

EPLO activities in EU Member States aimed at strengthening EU peacebuilding policy

Recommendations from Member State meeting

This document summarises the recommendations to the Dutch government, EU policy-makers and civil society from The Netherlands which came out of the meeting entitled **Mediation in context: understanding the role of the EU**, which took place in The Hague on Tuesday, 24 September 2013. For more information, please visit [EPLO's website](#).

The following EU policy areas were discussed during the meeting: the role of the EEAS in making the EU more effective in peacebuilding and the EU's policy and practice in mediation.

The role of the EU and The Netherlands in making the EU more effective in mediation and peacebuilding

Recommendations to:

1) EU officials:

- Systematically use in-house conflict analysis systematically to better understand the root causes of conflicts ;
- Acknowledge and use the expertise in peacebuilding, including mediation, developed within the EU so far;
- Reach out to officials in EU Member States to increase their understanding of what the EU is doing in peacebuilding and its potential as a substitute for their own activities;
- Incentivise the involvement of EU Member States in EU activities related to peacebuilding as part of a collective responsibility;
- Make a better use of civil society's input to improve the EU's accountability and transparency;
- Assume a bigger share of political risk in supporting peacebuilding by providing more support to EU delegations and more funding for bold mediation initiatives in conflict-affected countries;
- Continue to provide support to less visible mediation initiatives and communicate more on effective and successful projects;
- Strive to make the EU bureaucracy faster and more flexible in the field of conflict prevention and crisis response;
- Address the key challenge of ensuring that peace support is in line with International Humanitarian Law;
- Continue to involve women from conflict-affected countries in peace support work.

2) Dutch government officials, and EU Member States in general:

- Recognize the potential of promoting peacebuilding and development initiatives through the EU by making a realistic assessment of what role(s) The Netherlands can play on the EU level, providing the necessary means to achieve EU objectives and making space for the EU to step in when it is relevant in areas where The Netherlands is active;
- Get more involved in monitoring and evaluating EU policies, to better understand what is effective and to help clarify the concepts and develop effective policies;
- Recognize the importance for the next HRVP and development commissioner to be appointed next year to make decisive reforms to make EU external policy more efficient;
- Promote the use of a broad definition of the Comprehensive Approach to EU external action which integrates CSDP as one tool among many;
- Acknowledge successful EU initiatives when they happen and refrain from criticizing the EU when it is not at fault;

- Be less sensitive on information-sharing at the EU level, especially in country, and be proactive in building trust with other MS diplomatic systems;
- Ensure that certain decisions in policy-making are not dependent on personal decisions but are grounded in the institutional set-up to prevent waste of resources and promote long-term investment in peacebuilding and cooperation;
- Continue to support local peacebuilding efforts as part of a Dutch tradition and expertise, in spite of budget cuts;
- Increase awareness of and resources for staff working on EU related issues in capital;

3) Civil Society Organisations:

- Continue to hold EU institutions accountable, through lobbying and monitoring activities to help point out problems to make sure that all actions are in line with international law and EU principles;
- Help the EU transmit the European experience of conflict to third country partners.

Mediation in context: lessons from EU support to peace processes

Recommendations to:

1) EU officials:

- Tackle the issue of turnover and short-term, ad-hoc decision-making by setting up systems and by further institutionalizing the use of peacebuilding approach, including mediation, to promote consistency in policies and practice;
- Involve EU Delegation staff more in policy-making to help transfer local knowledge to Brussels;
- Recognize that mediation without implementation of agreements is not effective and improve monitoring of peace agreements to achieve long-term, sustainable results (for example in the case of the Kosovo-Serbia agreement);
- Continue to support ongoing mediation and dialogue efforts in frozen conflicts, even if soft, slow and not visible, to avoid escalation between parties (such as in the conflict over the Karabakh);
- Carry out a systematic and careful needs assessment focused on the people to avoid duplicating initiatives and overcrowding areas where there is already a heavy presence of international organisations (as in Kyrgyzstan for example);
- Push for more inclusivity by bringing civil society to the table with governments and armed groups;
- Offer stronger political support to civil society ideas and projects, in recognition that the EU's lasting partnership is with the people;
- Communicate more about EU mediation support activities in conflict-affected countries to clarify its position between parties to the conflict;
- Develop a good understanding of and good relations with local civil society before getting involved in mediation activities;
- Continue to be involved in countries which do not make the headlines and receive little attention, and use the available space to develop activities (as it did in Georgia);
- Use a conflict-sensitive approach, including considering timing, to ensure that EU involvement does not exacerbate tensions.

2) Dutch government officials

- Promote the institutionalisation of the use of mediation and peacebuilding approach at the EU level;
- Allow for the EU to be an entry point for local civil society in areas when it is relevant and

develop complimentary activities when necessary;

- Strive to better understand local habits and cultures to build trust and inform the design of EU policies and cooperation projects in the long term;
- Make embassies in conflict-affected areas a priority in terms of staffing and increase the ratio of number of staff per euro spent;
- Support transfer of experiences and expertise from Dutch communities to communities in fragile countries;
- Capitalise on The Netherlands' comparative advantage of being a smaller, neutral, apolitical country to be more involved and effective on the ground.

3) Civil society organisations:

- Continue to serve as an intermediary between civil society in conflict-affected areas and the EU, which often has complicated and time-consuming mechanisms.

EPLO's suggestions for follow-up and possible next steps:

EPLO will be taking forward the recommendations related to the EEAS' role in making the EU more effective in peacebuilding in its work on the mid-term review of the EEAS throughout 2013. For more information, please contact Josephine Liebl (jl Liebl@eplo.org).

In November 2013, EPLO will organise a CSDN meeting on mediation entitled "the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation: Translating the Fundamentals into EU Practice". For more information on this meeting, please contact Josephine Liebl (jl Liebl@eplo.org).

EPLO will continue to work with and monitor EU Member States' role in EU policy-making on peace and conflict issues and identify the opportunities for them to make the EU more effective in peacebuilding. Another meeting in The Netherlands will be organized early 2014. For more information, please contact Nabila Habbida (nhabbida@eplo.org).



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