

Civil society engagement

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are influential partners of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), as they promote public dialogue, ensure the inclusion of under-represented individuals and hold governments, policymakers and the private sector to account. The EBRD regularly interacts with CSOs across its regions through collaboration, partnerships, exchanges of information, consultations and the Bank's accountability mechanism, as well as the Civil Society Programme at the EBRD's Annual Meeting.

A new approach to civil society engagement

The Bank works to mitigate risks, generate impact and advance its engagement with civil society. It does this by pursuing four objectives: (i) supporting and engaging with civil society via meaningful mechanisms, (ii) responding to global crises where they affect EBRD regions by working with civil society, (iii) developing a safe and open civic space, and (iv) strengthening the Bank's internal incentives for civil society engagement, effectiveness and accountability.

Partnerships

In order to deliver on these objectives, the Bank exchanges information with, consults and partners with CSOs with a view to strengthening their capacity as advisers and implementing partners on EBRD projects. Maintaining existing partnerships and forging effective new relationships with stakeholders of various kinds (multilateral development banks, civil society, international development partners, donors, the private sector, and so on) are essential in order to achieve tangible results.

Long-term vision

The Bank's long-term vision is for civil society engagement to contribute to the implementation of the EBRD's Strategic and Capital Framework by (i) supporting the transition to a green economy, (ii) promoting equality of opportunity and (iii) accelerating the digital transition. The goal here is to shift the EBRD's approach to civil society engagement from risk mitigation to impact generation.



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Levels of civil society engagement

The EBRD engages with CSOs and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across its regions. The Civil Society Engagement (CSE) team builds understanding of and support for the EBRD's work, fosters dialogue between the institution and CSOs, and facilitates engagement with operational teams and management. The CSE team also helps to enhance the Bank's transparency and accountability by incorporating civil society input in the institution's decision-making processes, as well as contributing to policy dialogue through its Civil Society Capacity Enhancement Framework. The team falls within the Impact and Partnerships pillar of the Vice Presidency, Policy and Partnerships department.



Civil Society Capacity Enhancement Framework: The Civil Society Capacity Enhancement Framework allows the Bank to engage more proactively with and provide support to local CSOs and other organisations across the EBRD regions. This framework raises awareness and strengthens the core skills and knowledge of local and national CSOs. It focuses on four priority areas: sustainable energy and resources; gender and economic inclusion; transparency and good governance; and digital transition.



Project-level engagement: CSOs can inform the Bank's due diligence and other engagement activities by submitting queries and requests about EBRD projects. The Bank discloses information on its projects, policies and strategies in line with the requirements of its [2024 Access to Information Policy](#).



Country strategy consultations: The CSE team facilitates dialogue and consultations between CSOs and country teams throughout the EBRD's country strategy cycle, in line with the Bank's 2024 Access to Information Policy and international best practices. The aim of these consultations is to identify the challenges and opportunities that each country faces. Each new country strategy is informed by dialogue with relevant stakeholders, including CSOs. Whenever a country strategy is published, the EBRD also publishes a report on CSO comments received during the relevant open consultation process.

Sector strategy consultations: CSOs' presence and experience at local and national levels play an invaluable role in informing EBRD operations. They are also vital when it comes to matters that present challenges and opportunities for development, especially in relation to sector strategies. Individual strategies and approaches at sector level combine to inform the Bank's broad thematic pillars: gender and economic inclusion, sustainability and digital transition.

Accountability mechanism: The Bank's Independent Project Accountability Mechanism (IPAM) reviews environmental, social and transparency-related concerns about Bank projects that are raised by CSOs and other people affected by those projects.



Local knowledge: CSOs have knowledge that complements the information available to the EBRD on its projects and policies. They can play a crucial role in developing and/or implementing tools for data collection and in monitoring projects' progress. CSOs also play an important role in clearly communicating policies and initiatives to the public and raising awareness.

Project implementation: We collaborate with CSOs to deliver projects across our regions, utilising their local knowledge and expertise to achieve effective and impactful outcomes.

Civil Society Steering Committee: This committee, which comprises international NGOs and CSOs from across the EBRD's regions, is an additional forum for dialogue between the Bank and civil society and enhances the EBRD's engagement with key stakeholders.

Making civil society an equal partner in policymaking: In cooperation with other multilateral development banks, the EBRD is working to make policymaking more inclusive and make civil society an equal partner in the design and delivery of policy.



Annual Meeting: The Civil Society Programme at the EBRD's Annual Meeting serves as a crucial outreach platform for CSOs. It offers a comprehensive programme of events to address the needs of civil society in any given year, including meetings with the EBRD's President and members of the Board of Directors. The programme also offers ad hoc meetings based on feedback received during consultations, particularly where the Bank sees trends emerging in a particular region.

Other workshops and events: The Bank also organises other events aimed at connecting with civil society and the general public and holds workshops on selected topics across its regions. CSOs are warmly invited to participate in these events.

