

# EBRD-CSO Newsletter

Keeping you up to date with the EBRD



European Bank  
for Reconstruction and Development



Welcome to the  
CSO Newsletter

June 2025

Annual  
Meeting  
Edition

## Foreword

Dear CSO partners,

It was a pleasure to welcome you to the EBRD's 2025 Annual Meeting and Business Forum in London from 13 to 15 May. The event's Civil Society Programme attracted around 130 civil society representatives from 24 countries.

This was the 25th year that a Civil Society Programme had been organised at the Annual Meeting. The three-day programme brought civil society organisations (CSOs), representatives of multilateral development banks (MDBs) and EBRD leaders together to discuss issues surrounding inclusive and accountable development.

The 2025 Civil Society Programme featured meetings with EBRD President Odile Renaud-Basso and members of the Board of Directors, offering CSOs a platform to share their insights on

strategic priorities and the impact of development finance. A gathering of MDB representatives focusing on civil society and a meeting between those MDB representatives and CSOs reinforced participants' shared commitment to strengthening civic engagement.

The open panels were notable for their regional focus. The session on sub-Saharan Africa highlighted CSOs' role in sustainable development, emphasising the local context and partnerships.

Meanwhile, the Ukraine panel addressed challenges relating to human capital and the labour market amid the ongoing war and the associated displacement, showcasing collaborative efforts to support reintegration into the labour market and the recovery of the workforce.

The programme also saw the start of a consultation process on the Bank's Project Accountability Policy (PAP), included a session with the Independent Evaluation Department stressing the importance of transparency and accountability, and featured a roundtable for CSOs and firms on inclusivity as regards sexual orientation and gender identity.

In this special edition of the CSO Newsletter, we share highlights from the Annual Meeting in London. We hope you found it useful and look forward to seeing you at our 2026 Annual Meeting in Riga, Latvia.

Happy reading,

The CSE team

# CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMME

## Expanding horizons with civil society in sub-Saharan Africa

We hosted a panel session with EBRD senior management, CSOs and philanthropic organisations to discuss the role of local context, communities and partnerships for the Bank's expansion into sub-Saharan Africa.

Moderated by Olena Koval (EBRD), the panel featured Heike Harmgart (EBRD), Uju Aderemi (Save the Children), Hayley Kornblum (IKEA Foundation) and Sacha Gayama (Danish Refugee Council).



**Key takeaways from the discussion included the following:**

- **Understanding the local context:** Recognising cultural nuances and complex sensitivities is crucial for effective partnerships. Bringing local community voices into policy design – for example, during the country strategy cycle and policy implementation – is critical.
- **Utilising existing solutions:** It is important to avoid reinventing the wheel by looking for solutions that are already present in the relevant countries, while prioritising people and communities.
- **Expanding financial instruments:** Enhancing our financial instrument toolkit can help to attract diverse partners and incentivise innovative solutions.
- **Building effective partnerships:** Successful collaboration between philanthropic organisations and development institutions requires a ground-up approach, an understanding of the ecosystem and patience. Ensuring that all parties – including CSOs – communicate effectively when it comes to the design of projects and policies will take time.

## Investing in people: restoring Ukraine's human capital



Our Ukraine panel, organised in cooperation with the EBRD's Gender and Economic Inclusion team, looked at how businesses and civil society can support Ukraine's human capital recovery and the reintegration of war veterans.

Moderated by EBRD alumnus Alan Russo, the panel featured Barbara Rambousek (EBRD), Olga Rudneva (Superhumans Centre), Hlib Vyshlinsky (Centre for Economic Strategy), Viacheslav Klymov (NOVA Group) and Mauro Longobardo (ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih).

REPLAY THE SESSION



**Key takeaways from the discussion included the following:**

- **The ongoing war and the resulting demographic challenges are impacting Ukraine's labour market.** High unemployment, skill shortages, mass migration and large-scale mobilisation are all critical issues in this regard.
- **Policy changes are essential to address labour market mismatches.** Improving employment services – supporting war veterans and women by updating the Labour Code – is imperative to improve opportunities for Ukraine's human capital.
- **Businesses are tackling labour shortages through various initiatives.** Investment in shelters, workplace adaptations and support for employees' well-being (including mental health support and the reintegration of veterans) is ongoing.
- **Civil society can play a vital role in reintegrating veterans and people injured during the war.** Aligning post-military goals with employment opportunities and helping to address trauma and financial literacy needs will be key in this respect.



# SPECIAL SESSIONS



## MDBs strengthen coordination on civil society engagement

The Civil Society Programme at this year's Annual Meeting featured the first in-person gathering of MDB representatives focusing on civil society in a decade.

The focus was on enhancing collaboration in civil society engagement, sharing lessons and aligning priorities in areas such as stakeholder participation, economic inclusion, transparency and sustainability. Participants reaffirmed the importance of civic engagement for effective development and pledged deeper coordination. A session bringing together MDB representatives and CSOs yielded valuable insights and recommendations.

## Collaboration between civil society and businesses on inclusivity as regards sexual orientation and gender identity

This closed-door roundtable emphasised the business value of integrating sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) considerations into corporate operations. The discussions looked at challenges in this area, innovative strategies and opportunities to foster inclusive SOGI practices. Key insights included the importance of formal and informal support, the value of inclusive language and the need for further assessment. Recommendations included continuous dialogue and follow-up meetings, the leveraging of local SOGI expertise and the mobilisation of the private sector for SOGI inclusion.

## Other sessions

The 2025 Civil Society Programme also featured a session by the EBRD's Independent Project Accountability Mechanism team on the Bank's [review of its Project Accountability Policy](#). This was the first of a series of consultation sessions on the revision of the PAP.

The [Independent Evaluation Department](#)'s session presented the Annual Evaluation Review 2024 and discussed evaluation findings that might be of interest to CSOs, such as the mid-term evaluation of the 2021-25 Strategic and Capital Framework (SCF) and an evaluation of the EBRD's support for gender equality.

Read the  
Annual  
Evaluation  
Review 2024



Read the mid-  
term evaluation  
of the 2021-25  
SCF



# MEDIA CORNER

VIDEO  
HIGHLIGHTS OF  
THE 2025  
ANNUAL  
MEETING



EBRD PHOTOS  
FROM THE  
ANNUAL  
MEETING



EBRD  
LIVESTREAMS  
FROM THE  
ANNUAL  
MEETING



# OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



We look forward to  
welcoming you to  
Riga in 2026!

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