools at disposal would greatly improve the monitoring** at implementation stage of the roadmap.
- **CSO consultation mechanisms (both existing and/or new) should be specifically introduced in all roadmap action plan priority areas.** This would support institutionalisation, strategic direction and stronger CSO participation in the different priority areas.

Regarding implementation:

- **Implementation should be subject to regular dialogue and joint decisions** with CSOs and other actors involved in the process.
- **The action plan should be subject to a joint reality check on capacities, interest and on-going initiatives from all sides** – EU Delegation, CSOs, EU member states national government and local authorities – and risks and assumptions should be discussed and addressed.
- **A joint monitoring process should be established.**
- **Activities in the area of capacity building should also address the needs of local and small CSOs** and should take place at different levels and in different forms according to the needs and context
- In general, **EU Delegations should explore ways of facilitating civil society spaces for dialogue between CSOs and public authorities through the implementation of the roadmap.**

4. Continued engagement in the process: why, how, when?

CONCORD's Mutual Engagement report and the analysis of country roadmaps show that the elaboration of country roadmaps for EU Delegation engagement with civil society represents a major step in the right direction. If well implemented and conceived the roadmaps bear a lot of potential. At this stage, it is therefore very important that all actors involved, whether on EU Delegation, EU member state embassy or CSO side continue a committed cooperation to implement the roadmaps and review as necessary and appropriate.

What you can do!

- Find out about the process in your country and make sure you contribute to the dialogue.
- Access public roadmaps on capacity4dev or your EU Delegation website and identify the areas where you think you can contribute.
- Get in touch with your CSO network or other CSOs to see if they are already working on roadmap implementation.
- Engage in the mid-term review of the funding programming process in 2016/2017, which will also be the occasion to take stock of the roadmap.
- Mention, refer to and ask about the roadmap in meetings that you are having with the EU

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Delegation but also EU member state and other embassies as well as your national government. You'll find out who has signed off the roadmap in your country on the roadmap cover page. Responsibilities to different actors are assigned in the action plan.

- Share your feedback and experiences regarding roadmap implementation: you can do so anytime by contacting the Concord secretariat or at later stage via a CONCORD survey that is coming out in 2016.

5. References and further reading:

Official EU material
Overview of published EU country roadmaps, some only available as summaries, http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/minisite/roadmaps

'*Keeping track*', newsletter on EU Roadmaps for engagement with Civil Society produced by the European Commission, available in English, French, and Spanish, http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/minisite/brochures-roadmaps/keeping-track-newsletters

'*Brochure on EU country roadmaps*', four page-briefing produced by the European Commission, available in English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese, http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-governance-civilsociety/minisite/brochures-roadmaps

CONCORD material
CONCORD briefing paper on the EU country CSO roadmaps, March 2014, available in English, French and Spanish, http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/310-concord-briefing-paper-on-the-eu-country-cso-road-maps-march-2014

Accompanying the briefing note, CONCORD organised webinars to inform on the background and process of the roadmaps, the webinars were recorded and can be accessed in three languages - English, French and Spanish.

CONCORD EU Delegations Report 2015, '*Mutual engagement between EU Delegations and civil society organisations*', available in English, French and Spanish, http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/406-the-eu-delegations-watch-report-2015

Briefing note on how to use the CONCORD EUD report, available in English, French and Spanish, http://www.concordeurope.org/publications/item/414-how-can-you-use-concord-s-report-on-euds-and-csos

Webinars presenting the CONCORD EUD report and main findings were recorded and can be accessed in three languages – English, French, and Spanish.

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