

annual report

2025

EPLO 

The **largest independent European civil society platform** of European NGOs, NGO networks and think tanks that are **committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.**

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Building Bridges in Uncertain Times

Foreword from the Chair of the Board



Judy
McCallum

EPLO's 2025 Annual Report reflects a year of turbulence for peace. As we look back, the international landscape has been characterised by a troubling rise in violent conflicts, civilian casualties and the sustained erosion of the multilateral norms that have long underpinned global stability. The trends we observed in 2024 – increasing military expenditure, a call to rearmament, and shrinking space for civil society – have unfortunately persisted and, in many cases, intensified. In this environment, EPLO's mission remains even more relevant than ever, and EPLO member organisations continue their vital conflict prevention and peacebuilding work despite the many challenges they face.

The past year was marked by significant discussions regarding the **next EU Multiannual Financial Framework**. As the European Union negotiates its long-term budget, EPLO focused on providing the expertise needed to ensure that peacebuilding and conflict prevention remain a distinct and well-resourced pillar of EU external action. We have worked

consistently to demonstrate that true security is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of peaceful, resilient, inclusive societies.

The **Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN)** remains a cornerstone of our engagement with EU institutions. In its 15th year, the CSDN has proven to be an invaluable mechanism for ensuring that EU policy is informed by the insights of those working on the ground and directly impacted by conflict. These exchanges have been critical for building and maintaining a transparent and collaborative relationship between policymakers and civil society.

The challenges we face are complex, and the path forward is unpredictable. However, the collective expertise and shared commitment of the EPLO network provide a strong foundation for the years ahead. I want to thank our members and partners for their unwavering dedication. Despite the complexities of the current geopolitical climate, your work remains a vital contribution to a more peaceful and stable world.

Reflecting on 2025 and Shaping our Future

A message from EPLO Executive Director



Sonya
Reines-Djivanides

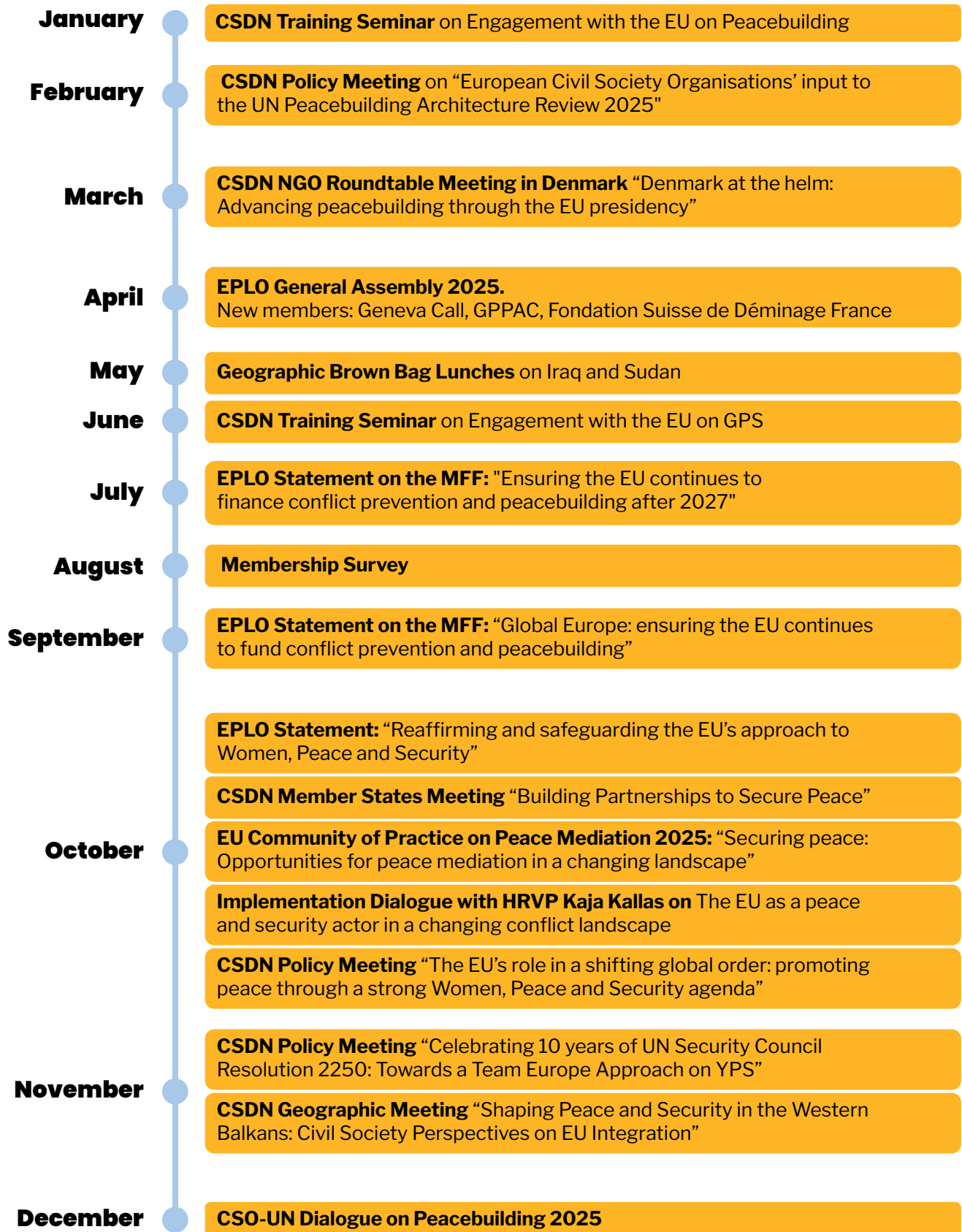
As I reflect on 2025, it is clear that the peacebuilding and conflict prevention sector, and the whole of civil society globally, is facing immense pressure. We have navigated a year defined by systemic volatility and a multi-dimensional erosion of international law, where conflicts are becoming more frequent, lethal, and protracted. In an environment where military expenditure is rising and support for nonviolent responses is waning, **EPLO's mission to promote peace and prevent violent conflict is vital.**

The strength of our network lies in the vital collaboration between the Secretariat and our Member Organisations across Europe. While the EPLO team provides the essential coordination and backbone, **our collective impact is driven by the diverse expertise and active engagement of our members.**

2026 will mark the milestone of EPLO's 25th anniversary. Since our foundation by 16 organisations in 2001, **we have grown into a network of over 50 members.** We do not intend to treat this anniversary merely as a celebration of the past, instead, it will serve as the launchpad for our new Strategic Framework 2026–2030. This new strategy will serve as a roadmap designed to **ensure that the diverse expertise of civil society remains an indispensable force for global peace.**

I want to thank our Member Organisations, civil society and institutional partners, and the EPLO Team for their dedication and hard work, and I look forward to continuing our collective action in 2026 and beyond.

EPLO 2025 Timeline





Strategic and Policy Objectives

EPLO's mission is to influence European policymakers to take a more active and effective approach in securing peace and nonviolent forms of conflict resolution in all regions of the world.

In the period 2020-2025, EPLO's work toward its mission is framed by three interconnected **strategic objectives**:

- 1. Advance the strengths of peacebuilding/ conflict prevention in the narrative around EU external action**
- 2. Improve EU peacebuilding in practice**
- 3. Help the EU to improve its engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts**

Each strategic objective is in turn operationalised through six **policy objectives**:

- 1. A stronger EU policy framework for peacebuilding**
- 2. Significant EU funding for peacebuilding**
- 3. Centering gender equality in peace**
- 4. A move from policy to practice**
- 5. Better EU engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts**
- 6. Broaden support for peacebuilding approaches**

EPLO's Strategic and Policy Objectives for the period 2020-2025 can be read in full on our website

[VISIT EPLO.ORG](https://www.eplo.org)



Civil Society Dialogue Network

Focus on expertise and dialogue

In 2025, EPLO, in cooperation with the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) and the European External Action Service (EEAS), continued to implement the fifth phase of the [Civil Society Dialogue Network \(CSDN\)](#).

In November 2025, the EU released the [EU Strategy for Civil Society](#), which sets out ten guiding principles for dialogue with civil society. The CSDN puts these **principles into practice**. For 15 years, the CSDN has demonstrated **the value of consistent, open and constructive dialogue between civil society and policymakers**, contributing to stronger EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding policies and practices.

Throughout 2025, the CSDN brought together more than 350 participants

across 11 dialogue meetings to exchange and feed into EU conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis management policies. These discussions ensured that the perspectives of peacebuilding experts, practitioners and researchers, including those from conflict affected countries, informed EU policy development and implementation.

At a time when the EU is increasingly looking eastwards for security partnerships, EPLO convened civil society experts from across the [Western Balkan Six in Prishtina](#) to discuss what meaningful partnership on peace and security between the EU and accession candidates would look like, as well as the potential implications of EU accession for the region's peace and stability.

In 2025, civil society engagement through the CSDN also informed processes with global relevance. EPLO convened civil society from across Europe and beyond to provide input into the EU and its Member States' [recommendations for the UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review](#). An independent external evaluation found that the explicit support of civil society during the dialogue for some contested priorities, including gender, diversity, and civil society engagement, strengthened EU negotiators' position and confidence during the process. A post-CSDN debrief to the United Nations Working Party (CONUN) also reinforced Member State support.

A number of meetings in 2025 built on sustained engagement with EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

missions across previous phases of the project. For the first time, the CSDN was used to facilitate dialogue feeding directly into the impact evaluation of a CSDP mission. Across two meetings, one held online, the other in Baghdad, civil society experts shared key insights and analysis with EEAS staff conducting the evaluation.

Finally, in 2025, EPLO produced and disseminated three videos designed to bring peacebuilding to a broader audience. The [first](#) brings together insights from a range of practitioners on their peacebuilding work, the [second](#) outlines the EU's policy framework for peace in accessible terms, and the [third](#) offers a glimpse into how the CSDN functions as a dialogue mechanism.

“The CSDN gave us a real, practical channel to keep Kosovo and the Western Balkans on the EU’s peacebuilding radar when formal political engagement was limited. By hosting a CSDN meeting in Prishtina, we were able to sit with EU institutions and stakeholders, present civil society analysis, and keep two-way exchange alive at a time when Kosovo faced reduced room for engagement. For peacebuilding actors, CSDN turns field realities into actionable input for EU policy.”

– Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

Towards the Next EU MFF

Funding for Peace after 2027

"EPLO embodies what MAG believes: peace requires sustained investment across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding continuum. This network gives MAG and alike the collective weight to ensure operational evidence shapes EU budget negotiations – turning field reality into principled policy change."

– Mines Advisory Group

As the legislative process for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) kicked off in 2025, EPLO has been engaging with all relevant stakeholders with the aim of **ensuring that the EU continues to fund conflict prevention and peacebuilding** after 2027, the end of the current long-term budget cycle.

In February, ahead of the Commission Proposal in July, EPLO adopted a first [Statement on the MFF](#) to make the case for ring-fenced funding for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. EPLO exchanged with various EU services including the EEAS, FPI, DG INTPA and DG BUDG to highlight the **rising needs in the field of peacebuilding**, encouraging the

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Commission to renew and safeguard funding for peace.

Since July 2025, EPLO and its Member Organisations have issued a [second Statement](#) welcoming the overall amount proposed by the Commission for external action. This Statement, which focuses on the proposed Global Europe regulation, also calls for more guarantees on peacebuilding investments, **better safeguards against competing priorities** and a conflict-sensitivity requirement across all EU external action.

With the ball having changed court, EPLO has been focusing its engagement, since July 2025, on Member States and the

European Parliament, the co-legislators of the EU Budget. In the **Council**, EPLO has been exchanging with an array of Member States and **building a coalition for peacebuilding and conflict prevention** in the next MFF. By December 2025, improvements were already emerging in the Council, including the need for EU actions to follow a conflict-sensitive approach. In the **European Parliament**, EPLO has provided inputs and information to encourage this key institution to uphold the EU's commitment to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

In these endeavours, EPLO has been working closely with its Member Organisations, leveraging the **membership's unique collective expertise and position** to develop analysis, ground recommendations in practice and maximise outreach. It has also closely coordinated with its sister networks VOICE (humanitarian) and CONCORD (development) to ensure coherent messaging in day-to-day engagement, and a credible, powerful voice in Brussels for civil society working for peace, development and humanitarian relief across the world.

"Being part of EPLO means we are stronger together: as the only European network dedicated to peacebuilding, they amplify our collective voice within a diverse community of organisations.

It allows us to exchange expertise while contributing to and benefiting from EPLO's guiding role.

A strong example is its work in the negotiations shaping the next MFF. Both behind the scenes, through access to information and influence, and publicly, through efforts promoting the importance of EU investment in peacebuilding."

– Search for Common Ground

25 years of the Women Peace and Security Agenda

State of Play and What's Next

"By thoughtfully bringing together organisations for the WPS anniversary, EPLO enabled the community to reflect on how far we've come and to explore practical ways to keep our commitments moving forward, despite headwinds."

– Berghof Foundation

In 2025, the year that marked the **25th anniversary** of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on **Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**, EPLO placed a **special focus on its member's efforts** and strengthened the **network's coordinated action** in implementing this agenda.

2025 was not only a year of celebration. It also coincided with a moment of **mounting challenges for gender equality and women's rights** in conflict-affected contexts including shrinking civic space, rising militarisation, funding cuts, and a global backlash against women's rights, paired with a surge in conflict-related sexual violence, digital harassment targeting women peacebuilders, and the gendered impacts of the climate crisis in fragile contexts.

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The **EPLO CSDN Policy Meeting on WPS**, [‘The EU's role in a shifting global order: Promoting peace through a strong Women, Peace and Security agenda’](#), organised in October 2025, was a central opportunity for members to share their work and concerns surrounding the EU's implementation of its WPS agenda. At the end of the conference, EPLO co-hosted a reception and high-level panel with the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU on **‘Advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda and women's roles in climate adaptation: Insights and priorities from North-East Africa’**.

EPLO published its [Statement on ‘Reaffirming and safeguarding the EU's approach to Women, Peace and Security’](#) in September, a process which was

coordinated through the **Gender, Peace and Security** (GPS) working group and endorsed by all EPLO members. The statement stresses that a principled EU approach to WPS is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and security. Similarly, in EPLO's September [Global Europe Statement](#), the network called for all **EU external action to be conflict- and gender-sensitive**, namely through **gender action targets**. Since then, EPLO has noted substantial inclusion of WPS-related references in the Council's discussions on the proposal.

Throughout 2025, EPLO engaged in the **Steering Group of the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) Structured Dialogue**. In this role, EPLO coordinated the network's

input into the [GAP III external intermediary evaluation](#). At the GAP III Structured Dialogue event on 'Gender Equality in EU External Action: Reinforcing Commitments – Accelerating Implementation', organised by DG INTPA and the Policy Forum on Development, **EPLO facilitated the panel on 'Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile Contexts'**.

In a rapidly changing global environment with wide impacts on gender equality and women's rights in fragile contexts, EPLO will continue to provide a platform for centering these issues with EU policymakers.



10th Anniversary of UNSCR 2250

Youth Engagement in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention

"Through an exchange with the UN Working Party of the EU on the Peacebuilding Architecture Review and the Brussels YPS Conference, EPLO helped bring youth perspectives directly into EU discussions in 2025. Interpeace values EPLO's convening role and the added value of joint advocacy through the network."

- Interpeace

2025 marked a decade since the UN Security Council unanimously adopted **Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)**, a milestone that called on states and international actors to recognise young people as essential partners in building sustainable peace. For EPLO, the anniversary was an opportunity to actively engage Member Organisations and institutional interlocutors, and ensure that young people are recognised not just as those affected by conflict, but as indispensable agents of its prevention and resolution.

A key part of this engagement was EPLO's participation in the **EU YPS Coalition**, which brings together EU institutional, civil society, and youth actors to advance

the EU's role in working with young people in inclusive peace and security efforts. As part of this coalition, EPLO contributed to information sharing and collaborative action, helping to build the conditions for coordinated work on the YPS agenda at EU level.

This collaboration culminated in the organisation of the [Second EU Youth, Peace and Security Conference](#), held in Brussels from 10 to 14 November 2025. Seven years after the first EU YPS Conference, this gathering brought together over 200 participants, including young peacebuilders from more than 85 countries, EU and Member State representatives, partner governments, and civil society actors, with the objective

of shaping a Team Europe approach to the YPS agenda and translating political commitments into coordinated action.

EPLO contributed to the Conference via the CSDN by facilitating the participation of young peacebuilders from over 35 different countries, including fragile and conflict-affected settings, ensuring that the voices shaping the agenda reflected diverse realities on the ground. EPLO also supported the development of sessions exploring the intersection of the YPS agenda with other key policy areas, including EU accession, WPS, climate, and new technologies.

The Conference culminated in a [Joint Declaration](#) setting out concrete proposals, from institutionalising youth participation in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions to establishing permanent YPS coordination platforms within EU structures. The Declaration now serves as a shared reference point and practical tool for the whole community to advance accountability, deepen implementation, and sustain momentum on the YPS agenda beyond the anniversary year.



“EPLO played a valuable convening role during the YPS anniversary year, notably through their work with the second edition of the EU YPS Conference 2025. By drawing on its extensive network to ensure diverse and meaningful CSO participation, EPLO fostered inclusive dialogue and strengthened collective engagement in advancing the YPS agenda.”

– CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation

Convening Efforts to Support Peace Mediation

“EPLO provides crucial space for civil society to engage with EU institutions in the field of peace mediation. By co-organising a CSDN on mediation partnerships with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EEAS, and FPI, EPLO provided an important opportunity for civil society to influence the EU on the scope and nature of its support to mediation.”

–Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

In 2025 EPLO convened discussions on peace mediation, creating spaces for dialogue among experts, practitioners, and policymakers on how to advance peace mediation in EU external action, shaping efforts to implement the [Concept on EU Peace Mediation](#) and the [EEAS Peace Mediation Guidelines](#), and ensuring continuity for peace mediation as a priority external action tool.

In October, in the framework of the CSDN, with the support of FPI, the EEAS and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, **EPLO organised a Member State Meeting in Rome titled ‘Building Partnerships to Secure Peace’**. The event [explored](#) how EU mediation efforts can adapt to present and future conflict dynamics and trends

through strengthening partnerships, and served as a bridge between the 2024 and 2025 editions of the **EU Peace Mediation Community of Practice (CoP)**. The key findings of the CSDN meeting in Rome inspired the focus of the session hosted by EPLO at the 2025 CoP, where, building on many years of EU-UN partnership on mediation, panelists from UN DPPA, the EEAS, FPI and civil society engaged in in-depth discussions on how to further support peace mediation in the current global context.

Bringing in the expertise of EPLO Member Organisations on mediation and their experience across diverse peace processes, these discussions highlighted how partnerships are effective when they enhance complementarity, are projected

towards long-term objectives, and put trust at their core. In a global context characterised by transactional, short-term approaches to peacemaking, and systematic erosion of the multilateral rules-based order, the EU is seen as having a unique role in its convening power and multidisciplinary approach, fostering track 2 diplomacy, leveraging Member States' unique relationships with third countries, and combining a holistic understanding of conflicts with thematic and technical expertise.

In October, EPLO and other civil society representatives attended the **Implementation Dialogue** titled "[Securing Peace: The EU as a Peace and Security Actor in a Changing Conflict](#)

Landscape" hosted by the EU High Representative Kallas. The dialogue created a space for direct exchange between civil society and the HRVP, taking stock of progress made towards the EU's peace, security, and defence objectives and gathering civil society views on implementation on the ground. HRVP Kallas reassured participants that the EU will keep standing up for a negotiated end to conflicts, respect for human rights and accountability, acknowledging the importance of EU funding for peacebuilding, mediation and conflict prevention in the next MFF, as well as stating her intention to collaborate with civil society beyond this implementation dialogue.

"EPLO provides crucial space for civil society to engage with EU institutions in the field of peace mediation. By co-organising a CSDN on mediation partnerships with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EEAS, and FPI, EPLO provided an important opportunity for civil society to influence the EU on the scope and nature of its support to mediation."

- Conciliation Resources



The EPLO Community of Practice

Training, Convening and Strategising

Throughout 2025, EPLO continued playing the role of convener across the peacebuilding and conflict prevention field in Europe and beyond, with the aim of strengthening the sector's capability in exchanging and engaging with European institutional actors.

Under the CSDN, EPLO organised three Training Seminars on different topics: **1) Engagement with the EU on peacebuilding and conflict prevention** (January 2025); **2) Engagement with EU Delegations on peacebuilding and conflict prevention** (February 2025); and **3) Engagement with the EU on Gender, Peace and Security** (June 2025). Through these Training Seminars, EPLO aims to enable peers to increase their understanding of the EU as a foreign policy actor and provide concrete examples for more effective policy engagement. Both formal and informal feedback confirms that these seminars remain one of the most positively evaluated tools for participants seeking to bridge the gap between EU peacebuilding policies and practice.

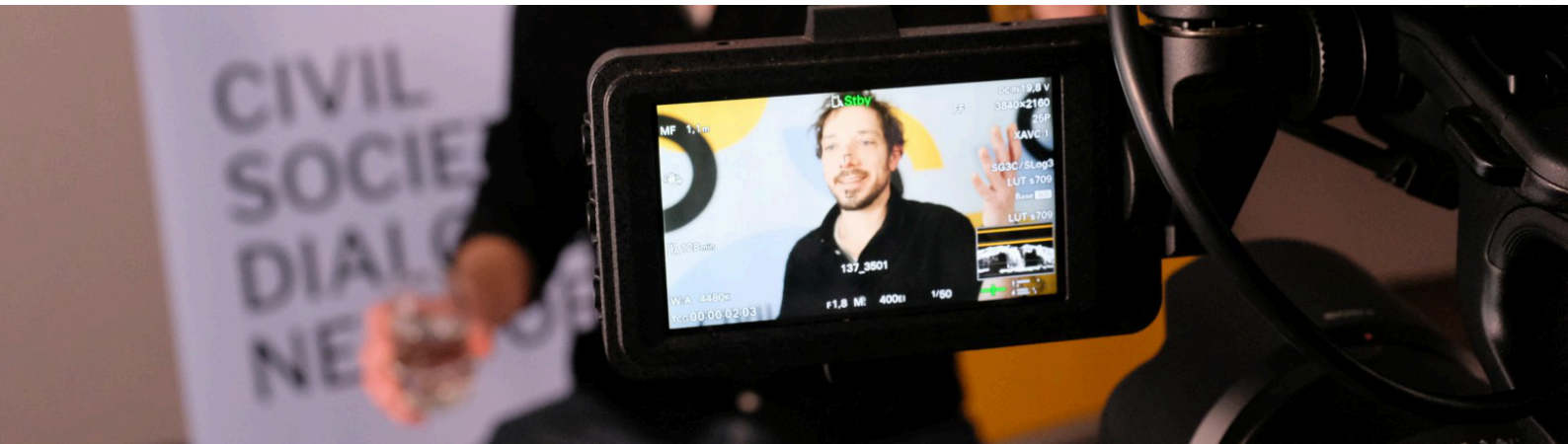
In March 2025, EPLO organised a **CSDN NGO Roundtable Meeting in Copenhagen** alongside member Conducive Space for Peace. The meeting

succeeded in convening Danish organisations ahead of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU to align their peacebuilding and conflict prevention priorities. Given the diverse nature of work carried out by these organisations, the conversation effectively bridged the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, ensuring an integrated approach to the upcoming Presidency.

Throughout the year, the **EPLO Communications Community of Practice met to address the ongoing shift in security narratives towards militarisation and hard security**. This space enabled colleagues to exchange on the specific challenges this shift creates for the sector and to brainstorm proactive responses. Providing such platforms for honest exchange is at the core of EPLO's mission as a network.

2025 was also a milestone year as the Secretariat and Member Organisations began the joint drafting of the **new EPLO Strategy (2026-2030)**. In the current global context, this collective effort focused on ensuring the network remains relevant, resilient, and able to adapt to an uncertain and fast-changing environment.

Communication and Visibility



In 2025, EPLO's communication work continued to support the network's engagement with EU institutions while strengthening the visibility of its activities and those of its member organisations. In a context of increasing pressure on peacebuilding narratives, communication also played a role in helping frame and disseminate key messages in a clear and accessible way.

Throughout the year, communication efforts focused on **ensuring consistent outreach around EPLO's core activities, including CSDN meetings, policy discussions, statements and publications**. LinkedIn remained the main channel, complemented by website updates and regular newsletters. The internal monthly newsletter continued to serve as a key tool to connect with member organisations and share updates across the network, while external communications supported broader visibility of EPLO's work and outputs.

In parallel, EPLO contributed to ongoing reflections on **peace narratives through dedicated working group calls within the network**. These exchanges provided a

space to collectively reflect on how to communicate peacebuilding in a shifting political and security context, and informed communication approaches throughout the year.

Efforts were also made to further structure communication practices and formats. This included strengthening the link between policy and communication outputs, improving the accessibility of content, and supporting the dissemination of member organisations' work. **Audiovisual content, including videos produced under the CSDN, contributed to reaching wider audiences and presenting peacebuilding topics in a more accessible way.**

In addition, work was undertaken to improve EPLO's website, with a focus on restructuring key sections and enhancing the presentation of publications and events.

Overall, communication remained a transversal tool to support EPLO's engagement, contributing to more coherent, visible and accessible outputs across the network.

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