



FUNDING INSTRUMENTS MEETING

Implementation of the Multiannual Action Plan of the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention for 2025-2026

Meeting Report

March 2026

European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is the largest independent civil society platform of European NGOs, NGO networks and think tanks that are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict. EPLO's mission is to influence European policymakers to take a more active role in securing peace and resolving and preventing conflict through nonviolent means in all regions of the world, and to do so more effectively.

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policymakers 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.



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Background

On 29 January, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), in cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission's (EC) Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), organised a Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) Funding Instruments Meeting in Brussels.

The objective of the meeting was to bring together EU institutions, civil society experts and practitioners to discuss the implementation of the [Multiannual Action Plan \(MAAP\) for 2025-2026](#) of the Thematic Programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe (NDICI-GE). In particular, the meeting provided the opportunity to discuss the role of technologies in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and how this may relate to the implementation of the MAAP.

As technology and the digital transition are horizontal priorities for the European Commission as a whole, innovation constitutes one of the four pillars on which the MAAP will be based, alongside multilateral support, structural support and support measures. The innovation pillar, which mainly supports the work of civil society organisations, will in 2026 focus strongly on 'peace tech'.

The CSDN meeting was held under Chatham House Rules and gathered 34 participants from a broad range of civil society organisations, as well as representatives of the EU institutions.

The following sections gather the key observations that emerged during the discussions.

Technology for diverse uses

Technology is assuming an increasingly prominent role in supporting the implementation of peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives. Practitioners are exploring new ways to integrate tech tools in their activities, by both using already existing commercial products and building ad hoc tools to address specific needs. The range of tools presented by the participants is diverse and includes deliberative technology in a broad sense, as well as tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots, ad hoc search engines, data management tools, data visualisation tools, mobile applications, Geographic Information System (GIS) tools, digital twin models, and videogames.

These tools serve a variety of purposes, such as:

- **Data collection and cataloguing:** enhancing tracking and monitoring of physical and online spaces, improving archiving and searching of data and information.
- **Analysis:** new tech tools are used to improve monitoring of traditional media and social media, going beyond keyword searches to identify narratives, sentiments, arguments and meaning, regardless of the way they are phrased. Applications of this analysis include foresight exercises and early warning.
- **Engagement:** facilitating remote engagement and collection of perspectives but also supporting in-person dialogue with live data visualisation, quick polling and joint assessment. This makes information more tangible, visible and accessible, improves inclusion and creates alternative spaces for engagement.
- **Technical support:** using specialised chatbots to draw on specific knowledge to conduct risk assessments or to access archival information.
- **Strategic communication:** enhancing outreach and messaging to marginalised communities and harder to reach groups.
- **Protection:** improving early warning, mapping and reporting of incidents and risks, including through geolocation-based applications and other technologies, such as frequency analysers used to identify drones.
- **Digital safety:** developing tools to help users better identify harmful content, improve digital literacy, and amplify diverse voices to reduce polarisation. Training programmes are also being implemented to recognise hate speech and disinformation.

A people-centred adoption of technology

Participants underlined how discussions on technology and peacebuilding are still at a relatively early stage, and that there is no universal definition of ‘peace tech’ as such. Some view peace tech as technology specifically designed for peacebuilding, while others interpret it more broadly as the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and other digital tools to support peacebuilding efforts.

While in practice the distinction between these perspectives remains unclear, participants agreed that what matters most is that **technology is seen as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself**. With the need to innovate peacebuilding practices and growing enthusiasm and top-down donor pressure to embrace new technologies such as AI, there is a risk of adopting solutions based on external expectations rather than genuine need or contextual

fit. This can lead to “tech solutionism”, where technologies are used without sufficient consideration of their relevance, alignment with the needs of practitioners and beneficiaries of peacebuilding programmes, or even proper understanding of how they function.

The expansion of peace tech should therefore be grounded in clear understanding of the contexts and needs, while remaining mindful of the risks, new barriers, and potential frictions such technologies may introduce. In this regard, flexibility and adaptability are essential to ensure that tools are appropriately tailored to the specific nature of the scenarios in which they are applied.

Localisation and inclusion

Participants emphasised the value of a **localised approach**, highlighting that off-the-shelf tools already in use within communities are often the most effective, as they are typically more adapted to local digital literacy, accessibility and connectivity, and come with lower adoption costs. A key challenge, however, lies in **interoperability**, as the more accessible front-end tools favoured by the target communities may not necessarily be the best match for back-end needs. The issue of access and interoperability raises a trade-off between the choice of relying on already widely used, familiar tools and the introduction of new, more tailored and specialised tools that are more fit for purpose but may face adoption barriers.

Peace tech also brings key considerations around **inclusion**. The adoption of certain technologies could disproportionately benefit the more connected groups of populations, exacerbating the exclusion of already marginalised groups. To prevent this, peace tech adoption should be accompanied by capacity-building, digital literacy training, and risk mitigation measures, such as safeguards for mental health, particularly for youth and women who are disproportionately affected by digital harm. When it comes to the development of new tools, effectiveness and risk mitigation go hand in hand. An ideal process starts with thoughtful design, based on solid conflict analysis and sensitivity to context, and has the goal to build something in support of already existing processes and in complementarity with technologies and practices already in use.

Bridging online and offline

Participants agreed that peace tech is particularly helpful when it complements traditional peacebuilding and conflict prevention methods. Online and offline should not be seen as binary; the focus should be on their integration, as both ultimately address the same real-world conflict and impact. With a focus on peacebuilding and conflict prevention as an objective for peace tech adoption, it is important not to overlook the risks associated with an over-reliance on new technologies.

Research indicates that low-tech is still playing a larger role overall than high-tech on peace drivers and conflict dynamics, especially in areas where connectivity and electricity access can often be unreliable and disrupted. In these contexts, low-tech tools, like the radio, continue to play a critical role, even though physical infrastructure is subjected to higher risks of being captured by authoritarian forces.

In several cases, even in highly digitalised areas, people affected by conflict may prefer to rely on analogue infrastructure due to concerns over surveillance or lack of trust in the companies providing digital infrastructure. Additionally, the high cost of peace tech often limits access for many peacebuilding actors, forcing them to depend on pre-existing analogue technology.

Breaking the silos

Despite the growing enthusiasm for peace tech, participants argued that the peacebuilding and tech sectors remain fundamentally distant, with collaboration occurring only in isolated initiatives or driven by individual champions. With structured and systematic cooperation still in its early stages, there is a pressing need for more sustainable and medium-term approaches to foster cross-sector collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

Recognising the gap between the peacebuilding and tech sector, it is unlikely that sustainable collaboration will happen organically. For this, a deliberate push from institutional actors and donors is seen as crucial in bridging these gaps and creating synergies needed to strengthen collaboration.

In addition to intentional efforts to bring different stakeholders together, participants stressed the need for continuous training to ensure skills and knowledge keep pace with technological developments, which is particularly important at local level.

Some participants highlighted that engagement with the private sector is particularly difficult due to the fundamentally different goals commercial companies pursue compared to peacebuilding practitioners, as well as the sector's reluctance to invest in areas which do not yield much profit. For this, many participants would see the benefit of a stronger role for governmental actors to drive efforts to align these sectors.

Trust in digital platforms and their ownership was identified as another significant obstacle to engagement. While underlining the risks in terms of privacy, data storage, and misinformation, some participants called for more risk taking from the peacebuilding sector in exploring the potential of new technologies such as AI.

An underdeveloped policy space

Participants noted that the number of initiatives to introduce peace tech and expand adoption has increased, but policy development has not kept pace. This disparity reflects both a nascent sector, but also its inherent complexity, diversity and intangibility, which makes it challenging to build consensus around a unified policy direction. However, the complexity in developing consistent policy also comes from ideological considerations and broader debates about government regulation of private corporations.

Participants called for more robust policy developments on technology in general, and peace tech specifically. The development of international guiding principles for peace tech, rooted in human-centred approaches, the ‘do no harm’ principle, and risk mitigation, was seen as crucial, although the risks of abusive state control, especially in authoritarian contexts, was acknowledged. It was also noted that policy implementation and development would be particularly difficult in some conflict-affected countries where legal frameworks are fragile and governance weak.

Learning challenges

Participants emphasised a clear need to refine existing research methods and strongly support specific research on peace tech, inviting the peacebuilding sector to reflect on strategies to incentivise policymakers to support these areas. A particular knowledge gap was identified in understanding how to effectively scale up initiatives that are successful at the local level.

While the tech and innovation sector has seen growing attention, there remains room for improvement in organising research more systematically, thus reducing risks of duplication and overlapping efforts. For this, mapping existing initiatives and establishing standards for co-learning and co-creation is essential to avoid redundancy and ensure resources are used more efficiently. Additionally, embracing these new tools requires modernising data collection methods, bridging the gap between quantitative metrics and qualitative analysis.

The role of the EU

In addition to making observations on the role of technologies in peacebuilding and conflict prevention with the purpose of informing EU programming, participants also highlighted specific operational areas where the EU could play a positive role.

The following points were raised by participants during the meeting. They represent a range of different viewpoints which may not necessarily reflect unanimous agreement.

Recommendations

- The EU is well-positioned to lead by example by integrating peace tech considerations beyond FPI peacebuilding and conflict prevention programming, expanding to the broader external action.
- The EU can strengthen collaboration between its external action and more internally oriented parts of the house (e.g., DG Connect), by integrating peace tech considerations in other areas, such as digitalisation, innovation, competition, etc. This is especially valuable since a similar type of work is often conducted, although with different target groups and definitions.
- In its peace support work, the EU can incentivise cross-sector collaboration through adjustments in programming criteria, for example by encouraging joint partnerships between the tech and peacebuilding sectors.
- The EU should leverage its normative power and advance tech regulation grounded in a rights-based approach, freedom of expression and safe online spaces. This could involve both internal EU policy (e.g., Digital Services Act) and global leadership initiatives in the context of UN fora and in partnership with other regional organisations.
- The EU should leverage its convening nature and facilitate peer exchanges, learning opportunities and cross-fertilisation through more consultations, dialogues and conferences, and foster dialogue beyond programming and the peacebuilding and conflict prevention sectors.
- Given its policy capacity and capillary reach through the delegations, the EU could develop operational guidelines for the safe and ethical use of technology in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, with the objective to improve action but also setting high international standards for practice.
- On a technical level, and especially in the area of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, the EU should embrace tech models supporting openness and interoperability to reduce risk of corporate capture, embracing principles such as data minimisation, encryption, local co-design and community governance.
- The EU could also increase ‘do no harm’ and conflict-sensitivity standards within tech policy, for example by including red lines against military and intelligence misuse of data, establishing independent ethical reviews and including risk mitigation by design.