



Foreword

Dear CSOs,

It was a pleasure to welcome you to the EBRD's 2024 Annual Meeting and Business Forum in Yerevan, Armenia, on 14-16 May. The Civil Society Programme attracted 191 civil society representatives from 36 countries.

We were delighted to meet those of you who attended in person, be it at our panel discussions or at our CSO welcome reception at the beginning of the first day.

This year's open panel looked at how the EBRD builds community impact through its projects, while the CSO-led panel explored the question of how civil society can act as a powerful force for good in Armenia and the wider region.

The meetings between the EBRD's Board of Directors, the Bank's President and representatives of civil society allowed for constructive dialogue, giving you the chance to present issues of concern and make recommendations to us on key strategic matters and operations.

Similar to previous years, we hosted a panel discussion entitled "Accountability and learning: the role of independent evaluation at the EBRD" on behalf of the EBRD's Independent Evaluation Department (IEVD), as well as a session on the Independent Project Accountability Mechanism (IPAM) and the review of the IPAM policy.

In this special edition of the CSO newsletter, we share key highlights from our Civil Society Programme in Yerevan. We found it useful and thought-provoking, and we hope you did, too. We hope to see you at our 2025 Annual Meeting in London.

In the meantime, we will be back with the next regular edition of the newsletter in July.

Happy reading,

The CSE team



Yerevan
2024

CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMME

Connecting worlds: how the EBRD fosters community collaboration for positive change

This year's open panel featured a multi-stakeholder discussion between EBRD senior management, civil society and the private sector on the EBRD's impact through community collaboration. The session was moderated by Alan Rousso.

The panel comprised Mark Bowman, Vice President for Policy and Partnerships at the EBRD, Saba Al Mubaslat, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the Ford Foundation, Astghine Pasoyan, Executive Director of the Energy Saving Foundation, and Igor Janke, Founding President of the Freedom Institute.



**Replay the
session**



Key takeaways from the discussion included the following:

- The EBRD, a key player in the post-Cold War era, **recognises the importance of civil society** and has been working with such actors for a long time. Its contribution in bringing civil society to the table and facilitating change has been significant and has had a profound effect on civil society's ability to influence policy and decision-making.
- **Civil society is the connecting tissue** that links policymakers at the macro level with the general public at the micro level. Civil society is the middle ground that knows both worlds and can mediate between them. Civil society changes lives by taking ordinary people's concerns and perceptions and advocating for them in the language of policymakers and market players.
- Historically, national and local authorities in Armenia always thought they knew what needed to be done, while civil society was outside protesting with banners. If civil society had not persistently advocated for public consultations, Armenia might not have the more inclusive decision-making processes that it has today. **The EBRD's decision to involve CSOs in dialogue has acted as a catalyst for that change.** It is truly remarkable to think that, today, civil society is not just in the room, but actively helping to shape decision-making at the Bank.
- **Partnerships are critical for the EBRD**, both at an operational level and in terms of bringing about broader systemic change. Working with civil society improves the EBRD's ability to do its job and increases societal buy-in. Civil society needs to be part of policy and decision-making conversations. And that is what the EBRD tries to do: make civil society part of the conversation, by requiring our clients to engage with CSOs and helping CSOs to enhance their capacity.

CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAMME



Bridging the divide: civil society engagement for regional impact

Our CSO-led panel discussion, which was organised in cooperation with the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), a member of our CSO Steering Committee, and moderated by Melinda Crane, explored the question of how civil society can act as a powerful force for good in Armenia and the wider region.

The panel comprised Gayane Mkrtchyan, Director of Civil Society Programs at the Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Armen Baldryan, CEO of UNICOMP CJSC and President of the Union of Employers of Information and Communication Technologies, Orysia Lutsevych, Deputy Director of the Russia and Eurasia Programme and Head of the Ukraine Forum at Chatham House, and Luiza Ayvazyan, Head of Office for Armenia at CIPE.



Key takeaways from the discussion included the following:

- Bringing civil society, government and the private sector together is the only way to have a real impact on the ground and bring about positive change within society. This means involving civil society in the design and governance of policies and policy initiatives. In Ukraine, for example, the country's ability to continue functioning while at war owes a lot to decentralisation and the strengthening of local communities. Thus, **civil society can also play a critical role in community development.**
- Partnerships between civil society, the private sector and government in the southern Caucasus must be **based on human rights, dignity and mutual benefit for all stakeholders** if they are to achieve effective cross-sector and cross-border cooperation.
- While the enabling environments for civil society vary from economy to economy across the southern Caucasus, the economies of that region share a real need to rebuild the morale and resilience of civil society. **Civil society needs to remain focused on the issues that are important to citizens** and improve its public image (which can very easily be shaped by various actors) in order to foster greater resilience and support dialogue with citizens and government.
- Technology (particularly artificial intelligence), data visualisation and transparency can help to **enhance citizen engagement, accountability and advocacy, especially in under-served communities.**

Replay the session



SPECIAL SESSIONS

MEDIA CORNER



The 2024 Civil Society Programme also featured a session on the Bank's [IPAM](#) process and the review of that policy.

The Bank's Chief Accountability Officer, Victoria Márquez-Mees, provided an interesting insight into how the EBRD handles complaints about environmental, social and disclosure-related matters pertaining to its investments. The session included opening remarks from the CEE Bankwatch Network and the environmental NGO Armenian Forests. The session also saw the official release of the IPAM Annual Report 2023.



At the [Independent Evaluation Department](#) session, we introduced attendees to the independent evaluation functions at the EBRD and the department's role in ensuring accountability and learning. We also presented the findings of the EBRD's Annual Evaluation Review 2023.

Lastly, a special session gave civil society representatives one final opportunity to share input and suggestions with the EBRD as part of its consultation on the revision of the Environmental and Social Policy (ESP) and the Access to Information Policy (AIP).

VIDEO
HIGHLIGHTS OF
THE 2024 ANNUAL
MEETING



EBRD PHOTOS
FROM THE
ANNUAL MEETING



EBRD
LIVESTREAMS
FROM THE
ANNUAL MEETING



Yerevan
2024

**Read the IPAM
Annual Report
2023**



**Read the Annual
Evaluation
Review 2023**



OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



**We look forward to
welcoming you to
London in 2025!**

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