



Civil Society Dialogue Network

**NGO-Roundtable meeting in
Germany**

April 2024

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Meeting Communication

NGO-Roundtable Meeting in Germany

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EPLO NGO-Roundtable in Germany

On 11 April 2024, EPLO organised a [Civil Society Dialogue Network](#) (CSDN) NGO-Roundtable meeting (RTM) in Berlin. The overall objective of the meeting was to enable representatives of German-based peacebuilding NGOs to exchange on advocacy and funding issues relating to the European Union's (EU) support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CPPB). The meeting was opened by Andrew Gilmour, Executive Director of the Berghof Foundation, who hosted the event, and Christoph Lüttmann, Managing Director of CSSP - Berlin Center for Integrative Mediation e.V. and member of EPLO's Steering Committee. EPLO then kicked off the meeting with two presentations on 1) Key EU peacebuilding actors and policy frameworks on CPPB, and on 2) the EU's funding framework for external action. In the afternoon, participants exchanged on their advocacy priorities, current developments and concerns for German civil society engaged in CPPB, and entry points for advocacy towards the EU on these issues, also considering the European elections that will be held in June 2024.

Major concerns are Germany's increasingly isolationist approach which prioritises national interests over partner countries' concerns. This approach mirrors the European Commission's Global Gateway initiative, whose profitable infrastructure projects in relatively stable regions deduct capacities from international partnerships in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. In view of the recurring nature of many current conflicts, participants stressed that German and European approaches to security need to go beyond stabilisation approaches and instead adopt a wider security lens through conflict prevention and cooperation with local partners, focusing on root causes and inequalities. Scepticism of Western value-based approaches and a lack of practical credibility were discussed, calling for a refocus on human security and a true solidarity approach, while also acknowledging the difficulties of the solidarity concept. Both the German government and civil society should not only fight to keep peace on the agenda, but also develop strong counter-narratives to right-wing groups that are currently exploiting the peace narrative. To achieve joint action, controversies in PB activism must be addressed openly to be able to speak with one voice when needed. References to existing frameworks, such as the National Security Strategy and Sustainable Development Goals, could allow for integrated action taking into account gender equality, women's rights, social justice and the climate crisis.

Next to these concerns, funding cuts at both the German and European level were a central topic of discussion, with the quantity and the forms of disbursement being major sources of unease. There is a risk that the budget for the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) will be shifted increasingly towards migration prevention and stronger

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securitisation, leaving even less room for peacebuilding. Funding is either disbursed through small schemes or big multi-year programmes for large actors with an according administrative structure, leaving little room for flexible and direct contributions to local peacebuilding which are urgently needed. As donors increasingly forego overhead costs, the administrative burden resulting for civil society organisations is also becoming progressively problematic. The meeting identified a gap in advocacy from the German government for EU funding for peace and the resulting need for reflection and coordination between German policy-makers and civil society to bring proactive funding claims to the European arena. Joint strategies and well thought-out prioritisation will be needed.

Sophia Armanski, Deputy Head of the department S03 for Stabilisation, Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding in the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) and Tobias Pietz, Deputy Head for Policy Partnerships and Innovation at ZIF (Center for International Peace Operations) joined the discussion on Germany's role of promoting peace in EU external action in the afternoon. Sophia Armanski gave an overview of the work of the S03 department and the coordination with the EU, and stressed the necessity for joint action given the decreasing national and European budgets. Tobias Pietz emphasised the importance of policy partnerships, the EU's role in crisis management, and Germany's role in bringing peace mediation and a climate and environmental security lens into the [Civilian CSDP Compact](#).

German civil society engaged in CPPB will need to break out of silos both within civil society as well as between the government and civil society, (further) develop like-minded alliances, strategise together on the negotiations and monitoring of the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework, find common ways to engage with the GFFO and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) - in particular country desks in the ministries -, and sensitise German members of the European Parliament ahead of and beyond the European elections, for example through joint advocacy statements.