



EPLO
EUROPEAN PEACEBUILDING
LIAISON OFFICE

**CIVIL
SOCIETY
DIALOGUE
NETWORK**



Peacebuilding in Dutch Civil Society

The objective of this background paper is to provide a mapping of Dutch peacebuilding organisations, in particular their engagement with the Dutch government and European Union (EU). It was prepared in advance of the CSDN Roundtable Meeting of NGOs due to be held in the Netherlands on 19 November 2024 and was intended among other goals to provide a basis on which to identify invitees and participants.

Discussions during the meeting are intended to foster a better collective understanding of the current peacebuilding landscape, enabling participants to strategize more effectively for increased advocacy and support for peacebuilding initiatives from both the Dutch government and the EU. For this reason, a comprehensive mapping is necessary.

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in cooperation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The fifth phase of the CSDN will last from 2023 to 2026. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).



This document was produced with the financial assistance of the EU. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of EPLO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the EU.

© EPLO 2024

Permission is granted for reproduction and use of the materials. Please acknowledge your source when using the materials and notify EPLO.

Contents

Background 5

Areas of Engagement 5

 Emergency relief.....6

 Humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus.....6

 Inclusive peacebuilding.....6

 Capacity-building.....6

 Justice & reconciliation.....6

 Research & education.....7

Relationship between Dutch CSOs and the EU 7

Civil Society Peacebuilding Actors in The Netherlands 7

Acronyms

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| DG | Directorate-General (of the European Commission) |
| EU | European Union |
| FCAS | Fragile and conflict-affected states/situations |
| FFP | Feminist foreign policy |
| HCCH | Hague Conference on Private International Law |
| HDP | Humanitarian-development-peace |
| ICJ | International Court of Justice |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| PCA | Permanent Court of Arbitration |
| PCVE | Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism |
| UN | United Nations |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| UNFPA | United Nations Fund for Population Activities (aka. The UN Population Fund) |
| PBSO | (UN) Peacebuilding Support Office |
| YPS | Youth, peace and security |
| SRoL | Security and rule of law |

Background

The Netherlands has long been home to a diverse group of organisations working on peace and justice. Its tradition as a global peace actor is tied to the international institutions which have their headquarters in The Hague; however, it must be noted that its reputation as “the City of Peace and Justice” is more than a century old. Key figures in the history of peace and justice have worked in The Hague, such as Hugo Grotius, the father of modern international law, or Nobel Peace Prize winner Tobias Asser, the founder of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) in 1893. Other conferences followed the lead of the HCCH, notably including the First Hague Peace Conference in 1899, which led to the creation of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). The Peace Palace was built to house the PCA in The Hague, and later housed the International Court of Justice (ICJ) too¹. Currently, according to the latest study published in 2023 by the Municipality of The Hague², the city and its surroundings are home to some 491 international organisations³.

This paper focuses specifically on civil society organisations (CSOs) working on peacebuilding. Dutch CSOs in particular have been widely recognised for their creative approaches to peacebuilding, and their unwavering dedication to conflict resolution and working toward long-term, sustainable peace. They have pioneered many new strategies for dispute resolution and have positioned themselves as important actors in peacebuilding the world over. This mapping presents a selection of these organisations and their work. It was compiled on the basis of desk research, EPLO member organisations, and a list of CSOs operating in the city of the Hague provided to EPLO by the municipal government. It is not comprehensive but should read as a series of examples selected for the relevance of their work to peacebuilding specifically and to illustrate the diverse forms such work can take.

Areas of Engagement

Dutch CSOs vary in size, type, and area of work. Many of those presented here are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that operate internationally. Some have a specific geographical focus (e.g. Africa), while others have a global mandate. Similarly, it is important to note that many of them have created networks to facilitate cooperation and provide mutual support. The Netherlands has many such civil society networks, including the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders). The Hague has its own network of 180 organisations based in the city: the Hague Project Peace and Justice. Dutch CSOs address and work on a wide range of issues, but some common, overlapping themes are listed below:

¹ For more information on the history of The Hague, please visit <https://www.denhaag.nl/en/international-the-hague/history-of-the-city-of-peace-and-justice/>

² Municipality of The Hague - Directorate of International Affairs (June 2023), *The impact of international organisations on The Hague: an economic impact analysis of the international non-profit sector*.

³ Including international (intergovernmental) organisations, embassies, consulates, international schools, international knowledge institutions, NGOs, expat and service organisations, and organisations associated with embassies

Emergency relief

From conflicts to natural disasters, several Dutch organisations provide immediate aid to people in the aftermath of crises. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Netherlands provides financial support through the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA)⁴, an alliance of Dutch humanitarian organisations that work together. In partnership with local groups, DRA members are able to respond to disasters within 72 hours. It is currently undertaken joint responses to humanitarian crises in South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Yemen. Cordaid, Oxfam Novib, and ZOA are part of the DRA, for example.

Humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus

Multiple Dutch NGOs combine humanitarian assistance with longer-term programmes contributing to development and conflict prevention. These programmes focus on areas such as food security, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); economic growth; and climate change mitigation. Mercy Corps Netherlands, for instance, is one Dutch organisation among many others that contribute to the provision of clean water access, supporting smallholder farmers, and financial assistance to both individuals and small businesses.

Inclusive peacebuilding

Sustainable and lasting peace is only possible if everyone in society is included in the process. To this end, many Dutch organisations focus on gender equality in conflict resolution. The inclusion of women, as well as minorities, vulnerable groups, and youth is crucial in peacebuilding. CSOs like the Youth Peace Initiative or PAX Netherlands, among others, have a particular focus on this. The latter, for example, has recently worked in partnership with the Dutch MFA for the development of a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) that outlines an intersectional, gender-sensitive, and decolonial approach to national defence and international cooperation⁵.

Capacity-building

Many Dutch CSOs prioritise local leadership in their interventions. As part of this, they pursue capacity-building strategies in the countries in which they work, which provide local CSOs and individuals with the necessary knowledge and tools to assume leadership roles. For instance, the Centre for African Justice, Peace and Human Rights (CAJPHR) trains African legal professionals and law students in international criminal law so they can investigate wrongdoing, giving justice to victims and ending impunity. The Centre for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) offers workshops and provides information on enhancing community self-protection measures and effectively advocating for better civilian protection. Lastly, Stichting HALO Trust Europe provides training to local communities on landmine and explosive clearance so that they can live safely after conflicts end.

Justice & reconciliation

Reconciliation and transitional justice are particularly common focuses of Dutch organisations, due to The Hague's status as a centre of international law. The International Center for

⁴ <https://dutchrelief.org/>

⁵ For the full article on the PAX Netherlands' work on FFP, please visit <https://paxforpeace.nl/news/making-it-count-towards-a-dutch-feminist-foreign-policy/>

Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and Impunity Watch are two examples. Such groups work with victims and survivors of serious human rights violations, recording their testimonies, developing their capacity to articulate their demands, connecting them with key targets for advocacy, and engaging with public institutions. Some groups also organise reconciliation programmes which bring together victims and perpetrators to facilitate healing and rebuild social cohesion.

Research & education

Finally, some organisations in the Netherlands are engaged in research and knowledge exchange in various HDP-related fields. As The Hague is the host city of several prominent international courts like the International Criminal Court and ICJ, many groups focus on international and human rights law. However, other areas of note include economic development and technological approaches to HDP work. Examples include the Peace Innovation Institute (PII) and the Peace Tech Lab (PTL).

Relationship between Dutch CSOs and the EU

Most CSOs in the Netherlands have a history of collaboration with the national government, especially with the MFA, as discussed. The state provides funding for many organisations based in The Hague and elsewhere. However, the Dutch government is not the only source of institutional funding; the European Union (EU) has also been a long-standing partner of Dutch CSOs in different ways.

The relationship is bidirectional. The EU, through its various institutions, is a key funder of the work of Dutch organisations. Dutch CSOs receive funding from the EU both individually and jointly, through European grants that require co-financing (particularly from the different Directorates-General (DG) of the European Commission, such as the DG for International Partnerships (DGINTPA) and for the European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DGNEAR)).

In the other direction, Dutch CSOs engage with the EU both to advocate on relevant issues and for knowledge exchange. Many have specific projects aimed at influencing EU policy on human rights, the protection of civilians, or peacebuilding more broadly. They also collaborate with the EU by contributing expertise in the thematic or geographical areas in which they work, to inform policy and programming.

Civil Society Peacebuilding Actors in The Netherlands

The following is a non-exhaustive, alphabetical list of some of the networks, organisations, think tanks and education institutions working in peacebuilding in the Netherlands⁶:

⁶ EPLO member organisations are marked with a * next to their names.

Centre for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)*⁷

- CIVIC works with local communities in conflict zones to help them develop and/or strengthen mechanisms for self-protection.
- In parallel, CIVIC advocates for better protection of civilians from both local and international security forces. This advocacy targets policymakers at all levels, including local governments, the EU, and the United Nations.
- CIVIC's programmes are focused on geographic contexts ranging from Africa to the Middle East.

Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS)*⁸

- CSPPS is a global network of civil society actors, experts, and academics working in peacebuilding and statebuilding projects in over 27 fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS).
- CSPPS provides support for local civil society organisations by bringing them together and facilitating dialogue to address the root causes of conflicts, amplifying their voices at all levels (including the political), and lobbying.
- Of the more than 60 members of CSPPS, seven are located in The Netherlands⁹.

Cordaid*¹⁰

- Cordaid is a development organisation which aims to help communities around the world become self-sustaining.
- It works in the areas of healthcare, education, climate change, food security, and justice.
- Cordaid also provides emergency aid, most recently in Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine.
- In the Netherlands, Cordaid also works on poverty alleviation and inclusivity issues.

Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)¹¹

- GPPAC is a member-led network of more than 250 civil society organisations working in conflict prevention.
- The work of GPPAC's members is organised into 15 regions across the world, with priorities and agendas specific to each.
- GPPAC facilitates connections and collaboration among its members, putting co-creation at the centre of peacebuilding projects and ensuring they stay locally-lead.
- The three pillars of GPPAC's work are: locally led peacebuilding action, inclusion of women and youth, and climate security and emerging threats.

⁷ <https://civiliansinconflict.org/>

⁸ <https://www.cspps.org/>

⁹ <https://www.cspps.org/where-we-work/netherlands>

¹⁰ <https://www.cordaid.org/nl/>

¹¹ <https://gppac.net/>

Impunity Watch¹²

- Impunity Watch is an NGO which works with victims, survivors and communities affected by serious human rights violations to seek redress, ensure their inclusion in justice processes, and dismantle cultures and structures of impunity for perpetrators.
- It was created in response to calls for support from Guatemalan human rights groups in the aftermath of the country's civil war.
- It went on to work in Serbia; the Great Lakes region of Africa, especially Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and the Middle East, in particular countries like Iraq, Syria and Tunisia.
- Impunity Watch carries out research and advocacy to fight impunity and transform justice; one core area of work has been the development of a research instrument to measure the extent of impunity for human rights violators in particular contexts.

Dutch National Youth Council (NJR)¹³

- The Dutch National Youth Council comprises 37 national youth organisations based in the Netherlands.
- It aims to empower youth, enabling young people to develop their potential and work together.
- Among its different projects, NJR holds EU Youth Dialogues. Through these, policymakers and young people meet every six months to develop new ideas and recommendations on European youth policy.

International Alert^{*14}

- International Alert is a charity which combines research and practice in the field of peacebuilding.
- It operates in over 20 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.
- The different thematic areas International Alert works on range from climate change and gender-based violence to violent extremism and transitional justice, among others.
- Founded and headquartered in the UK, International Alert established an office in the Netherlands in 2017 in order to better engage with EU institutions and member state governments.

International Center for Transnational Justice (ICTJ)^{*15}

- The ICTJ works with victims to seek redress for major human rights violations. It helps them develop their capacity to articulate and advance their demands, engage with public institutions, and influence relevant legislation. It also advises states and other international actors on the advancement of transnational justice, institutional reform, and addressing past wrongs.
- Since its foundation in 2001, the organisation has worked in more than 50 countries. The ICTJ currently has programmes in 17 states. For example, in Colombia it has been actively involved in the peace process between the government and FARC-EP rebels; and in

¹² <https://www.impunitywatch.org/>

¹³ <https://www.njr.nl/en/>

¹⁴ <https://www.international-alert.org/>

¹⁵ <https://www.ictj.org/>

Ethiopia, the ICTJ advises and trains CSO representatives to better engage with the newly created National Dialogue Commission.

- The ICTJ has a long-standing partnership with the government of the Netherlands. The Dutch MFA has been a key supporter of the organisation's country and thematic programmes, particularly those related to disarmament and gender. It recently supported the ICTJ's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 to the tune of \$11.4 million (approx. €10.3m).

Justice & Peace¹⁶

- Justice & Peace is a Dutch NGO focused on empowering "change makers" to promote human rights and social justice in their communities, both in the Netherlands and abroad.
- In 2012, the organisation founded the Shelter City programme. The initiative supports human rights defenders whose safety may be at risk by offering them temporary relocation for periods of three months, during which time they are given support and able to connect with like-minded people to advance their causes. The programme operates in 22 locations in eight countries on four continents.
- In the Netherlands, Justice & Peace has a thematic focus on migration and integration. It operates a project called Samen Hier, which allows local communities to sponsor safe pathways for people fleeing their home countries so they can build new lives in the Netherlands.

Knowledge Platform for Security and Rule of Law¹⁷

- The Knowledge Platform for Security and Rule of Law is a network of experts working in the field of security and rule of law (SRoL) in FCAS.
- The Platform is intended to be a hub for information exchange. Through gathering experts, practitioners and researchers, and presenting novel information sources to different audiences, it aims to "improve the learning capacity and knowledge base" of actors in the SRoL field, especially decision-makers.
- Through its Knowledge Management Fund (KMF), with a €200,000 annual budget, the Platform awards grants of up to €20,000 for events, research ideas, pilot projects, and other initiatives that contribute to knowledge generation in the SRoL field.

Mensen met een Missie¹⁸

- Mensen met een Missie (Dutch for "People with a Mission") is an organisation fighting against gender, religious and ethnic discrimination, exclusion, and violence at the source.
- Through dialogue and platforming positive role models, it aims to transform the deep-rooted beliefs that lead to harmful outcomes. It also offers support to victims of violence.
- Some of its programmes include countering violence against women in Burundi and the DRC through awareness-raising, capacity building, and advocacy; and fighting human trafficking in Indonesia through education, lobbying, and support for survivors.

¹⁶ <https://justiceandpeace.nl/en/>

¹⁷ <https://www.kpsrl.org/>

¹⁸ <https://www.mensenmeteenmissie.nl/en/>

Mercy Corps Netherlands^{*19}

- Mercy Corps Netherlands is a humanitarian aid organisation that works in developing contexts. It aims to develop long-term solutions to socio-economic problems. Its main areas of work are water and food security, peace and good governance, and economic opportunity.
- As part of the global Mercy Corps organisation, it has access to communities of practice, and global advocacy platforms.
- Its programmes operate in 25 different countries and are financially supported by both the Dutch government and the EU.

Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)^{*20}

- The Netherlands Helsinki Committee is a Dutch NGO. It supports individuals, strengthening their capacities, for the promotion of human rights, rule of law and justice in Europe (including Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia). It carries out advocacy related to these and ad hoc campaigns.
- Its work is divided in three main programmes: Human Rights Defence, Integrity and Accountability, and Rights-Based Justice.
- The NHC counts as well with the Security and Human Rights Monitor (SHRM), a platform that provides information and analysis on the work of the OSCE and on security and human rights challenges.

Oxfam Novib^{*21}

- Oxfam Novib is the Dutch affiliate of Oxfam International, the largest association of organisations fighting inequality. Oxfam Novib was founded as a separate organisation in 1956 and has been a full member of Oxfam since 1995.
- Oxfam Novib works to reduce the gap between rich and poor through a number of channels: it campaigns for a more equitable tax system, fair pricing on consumer goods, and workers' rights (campaigns such as Behind the Barcodes and the Fair Finance Guide aim to combat exploitation in the production chains of multinationals); it also campaigns for Western countries to implement more effective and equitable climate policies, among many other projects.
- Additionally, Oxfam Novib supports activists around the world in the areas of climate change and women's and LGBTQA+ rights and provides emergency relief to those affected by natural disasters, wars and other crises.

PAX^{*22}

- PAX is the largest peace organisation in the Netherlands. It works to protect civilians in conflict situations, to end conflicts peacefully, and to build stable and lasting peace post-conflict.

¹⁹ <https://netherlands.mercycorps.org/>

²⁰ <https://www.nhc.nl/>

²¹ <https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/>

²² <https://paxforpeace.nl/>

- PAX works across countries in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Europe, but also locally in The Netherlands, where it facilitates a network of local peace groups, supports refugees, and trains young activists, and has organised the annual national Peace Week since 1967.
- PAX's programmes operate at the national, regional and international level. Themes include gender, peace and security; business, human rights and conflict; inclusive peacebuilding, protection of civilians; and humanitarian disarmament.
- PAX is a member organisation of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.

Peace Innovation Institute (PII)²³

- PII was created in 2018 through a collaboration between the Peace Innovation Lab at Stanford University in the United States and the City of The Hague.
- It aims to fight international challenges (climate change, war, racism, gender inequality, etc.) by "making peace profitable".
- To that end, PII established the Peace Data Standard (later the Hague Peace Data Standard) that measures the economic impact of peace. The Standard provides a common reference for companies to report the contributions they make to positive peace so that investors can reward peace creation and measure the positive social impact of their investments. The Standard is supported by the City of The Hague and the Dutch government.
- PII also has other initiatives, including ClimateActionWorks (spotlighting successful climate and biodiversity actions) and Peace Engineering (which connects and engages experts to make technology more ethical and a bigger contributor to peace).

The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL)²⁴

- The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law aims to make justice affordable, accessible and understandable to everyone.
- With that objective, HiIL collaborates with governments and other partners to improve systems and develop solutions that allow people to effectively seek and receive justice.
- HiIL has programmes in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia, Uganda and The Netherlands.

The Hague Humanity Hub²⁵

- The Hague Humanity Hub is a Dutch NGO whose objective is to support and strengthen the city's ecosystem of peace and justice.
- It builds alliances among the diverse actors working on these topics and creates a community where connection and knowledge exchange is possible.
- Besides, the Hague Humanity Hub provides spaces for meetings and events and organises programmes around peace and justice opened to all citizens.

²³ <https://www.peaceinnovation.com/>

²⁴ <https://www.hiil.org/>

²⁵ <https://www.humanityhub.net/>

The Hague Project Peace and Justice²⁶

- The Hague Project Peace and Justice is a network of 180 Hague-based organisations working on peace and justice issues.
- It was created as a joint initiative of the Dutch MFA and the city of The Hague.
- The Hague Project Peace and Justice combines the knowledge bases of all its members and facilitates dialogue among them, with the aim of fostering an exchange of views, experiences, and practices that makes all the organisations involved better able to promote peace and justice.

The Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael²⁷

- The Clingendael Institute is both a think tank and an academy for international affairs that was founded in 1983.
- It carries out relevant research on current international developments and policies and provides recommendations.
- Similarly, it provides training programmes and closely works along different actors (private sector, NGOs, national agencies – diplomats, the Dutch armed forces -).
- Clingendael publishes monthly the online magazine Clingendael Spectator and offers a platform for sharing knowledge among politicians, policymakers, businesses, social partners and others.

Stichting HALO Trust Europe^{*28}

- Stichting HALO Trust Europe is part of the HALO Trust, an organisation focused on demining and explosives removal.
- After conflict, it helps local communities by training and assisting them to clear landmines and other ordnance so they can live safely and rebuild their lives. It also provides risk education, teaching community members (especially children) how to stay safe until landmines and explosives are removed from their local area.
- It works in 30 countries, in Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the Caucasus, South and Central Asia, and Latin America.

United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders)²⁹

- UNOY Peacebuilders is a network of 130 youth peacebuilding organisations across 70 countries worldwide.
- The network provides its members with a range of resources on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). It amplifies its members' voices and facilitates the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices. It also provides training and materials to develop members' capacity for advocacy and peacebuilding practice.

²⁶ <https://www.hagueproject.com/>

²⁷ <https://www.clingendael.org/>

²⁸ <https://www.halotrust.org/>

²⁹ <https://unoy.org/>

- UNOY Peacebuilders co-chairs, alongside Search for Common Ground* and UNFPA/PBSO³⁰, the Global Coalition on YPS (GCYPS), the leading platform for shaping policy and practice on YPS around the world.

WO=MEN³¹

- WO=MEN is a network platform that works for gender equality and women and girls' empowerment.
- It monitors policies and shares knowledge, carries out lobbying and advocacy, and connects and mobilises Dutch organisations and people.
- Its work is primarily focused on the social, political and financial support for gender equality, the equal influence of all persons to the management and entitlement of natural resources, and the inclusion of all genders and gender non-conforming people to peace processes and (post) conflict situations.

Youth Peace Initiative (YPI)³²

- YPI is a youth-led organisation that promotes the inclusion of young people in peace and reconciliation processes.
- It connects youth in (post-)conflict regions and involves them in dialogue processes and related capacity-building activities.
- YPI operates the Young Leadership Experience, a programme that brings together young Israelis and Palestinians with the aim of fostering dialogue helping them build the leadership skills that they need to benefit their communities and promote inter-community reconciliation.
- It also frequently amplifies youth voices through its Youth Peace Talks events and awards a Youth Carnegie Peace Prize each year that recognises the initiatives and work of young peacebuilders around the world.

ZOA³³

- ZOA is an international relief and recovery organisation that operates in 15 different regions all over the world affected by conflict and/or natural disasters.
- Its areas of focus include water sanitation, education, food security, peacebuilding, and emergency relief. It also deals with land rights and community climate resilience and provides cash and voucher assistance as part of disaster response.
- Regarding peacebuilding specifically, ZOA works alongside communities to, on the one hand, transform the attitudes and behaviour of conflict actors and, on the other, address the root causes of conflict. It pays particular attention to the inclusion of women and youth in peacebuilding processes.

³⁰ United Nations Fund for Population Activities / Peacebuilding Support Office.

³¹ <https://www.wo-men.nl/en/>

³² <https://youthpeaceinitiative.net/>

³³ <https://www.zoa.nl/>