Civil Society Dialogue Network Policy Meeting

Reviewing the EU's conflict analysis practices – Gathering civil society input

Wednesday 17 October 2018
Brussels, Belgium

MEETING REPORT

The overall objective of this meeting was to gather the input of civil society experts for the revision of the European Union's (EU) [Guidance note on the use of Conflict Analysis in support of EU external action](#).

Specifically, the meeting sought to gather best practices, lessons learned and recommendations for the EU on:

- When to prioritise doing a conflict analysis;
- Conflict analysis methodologies and their value in different contexts;
- How to involve civil society at different levels in the conflict analysis and to ensure that their diverse input is better incorporated in the analysis;
- How to design and adapt programming based on conflict analysis.

The meeting gathered thirteen civil society experts working on peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict analysis. It was also attended by policymakers from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (EC). Discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule. This report includes the key points that were expressed.

I. General points and recommendations on EU conflict analysis

There was a general consensus among participants about the following points and recommendations relating to the use of conflict analysis by the European Union (EU):

- Conflict analysis should be seen as a continuous process rather than as a one-off exercise.
- Conflict analysis should be carried out before any decision is made on whether to intervene in a given context, in order to inform any such decision.
  - Carrying out conflict analysis (and acting upon the analysis) is a necessary requirement to ensure that engagements do no harm and are conflict-sensitive, and to ensure policy coherence.
  - This is true for any type of engagement, in any sector of activity (including for actions relating to political dialogue, peace and security issues, development co-operation, humanitarian aid, trade, private sector investments, etc.).
  - If a decision to intervene in a given context is made, conflict analysis should inform the decision on which instrument(s) will be used for the intervention, in order to ensure that the selected instrument(s) will do no harm and is (are) the best suited to the context and to the objectives of the engagement.
  - Conflict analysis (and impact assessments) must never be carried out as a means to provide legitimacy to a decision which was already taken before the analysis was carried out.
- It is particularly essential to carry out conflict analysis when engaging in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. However, it is also important to carry out conflict analysis when engaging in contexts which are not fragile or affected by conflict, in order to avoid doing harm and to adapt the EU's engagement early and appropriately to possible evolutions in the context.
  - Conflict analysis can be used to inform "multidimensional" engagements – for example, engagements designed to address the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The way the analysis process is designed and carried out in such cases will again depend on the exact purpose of the analysis, and the process will have to be tailored to the range of sectoral issues and stakeholders that will have to be apprehended in the analysis.
- Conflict analysis should be carried out and updated throughout the policy process (including during the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases), and it should be updated on a continuous basis (or, at a minimum, on a regular basis) to keep track of the evolution of the context.
  - This is a necessary requirement to be able to appropriately adapt the intervention based on its impact and/or on possible changes in the context where the intervention is deployed. It is also necessary to identify new actors which may not previously have been stakeholders (e.g. new donors, foreign actors intervening in the context, etc.).
  - This means that the carrying out of conflict analysis, and the process to act upon the analysis results, should be built into the EU policy process at all levels. Conflict analysis should be seen as a systemic component permeating all phases of EU policy-making.

- All conflict analysis should be gender-sensitive (see section II).

- All conflict analysis should involve and integrate the input of diverse civil society, in particular local civil society (see section III).

- In order to maximise the positive impact of the conflict analysis process, it is important for the personnel carrying out and acting upon the results of the conflict analysis to have expertise in doing so (this also applies to possible outside actors commissioned to carry out the analysis). It is therefore important to build the competence on conflict analysis of EU personnel, in addition to having strong institutional support for the need to systematically carry out conflict analysis in relation to any type of EU engagement.

- The EU should make sure that all EU services and instruments that may contribute to an engagement are able to access and make effective use of the conflict analysis. If possible, they should be involved in the conflict analysis process itself.

  o It may be helpful for the revised *Guidance note on the use of conflict analysis* to include steps relating to the EU policy process that will necessarily require the EU services involved to coordinate and cooperate with each other, and thus work in an integrated manner.

  o If the EU services that would design and plan a possible engagement are actively involved in the conflict analysis process, it will make it easier for them to build general (peace) indicators that will be attuned to the context and able to capture meaningful evolutions toward (or away from) peace, including to capture the impact that the EU engagement may have. For project indicators, the EU should work with its local civil society partners implementing the project to refine the general indicators in order to ensure they are fully adapted to the context and to the implementation of the project. It is important for local actors to be able to determine themselves what success should look like.

- Conflict analysis should also cover peace dynamics and examine the forces, capacities and initiatives for peace and positive change in the context.

  o Engagements (including programming) should be adapted in order to not only avoid exacerbating the tensions and conflict dynamics that the analysis uncovers but also to strengthen and support the peace dynamics and positive forces.

- In order to reach an appropriate understanding of the conflict dynamics in a context, it can sometimes be helpful to carry out and to combine a series of analyses, some on specific thematic issues. In-depth, specific analyses on given issues can feed into more general conflict analysis.

- It is extremely important for any participatory conflict analysis process to also benefit the people who participate in them and to not be solely extractive.

  o The EU should as much as possible share the results of any analysis process with the people who participated in it (and, whenever possible, make the results public). While the final analysis may have to be kept confidential, the EU should do its best to share as much information as possible with the participants (for example by redacting sensitive parts of the analysis). Such restitution helps build trust between the EU and the participants and it also allows the latter to use the analysis to inform, develop and adapt their own activities. In addition, the EU should keep participants informed about how the analysis is being used and it should be transparent about the impact it may have on its engagements and policies.

  o If possible, the EU should provide civil society participants with the opportunity to easily keep in touch with EU representatives (in particular in the EU delegation) even after the inquiry process has ended, and it should organise follow-up meetings in order to allow

participants to continue discussing the challenges they are facing and how to address them. This can contribute to building trust not only between the EU and the participants but also among the participants themselves. This makes it easier for the EU and participants to work together down the line (including as part of future conflict analysis processes, to provide feedback on each other's actions, to discuss challenges, to share lessons learned, etc.) and it helps build the capacity of the participants to carry out their own analyses, build their own networks and develop joint projects.

- EU staff turnover can make it difficult both to properly benefit from and act upon the results of a conflict analysis (due to the new staff being unfamiliar with the analysis process and its results) and to maintain the relationships and trust that were built by the previous staff with local actors (groups and communities, local civil society organisations (CSOs), local authorities, etc.).
  - o In order to address this challenge, there should be detailed processes put in place to ensure that new staff members are properly briefed on the conflict analysis and are introduced to the local people with whom the departing staff had built relationships of trust.

- The process of carrying out conflict analysis itself can have a range of positive consequences in addition to providing information to inform decisions and actions. For example:
  - o It can involve bringing together different local stakeholders and members of the population, including from local civil society, communities, authorities, etc., and as mentioned above this can have the positive effect of fostering dialogue and shared understandings between the different participants.
  - o It should involve bringing together different people and services within the EU institutions themselves, thereby contributing to a more integrated EU approach to engagements.

II.　All conflict analysis should be gender-sensitive

There was a consensus among participants on the fact that any conflict analysis must integrate gender analysis.

- Gender is a system of power that permeates all societies and all contexts. It is therefore imperative for any conflict analysis to be sensitive to gender, otherwise the analysis will be lacking with respect to one of the key structural components of any conflict.

- Conflict analysis should be sensitive to gender in understanding how masculinities and feminities are socially constructed in the context, which societal expectations are placed upon men and women, which norms govern how men and women are expected to behave, etc. This implies unpacking assumptions about genders and gender roles. The analysis should explore how diverse groups understand the roles and expectations placed upon them.
  - o This requires avoiding the pitfall of treating "men" and "women" as homogeneous groups – both in seeking to understand the roles, expectations and norms that apply to them (for example, the same behaviour may not be expected of young women and of older women in given contexts, and this applies to differences in classes, literacy levels, ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds, etc.) and in approaching the way they feel about gender roles, expectations and norms (for example, not all women – or even a majority of

women – in a given context will necessarily oppose oppressive, patriarchal power structures; such power structures can actively be perpetuated by women).

- o It is important to take into account intersectionality, i.e. the way multiple identities and their associated roles, expectations and norms intersect (e.g. the perspectives and the behaviours which are socially expected of rural women of a certain ethnic background are likely to not be the same as those of urban women of a different ethnic background).
- o Conflict analysis must capture how different groups experience conflict differently, and how conflict may be disrupting the existing gender roles, expectations and norms (this may or may not lead to positive change and to opportunities for EU programming).
- o Whenever possible, the analysis should include gender-specific data points, identify dynamics that may impact certain gender groups specifically, and disaggregate data based on gender, age, ethnicity, etc.

- Being sensitive to gender as a system of power will allow for a deeper understanding of other power structures and dynamics as gender intersects with all power structures in a society.
  - o It is important to avoid assumptions about power structures and about who holds what type of power based on who is the most "visible" in formal processes. Certain power dynamics may not be immediately apparent (e.g. in a context where women are not formally involved in a given peace process, the wives of the men involved in the process may have a degree of influence over them).

- The conflict analysis process should be sensitive to gender in a cross-cutting manner from its inception and not approach it as one element to address among others.
  - o This means thinking about gender in all aspects of the design of the analysis process, including to determine which EU official / analyst is going to do what, when they are going to be doing it, who they are going to be speaking with, through which processes consultations are going to happen, how the questions are going to be framed, etc.
  - o As part of the design of the analysis process, the EU staff (and/or commissioned actors) carrying out the analysis and the inquiry process should reflect on their own assumptions about gender and on their relationship with the actors they are working with (e.g. a common assumption is the idea that women necessarily oppose conflict).
    - For example, if the analysts are all male and they are interviewing women, the analysts' gender is likely to have an impact on the responses put forward by the women. Fundamentally, the analysts must reflect on their identities, how they are likely to be perceived by their local interlocutors and what impact this may have on the inquiry process (this is also true of the wider group / institution that they belong to, of the consultants that they may hire, etc.). They should adapt their team's composition and assign roles accordingly.
  - o In relation to the previous point, it may be helpful to partner with other actors (e.g. international or local CSOs that may be able to access certain groups or spaces more easily) to carry out the inquiry process.

- Any participatory process must ensure that participants are able to express themselves to discuss their wishes, their feelings, their fears, their needs, their recommendations, etc., freely and in safe spaces. This includes shielding participants from any harm or negative consequences that may result from their participation in the process (see section III). It also means ensuring that the composition of any group of participants that are being consulted together must not constrain how some of the participants express themselves.

- For example, it may be the case that female participants may not want to express their opinions on certain issues in the presence of men (including on issues that may not be easily identified as sensitive in such a manner by the analysts – e.g. land rights, access to resources, etc.), or young female participants in the presence of older female participants, or young men and women in the presence of faith leaders, etc. Since an imbalanced power distribution within a group can be an obstacle to honest and open discussion, it can sometimes be helpful to meet people separately, to divide them into smaller groups, to organise a series of smaller meetings over a longer period of time, etc.

- Being sensitive to gender in the analysis can allow for a better upstream understanding of risk, in particular of conflict escalation. For example, domestic violence can be seen as an indicator of instability and of risk of future violence – in addition to being an extremely important issue in itself.

III. All conflict analysis should involve and integrate the input of civil society

There was a consensus among participants on the fact that any conflict analysis should involve and integrate the input of diverse civil society (in particular local civil society).

A. *Why* it is crucial to involve and integrate the input of civil society in conflict analysis?

Participants made a number of points to highlight why it is crucial to involve and integrate the input of civil society (including local civil society) in conflict analysis. They underlined that "civil society" can include a wide range of formal and informal organisations, including international and local NGOs, community-based organisations, academia and research institutes, trade unions, village associations, farmers associations, human rights defenders, women's rights groups, social movements, journalists, religious organisations, etc. Working with civil society can allow the EU to:

- Have (sometimes indirect) access to members of diverse groups of the population, including marginalised groups and diverse gender groups.
  - In addition, the access that CSOs (in particular local CSOs) have with members of the population is not necessarily based on partisan interests or on a desire from the population to have access to donor funding, which can allow for more open discussions. Their access is also more flexible than any access the EU may have to the population, in terms of both how and when they can speak to actors.

- Have (indirect) access to remote / dangerous areas and to groups that the EU cannot necessarily speak to directly (including because the EU does not want to engage the groups publicly or because the groups do not want to engage with the EU).

- Be informed early on changes in the context that will require the analysis to be updated (and which may require EU engagements to be adapted), in particular in relation to the possible eruption of a crisis.

- Have access to in-depth, nuanced expertise and perspectives on, inter alia:

- Different stakeholders (and the relationships between them), in particular marginalised groups;
- Local peace and conflict dynamics, local initiatives for peace, the root causes of conflict and the risks to the human security of diverse members of the population;
- The social and daily life and the needs of diverse members of the population;
- Social relations and social norms, including gender relations and gender norms, within and across diverse communities (and within private spaces, including households);
- Power structures and local political systems, and power relations across different levels of power (including the highest levels of power);
- Political developments at all levels, including issues relating to civic space, human rights, political participation, access to resources, land control, humanitarian situations, trade, etc.;
- Trends and shifts in public opinion, and public and "private" debates (including on social media and technological platforms);
- Economic realities and opportunities, including the informal economy;
- Local perceptions of the EU, of other international actors, of the government and local authorities, of civil society, of other groups, etc.;
- Local perceptions of specific EU actions and programmes (and of those of other actors);
- The history of the context, and historical tendencies / trajectories relating to the above-mentioned elements.

- Receive input on how to be culturally-sensitive, gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive when engaging in the context.
- Have access to analysis and perspectives that are less constrained by political interests and priorities, and/or that can be framed by different paradigms, which can notably allow the EU to identify what it may have missed with respect to the issues that matter to local actors.
- Build trust and relationships with diverse members of the population, which can be helpful for future analysis processes but also for other aspects of EU engagements.
- Receive valuable help in translating local concerns, needs and understandings into "EU speak", and in translating EU inquiries into local language and frames of understanding.
- Get rid of inadequate / incorrect assumptions both as part of the inquiry process and in the interpretation and analysis of the collected data (including by allowing the EU to properly understand the meaning of certain responses by grasping the paradigms underpinning them).

Participants noted that it is important to avoid "romanticizing" civil society, including by assuming that civil society can "only" operate and provide expertise on the local level. "Civil society" is not a homogeneous group. This is why it is helpful to distinguish between different types of civil society interlocutors, to triangulate views and perspectives (including those of actors claiming to speak for large population groups), etc.

B. *How* should the EU involve and integrate the input of civil society in conflict analysis?

- Civil society should be involved at different stages of the analysis process, including to design and plan the process itself, to map the stakeholders, to adapt the methodology of the inquiry

process, to identify peace and conflict dynamics, to use the analysis to inform EU decision-making, etc.

- Conflict analysis should map all stakeholders (including possible stakeholders that are located outside of the geographical context itself). It should integrate the input of stakeholders and of diverse groups and members of the population. The analysis should not only focus on (and solely include the perspectives of) the government, people living in the country's capital, 'elite' members of the population, people living in urban areas, etc.

  o It is important to get rid of assumptions and preconceptions about what a CSO, a social institution, a business, a community, etc., "must look like" when identifying relevant actors to access. Making the effort to better understand local networks, local communities (including cross-border communities), local institutions, local organisations (including informal / non-registered organisations, non-traditional actors, private economic actors, etc.), and in general the social relations between actors/stakeholders in the given context, is essential to gaining a better understanding of whom to speak to, where, and how.

  o Doing actor and stakeholder mapping on a regular basis can give a sense of where power lies in a given context, who has influence, who is without power, who is contesting the people and structures holding the power, etc. This can help to identify shifts in power distribution and to determine whose perspectives it is important to access.

  o Paying attention to underlying power structures, to economic and gendered inequalities, to the informal economy, etc., can allow the analysis process to identify which groups and sectors may have been overlooked due to focusing too much on the dynamics which are assumed to be the most directly tied to violence and conflict.

  o It is important to recognise that "civil society" is itself not a homogeneous group, and that CSOs can defend different positions and interests. Some local CSOs may be aligned with the government on certain issues and others not, some may only follow directives from the government (and/or even exist solely to represent the government's views) while others may be very critical of its policies, etc. Likewise, there can be dissident voices within communities.

  o It can be helpful to think of interests and not only of groups of people when trying to identify stakeholders. This means analysts should reflect on the various interests that are tied to the peace and conflict dynamics that they uncover, and make sure that the actors who have these interests are included in the stakeholder mapping and are being reached out to in the inquiry process. This can be particularly useful to recognise the existence of dissident voices within already-identified groups.

  o It is helpful to speak to civil society to receive recommendations on other actors and groups to consult as part of the inquiry process, and on which questions to ask local actors (this should not be the only method to identify actors to consult, however).

  o It can be helpful to consult experts on the context, in particular local academics and research groups, including when designing and planning the analysis process and when gathering input for the analysis itself.

  o It may be helpful for the revised *Guidance note on the use of conflict analysis* to include practical questions that need to be answered as part of the analysis process, questions that will necessarily require the EU to talk to diverse people (including at all levels within a society and not just to the government and elites).

- It is important to be flexible with respect to the inquiry process, including in terms of methodology. The inquiry process should be adapted to the actors that are being spoken to (see

section II), and the information that is progressively gathered should inform how the inquiry is carried out.

- o It is important to be able to adapt the process to the language of the participants: they may prefer expressing themselves in their first language, and they may also not understand or be comfortable with some of the "institutional" language / models / framings used by the analysts.
  - It is often helpful to ensure that participants do not feel constrained by the parameters / framing of the questions, and to ask open questions which allow for in-depth answers rather than "yes" or "no" answers.
  - In some cases, it can be helpful to avoid the term "conflict analysis" when explaining the objectives of the consultation to local interlocutors. Using terms such as "peace analysis" or "context analysis" instead can be a solution.
- o It is important to make civil society participation in the process as easy as possible. This will often mean that it will be helpful to organise meetings and interviews as close as possible to where the participants live. In other cases, it may be helpful to allow participants to leave the area in which they live in order to be able to express themselves more freely.
- o Different meeting formats can be used depending on the purpose of the process and on the people being consulted: scoping/fact-finding missions, workshops, Civil Society Dialogue Network meetings, interviews, network meetings, etc.

- The EU should be very clear with participants about the purpose of the analysis process so that the people who are being consulted know exactly why they are being consulted, and so they have a better idea of what may or may not change as a result of the analysis. It is important that the people the EU engages with consider that they, and their perspectives, are being taken seriously. Some local actors get repeatedly consulted by international actors without a clear idea of how the information gathered will be used, which can lead to "consultation fatigue".

- In many cases, and for various reasons (see the next point), it can be helpful for the EU to consult and speak to international CSOs in order to get a better understanding of local perspectives on conflict dynamics in a given context. However, this cannot replace speaking to local civil society and local populations as part of the inquiry process whenever and wherever possible.

- The EU cannot assume that it (and/or EU member states) will be seen as a neutral party or as a "positive actor" by every stakeholder it may wish to reach as part of the analysis process. The EU should therefore adapt the way it approaches stakeholders based on how it may be seen by them, in order to build trust, maximise its access to the relevant stakeholders and ensure that they can submit their perspective as freely and honestly as possible.

- o In trying to access and speak to relevant stakeholders, the EU may face different obstacles for different stakeholders. For example, if a violent conflict is taking place in a given context, any conflict analysis will considerably benefit from the analysts having access to all of the parties in the conflict and being able to understand their respective positions, objectives, etc. However, it may be difficult for the EU to speak to some of these actors (in particular certain armed groups). In order to (at least partially) overcome such obstacles, it can be helpful for the EU to rely on partners (e.g. local or international CSOs) that are able to access these spaces and actors and to provide an understanding of the latter's perspective and positions.

- It may be the case that being asked questions by representatives of a major international donor (the EU) leads certain civil society participants to base their answers on what they expect the donor would like to hear. In some cases, it may thus be helpful to partner with other actors (e.g. international or local CSOs) to carry out the inquiry process, or possibly to carry out a parallel inquiry process allowing for the triangulation of responses.

- The EU should ensure that the actors that it speaks to as part of the analysis process (including possible intermediaries such as local or international CSOs who have access to armed groups that the EU cannot directly speak to) are fully shielded from any harm or negative consequences that may result from their participation in the process (this can include security risks, reputational risks, etc.).

  - For example, inviting women to an international hotel for an evening meeting may entail reputational (and even security) risks for them. Attributing criticism of the government to individual members of local CSOs may put them at risk of retaliation by the government. It may be necessary to avoid naming sources in reports and to avoid mentioning information that would allow participants to be identified.

- Informal processes (e.g. informal roundtable discussions bringing together people from various institutions, organisations, etc., to discuss the challenges that they face) can be helpful in learning about a context even when these processes are not designed to produce detailed analysis reports. They can also sometimes allow for the rapid sharing of information in cases where bureaucratic hurdles make it difficult to share information in real time on a rapidly-evolving context through official channels.

IV. Recommendations relating to conflict analysis methodology

- There are different approaches, processes and methodologies for carrying out conflict analysis. They all have their strengths and weaknesses. It is essential to tailor the approach, process and methodology to the purpose of the conflict analysis being carried out – no single approach will be optimal for every purpose and context.

- The EU should be flexible with respect to the focus, scope and time frame of its conflict analysis, and it should be ready to adapt the analysis process based on the input that it gathers from civil society.

  - For example, if the EU decides to carry out conflict analysis to understand the conflict dynamics in a given geographical area, it may be the case that local actors consider that the conflict dynamics in the area can only be understood by looking at a wider context, including one that may extend across national borders. The EU should not limit the scope of an analysis process based on an a priori focus on a given nation state or area. The process should instead be adapted based on how the conflict is seen and lived by local stakeholders.

  - The EU should be particularly flexible with respect to the time allocated to the inquiry process, as analysts must be able to take the time to adapt the process and their methodologies to the local context and to local actors (see sections II and III).

- There can never be a "perfectly exhaustive" conflict analysis due to limited resources, means and time. This means it is necessary to assess what constitutes "good enough" analysis. This assessment should be based on the specific purpose of the conflict analysis being carried out.

- There are various methodologies and approaches which can make it easier to keep the analysis – or at least parts of it – up to-date without having to repeat the entire analysis process periodically.

  - It can be helpful for the analysis to at least partially rely on systems tools which offer a dynamic depiction of the context. This can allow analysts to feed new data into the tools and see how this changes the results.

  - It can be helpful to define different benchmarks and levels of depth for the analysis, with "light" updates to the analysis requiring less work and being made more frequently than in-depth updates. These levels of analytical depth should be set based on the context and the purpose of the analysis, and the light updates can also inform the analysts on whether or not more a more in-depth revision of the analysis is needed earlier than when it was scheduled to occur.

  - In situations of sudden change in the context (in particular if a crisis erupts), it can be helpful to have "minimum" benchmarks setting what is "good enough" conflict analysis for the purpose of a rapid reaction, so that there is a clear understanding of what needs to be known, updated and acted upon for the EU to make informed decisions in relation to the short-term evolution of the context. It can also be helpful to have specific tools ready to carry out such "good enough" analysis whenever required. There can then be a return to different benchmarks for a deeper updating of the analysis over a longer time frame.

    As mentioned above, however, already having a conflict analysis process in place before a crisis erupts in a given context and updating the analysis will be significantly easier and faster than starting the analysis from scratch. Carrying out conflict analysis when a crisis is erupting is also particularly challenging, and it is important to recognise the limits of any analysis carried out within a short time frame in such circumstances.

  - In parallel to the more bureaucratic process of updating the formal analysis, the state (and possible evolution) of the context should be discussed in the coordination meetings held at the EU institutions level, as well as at informal learning events and any other type of meeting organised by the EU or other actors on the conflict, the context, the engagement, etc. Discussing the possible changes relating to the peace and conflict dynamics in the context at these regular formal and informal meetings can help actors and institutions embed the need to be sensitive to them and supplement the conflict analysis itself.

- It can be helpful to limit biases in the analysis by combining participatory approaches with other types of approaches and by triangulating the perspectives offered by the actors that were spoken to.

- It is helpful to use and build on existing bodies of research (including research carried out by CSOs) and databases, including as part of the design of the conflict analysis process.

- The EU should continuously look to the work being carried out by national states, other international organisations and civil society organisations to learn from their best practices, from their tools and from what hasn't worked for them in conflict analysis processes.

- The EU should continuously monitor the development of new tools and the use of new technologies which may provide opportunities for the improvement of conflict analysis processes.

V.   Other observations

In addition to the points and recommendations listed above, participants made a number of observations on various challenges and obstacles to cooperation between the EU and civil society in conflict analysis processes.

- It is sometimes difficult for CSOs to have a clear understanding of the EU's key priorities and processes, including with respect to conflict analysis. The EU should do more to provide its civil society partners with more information on its input needs and on its decision-making processes for given engagements. This would allow CSOs to provide more targeted, relevant and detailed input.

- The EU should devise solutions to allow the staff of delegations to engage more deeply and extensively with civil society, in particular as part of conflict analysis processes.

- Peacebuilding NGOs must be able to speak to all parties in a given conflict, including armed groups that are identified as terrorist organisations, as the enemy of the national government, etc. As highlighted above, any EU conflict analysis will benefit from being able to receive informed input on these groups, their objectives, their perspectives, etc. However, the funding that peacebuilding NGOs depend on sometimes prevents them from having such access to armed groups that are opposing the government of an EU partner country. It is therefore necessary to preserve the NGOs' ability to speak to all conflict parties.

- There can be a lack of integration and coordination between the various EU instruments, mechanisms and actors engaging in contexts. This makes it harder for CSOs to know with whom they should engage, which type of input would be the most relevant to the EU, etc. A more integrated approach to engagements and a more integrated and systemic prioritisation of conflict analysis within EU policy processes would be helpful in this regard.

- There can be a lack of integration and communication between the EU delegation level and the EU headquarters level, which means that CSOs who work with the EU at the delegation level sometimes find that their analysis and input has not been communicated appropriately to feed into decision-making processes in Brussels. Having more joint engagements with civil society involving EU officials from both Brussels and the delegation, and more integrated policy processes and channels of communication, would be helpful in this regard.