



Advocacy
Handbook for
Civil Society
Organizations:

TOWARDS A FAIR, JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD

CROSOL

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Organizations: Towards a Fair, Just and
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Introduction

1.

This manual is designed as a tool to support future advocacy activities of civil society organizations (**CSOs**) in the Western Balkans. Its purpose is to provide CSOs with a comprehensive guide to public advocacy, enabling them to develop and implement effective strategies for change, particularly in the areas of promoting and advocating for European values, human rights, international cooperation, and sustainable development. Whether you are a small, local organization or a larger and more experienced one, understanding the principles of advocacy, the policy-making process, and how to influence both the public and decision-makers can be key to increasing your impact.

The publication situates advocacy within the broader context of democratic participation, human rights promotion, international development cooperation and the pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**). It explores the principles and methodologies of advocacy, the institutional and political landscape of the European Union, and the tools available to CSOs to influence public policy and public opinion. Special attention is given to international development cooperation and the integration of global commitments into local and regional advocacy initiatives.

What is public advocacy?

2.

Public advocacy is the process by which individuals, organizations, and groups strive to bring about change or improvement in public policies, practices, or attitudes. It is a tool used to influence decision-making in the public interest, often focusing on addressing social issues, promoting rights, and protecting the environment. Participants can include individuals, groups, civil society organizations, and various other stakeholders.

Advocacy can be defined as a set of activities aimed at influencing government decisions and shaping public opinion. This includes gathering information, organizing campaigns, mobilizing communities, and building alliances to achieve specific change. The goals of public advocacy may vary, from changing laws and policies to raising awareness about important issues and challenges.

Public advocacy plays a key role in democratic societies. It allows citizens to engage in political processes and voice their opinions. This strengthens democracy and encourages active participation in decision-making. Through advocacy, organizations and individuals demand greater transparency and accountability from authorities, contributing to increased trust in institutions. Many civil society organizations use advocacy to draw attention to neglected issues such as poverty, discrimination, climate change, and other critical matters. Advocacy can lead to changes in legislation and policies, creating positive effects for the community and society as a whole.

Advocacy involves changing the practices and policies of those in power, affecting marginalized individuals and various other social groups. It is an organized political process aimed at citizens and includes coordinated efforts by people to change policies, practices, ideas, and values that perpetuate inequality, intolerance, and exclusion. Advocacy means actively supporting a cause, activity, or person, with the goal of persuading others about the importance of a problem, proposed positions, and solutions.

Public advocacy focuses on clear goals such as promoting human rights, protecting the environment, social justice, or improving healthcare. Advocates work toward specific objectives, whether it be changing laws, influencing public opinion, or altering government policy. Advocacy efforts involve public engagement to raise awareness and generate support for the cause. This includes organizing campaigns, rallies, petitions, and educational initiatives.

Advocacy involves non-violent activities designed to influence policies, practices, and behaviors, and usually begins with a small group of people who share concern about a specific issue and are willing to dedicate time, expertise, and available resources to achieve desired changes. Advocacy is a tool through which we influence people, shift their perspectives on certain situations, and foster mutual understanding.

The primary goal of public advocacy is to influence political decisions in order to change society or certain aspects of it. This includes lobbying policymakers, participating in public consultations, and using various strategies to shape legislative and regulatory outcomes.

Effective advocacy relies on strong communication strategies to disseminate information, share stories, and connect with a broader audience. This may include traditional media, social media, public speaking, and other outreach methods. Advocacy often involves forming coalitions and alliances with other organizations and stakeholders who share similar goals. A collective approach strengthens the chances of successful advocacy and amplifies its impact.

Advocacy can be practiced in various ways, depending on the goals and methods used:

- **Local advocacy** involves mobilizing individuals at the local level to take collective action. Local campaigns often rely on community organizing, public demonstrations, and local media to build citizen support.
- **Lobbying** includes direct interaction with policymakers and legislators to influence their decisions. This may involve meetings with officials, expert opinions, and submitting recommendations for specific measures and policies.
- **Public campaigns and social movements** aim to raise awareness and support for a particular cause. These efforts can be short- or long-term and often use a combination of media, social networks, public events, and public actions to achieve their goals.
- **Advocacy through education** may involve informing the public about specific issues through workshops, seminars, publications, and media activities. The goal is to inform and empower individuals to support the cause.

- **Legal advocacy** involves using the judicial system to promote a cause. This may include filing lawsuits, submitting legal briefs, and participating in other legal procedures.

Role of Civil Society

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in the process of public advocacy, acting as a bridge between citizens and authorities, and working to protect and promote the public interest. CSOs include a wide range of non-profit organizations, non-governmental associations, trade unions, citizen groups, professional associations, and other entities that are not directly connected to the government or the commercial sector. Their mission is to promote social justice, human rights, equality, environmental sustainability, and other key societal values, often through active participation in shaping public policies.

One of the main roles of CSOs in public advocacy is representing the voices of vulnerable and marginalized groups who often lack access to decision-makers or are insufficiently included in political processes. CSOs provide a platform for these groups to express their problems and interests—whether they are minorities, persons with disabilities, refugees, victims of violence, or environmentally threatened communities—thus ensuring that the interests and rights of all members of society are considered in policy making.

CSOs often act as information resources, collecting data on specific social issues and analyzing public policies. They conduct research, surveys, and analyses that offer fact-based and data-driven insights into complex problems.

The information they gather is used to educate the public and policymakers and serves as a foundation for advocacy arguments. For example, environmental organizations may conduct research on the impact of industrial activities on the environment and community health, using these findings to advocate for stricter environmental regulations.

CSOs have the capacity to mobilize citizens through campaigns, educational programs, protests, petitions, and other forms of collective action. Citizen and public mobilization is essential in applying pressure on decision-makers, as active public engagement in an issue gives governments and relevant institutions greater incentive to respond. Civil society organizations often use social media, traditional media, and public events to raise awareness about specific issues and inspire citizen action. Building coalitions and broad networks of allies gives them greater access to resources, expertise, and public support, increasing their chances of success.

CSOs also play an important role in directly influencing legislative processes and shaping public policy. Through lobbying, participation in public consultations or advisory bodies, and engagement with decision-makers, CSOs seek to influence the content of laws, regulations, and policy measures. They often formulate recommendations and solutions based on research and collaboration with relevant experts.

A key role of CSOs is monitoring and overseeing the implementation of public policies. After laws or policies are adopted, CSOs can track their implementation and point out shortcomings or non-compliance. This watchdog role of civil society enables ongoing pressure on governments and public institutions to implement policies in ways that ensure justice and equality for all citizens. An example of this is the work of

human rights organizations that monitor compliance with international treaties and domestic laws, highlighting cases of rights violations or implementation gaps.

It is important to emphasize that public advocacy is a long-term process with uncertain outcomes. When civil society organizations begin to advocate for changes in certain policies, they often believe change can be achieved in a short time. Unfortunately, that is rarely the case, and it can take years before policy changes are realized. It is essential to recognize that advocacy is a prolonged process. However, every small step brings us closer to the long-term goal. Since the results of advocacy work are not always immediately visible, it is important to remain committed to the goal and to set realistic expectations, accompanied by patience and persistence. With this in mind, planning, organizing, and allocating human and other resources should be approached carefully.

Key elements of the advocacy process

Advocacy is a process that unfolds in multiple stages. At the end of the advocacy cycle, evaluation and reiteration take place - that is, the continuation and adjustment of advocacy goals for the further development and improvement of public policies.



1. Identification of the Problem or Goal

The first step in the public advocacy process is clearly defining the problem or goal to be achieved. This may include social injustices, legislative shortcomings, environmental threats, or the need for reforms in areas such as education, healthcare, or human rights protection. It is essential to gather relevant data and investigate the existing situation in order to better understand the issue being advocated.

2. Context and Target Audience Analysis

Once the goal is defined, it is necessary to analyze the political and social context in which advocacy will take place. This includes understanding the institutional framework and identifying key decision-makers who can influence the outcome. The target audience may include the government,

legislators, business leaders, media, or the general public. A thorough analysis is a prerequisite for successfully selecting the right strategies and communication tactics.

3. Building Coalitions and Partnerships

One organization or individual is usually too weak to influence public policies alone. Public advocacy often requires collaboration among various organizations and individuals who share common goals. Building coalitions and networks provides a stronger foundation for conducting campaigns, as it brings together resources, knowledge, and influence from different stakeholders. Coalitions can also wield greater political influence and legitimacy, increasing the chances of success. Every advocacy initiative should be approached with the mindset that we are stronger together. Pressure from a larger number of organizations significantly increases the likelihood of a successful advocacy campaign, as mass participation and collectivity imply broader public support, which decision-makers depend on.

4. Developing a Strategy and Action Plan

Based on the defined problem and context analysis, a detailed strategy should be developed to outline the steps toward achieving the goals. This plan should include specific short- and long-term objectives that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. It is also necessary to realistically assess your own capacities and required resources - whether human, financial, or otherwise - for implementing the planned activities.

5. Communication and Public Awareness

A key part of public advocacy is effective communication. This involves conveying the message in a way that is

understandable and persuasive to target groups. It is important to use various communication channels, including traditional media, social media, public speaking, and other forms of media presence, to raise awareness about the advocacy issue. A clear and consistent message helps gain public support and mobilize stakeholders.

6. Campaign Execution

Once the strategy and plan are defined, the implementation phase begins. This is where planned activities are carried out, such as meetings with decision-makers, public events, media interventions, lobbying, and mobilizing support. This phase also includes adjusting tactics as needed, depending on public response and political feedback.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Throughout the entire process, progress toward goals must be monitored. This includes observing the reactions of decision-makers, the media, and the public, as well as measuring the results of advocacy activities. Evaluation is key to assessing the effectiveness of the strategy and adjusting tactics if needed. Sometimes, it is necessary to modify or adapt the approach to ensure a better chance of success.

8. Continued Advocacy and Sustainability

Public advocacy is rarely a process with immediate outcomes. It often requires long-term commitment and continuous pressure on decision-makers. After initial successes, it is important to work on maintaining the changes achieved, monitoring the implementation of laws or policies, and preventing a return to old practices. Long-term sustainability ensures that changes are lasting and effective.

As mentioned earlier, in developing your advocacy strategy and plan, aim to clearly define your objectives.

One method you can use is the so-called **SMART goals framework**:

S Simple/Specific

M Measurable

A Achievable

R Realistic/Relevant

T Time-bound

Institutional landscape of the European Union

3.

Historical background

The European Union (EU) is not only an economic and political organization but also a community built on shared values that shape its legal, social, and political framework.

The history of the EU's formation is closely linked to the devastating consequences of the two world wars that ravaged Europe in the first half of the 20th century. After the Second World War, European leaders recognized that the only way to build lasting peace in Europe was through cooperation and integration. The key idea was to prevent future conflicts through economic and political interdependence among European states. From these efforts emerged the first communities that preceded the EU – the **European Coal and Steel Community**¹ (ECSC), founded in 1951, and the **European Economic Community**² (EEC), founded in 1957.

Although the initial goals of these communities were economic in nature, over time a broader vision of European integration developed, based on shared values, which are enshrined in the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**³.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Axy0022>

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:11957E>

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12016P/TXT&from=EN>

During the 1970s and 1980s, the European Community increasingly became a political project. The signing of the Single European Act (1986) and later the Maastricht Treaty⁴ (1992) laid the foundations for the creation of the European Union as we know it today, with a focus on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as key values. The Lisbon Treaty⁵ (2009) further reinforced these values within the EU's legal framework, placing them at the core of the Union's functioning.

Key Institutions

The European Union⁶ is a complex organization composed of a number of different institutions with distinct roles. The three most important institutions that make decisions and shape common policies are

the European Parliament,

the Council of the European Union,

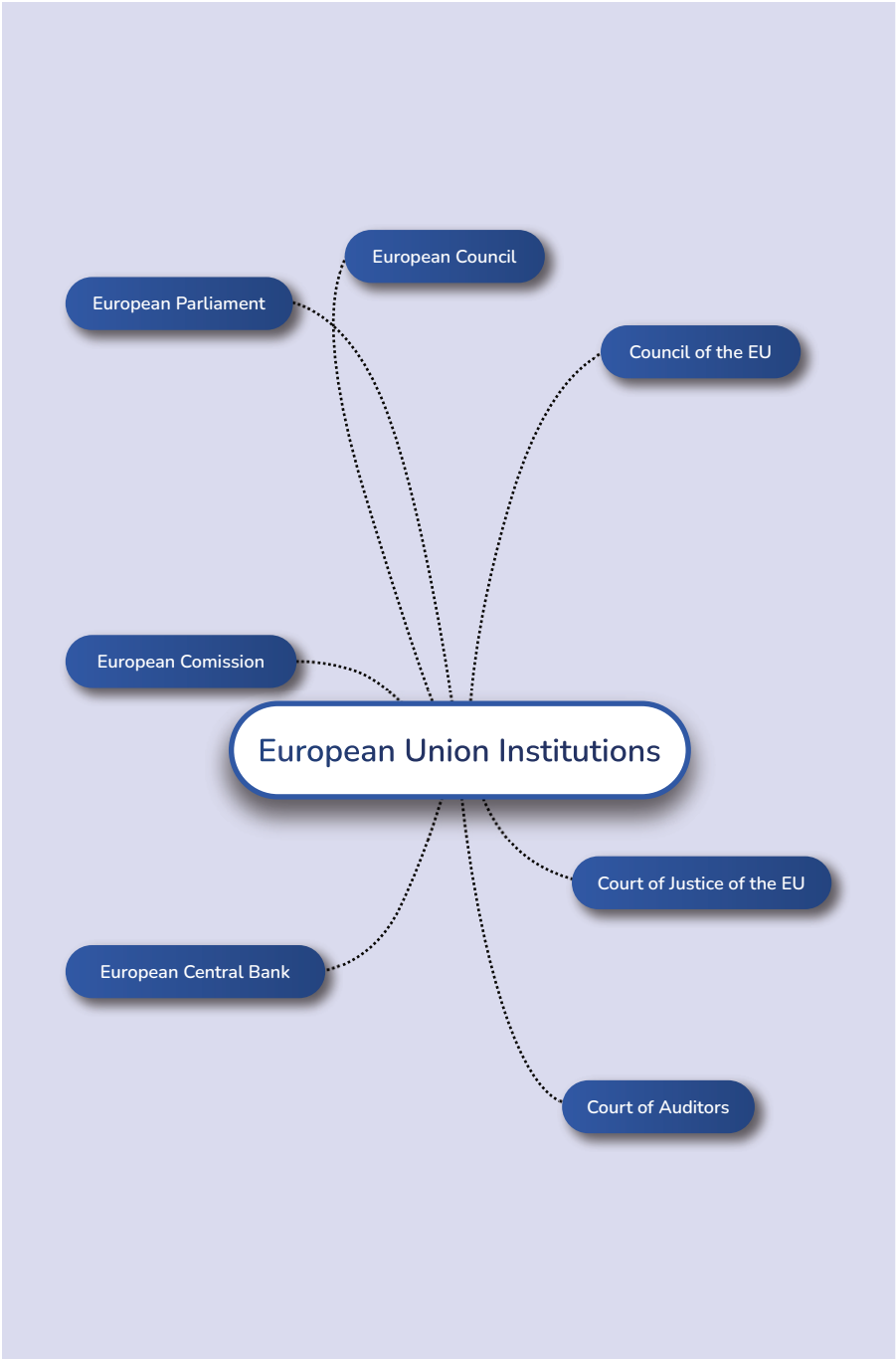
and the European Commission.



⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A11992M%2FTXT>

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:TOC>

⁶ https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en



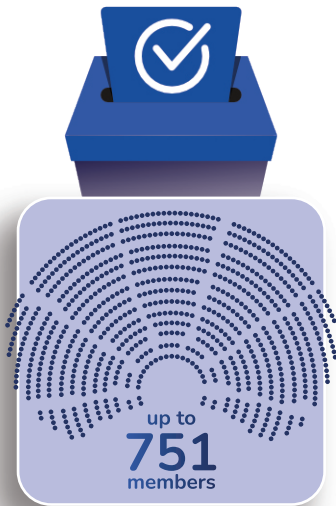
European Parliament

The European Parliament⁷ is the legislative body of the EU.

Members of the European Parliament (**MEPs**) are representatives directly elected by the citizens of the EU member states. European elections are held simultaneously in all member states, and citizens in each country vote for representatives from their own nation.

MEPs represent both their national electorates and the citizens of the EU as a whole.

The European Parliament can have **up to 751 members**, and the number of MEPs from each country depends on its population size. The distribution of seats in the European Parliament is based on the **principle of degressive proportionality**.



This means that while the population size of each country is taken into account, smaller states elect more MEPs than would be proportional to their population. This mechanism is designed to favor the representation of smaller countries - for example, smaller member states like Malta or Luxembourg have relatively more influence and a higher number of representatives than their share of the Union's population would suggest. The logic behind this is to prevent domination by a small number of large and powerful countries.

⁷ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en>

Members of the European Parliament can influence EU policy in several ways:

- by participating in plenary debates and voting sessions
- through meetings and discussions within their political groups by raising awareness of specific issues among other Members of the European Parliament and the public
- by advocating for certain policies or objectives and gathering support to increase the chances of their implementation
- by working in committees that deal with specific political issues.



Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union⁸, often also called the **Council of Ministers** or simply **the Council**, is one of the main legislative bodies of the European Union.

It consists of ministers from the governments of the member states, who meet in different configurations depending on the topics of specific legislative proposals. The Council operates according to **a system of rotating presidencies**. The member states take turns holding the presidency, which means that **every six months** a different country presides

⁸ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/presidency-council-eu/>

over the Council. The presidency rotates among the member states according to a predetermined schedule.

It is often said that a member state only becomes a "full" EU member once it has completed its first Council presidency. The rotating presidency leads the Council every six months, setting political goals for that period.

Legislative power is shared between the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament. Almost all legislative proposals must be approved to become law. The Council consists of one minister from each country who represents their interests in the EU legislative process. The Council usually makes decisions by a qualified majority, which requires the support of a majority of countries representing at least 65% of the EU population. The Council and the Parliament must agree on the text of a legislative proposal in order for it to be adopted. The Council is also responsible, together with the Parliament, for approving the EU budget.



European Commission

The European Commission⁹ represents the **executive power of the EU** and is responsible for.

- proposing laws,
- implementing decisions,
- and managing the day-to-day affairs of the European Union.

⁹ <https://commission.europa.eu>

The Commission consists of Directorates-General, each headed by a Commissioner. The Directorates-General are equivalent to ministries in national governments; for example, there is the Directorate-General for Economy, for Employment and Social Rights, for Values and Transparency, Agriculture, Justice, and others. Each Directorate-General is led by a Commissioner. Each member state has one Commissioner.

The Commission has the right of initiative, meaning it has a monopoly on proposing legislation. The position of Commission President is one of the most powerful in the EU, currently held by **Ursula von der Leyen**. After the election, a new Commission President is chosen through the so-called Spitzenkandidat process.

The Commission ensures that member states comply with EU law. If a country fails to implement or respect EU law, the Commission can launch **infringement procedures** and eventually take the matter to the European Court of Justice. The Commission manages and implements EU policies, programs, and the budget. It oversees how funds are spent and ensures policies are put into practice effectively.

The Commission represents the EU in international negotiations on trade, climate, development, and other areas where the EU has competence. It monitors the correct application of EU treaties, ensuring the legal framework of the Union is upheld. It also manages programs related to research, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and more, allocating funds accordingly.

International Development Cooperation and Sustainable Development

4.

International Development Cooperation (IDC) is a complex and multidimensional process involving cooperation and partnerships between countries with different levels of development with the aim of achieving sustainable development goals.

Understanding the definition of IDC itself is essential for creating the basis for understanding and analysing its main elements.

The notion of “development cooperation”

Development cooperation refers to a comprehensive approach involving financial, technical and political cooperation between countries to support the development process in developing countries. This includes sharing knowledge, skills, technology, experiences and resources to improve people's living standards, reduce poverty, increase environmental sustainability and achieve social and economic progress.

IDC differs from other types of cooperation, such as trade or military cooperation, in its focus on the development and

reduction of poverty. While trade and military cooperation may be aimed at pursuing their own interests or ensuring security, IDC aims to promote the development of developing countries and improve the living conditions of their populations.

IDC is also different from humanitarian aid, which is provided in emergency situations such as natural disasters or conflicts, as IDC has a longer-term goal of achieving sustainable development and structural change in developing countries.

IDC includes various stakeholders involved in the development cooperation process. This includes:

- **Donor countries:** States or international organisations providing financial, technical or political support to developing countries to achieve their development objectives. Countries (both in the Global North and South) provide funding, policy guidance, and partnerships. This includes development ministries, foreign affairs departments, and specialized agencies.
- **Recipient countries:** developing countries receiving support in the form of funds, technical assistance or other forms of support.
- **Civil society:** Civil society organisations, such as NGOs, which play an important role in promoting a participatory approach, transparency, accountability and monitoring the implementation of development projects.
- **Private sector:** private companies and business sector can participate in IDC through corporate social responsibility, investments in developing countries or through public-private partnerships.

- **Multilateral organizations** like the European Union, United Nations (UN) agencies (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF, WHO), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) channel resources and expertise.
- **Bilateral development agencies.**

Sustainable Development

The United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development¹⁰ was adopted at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development in New York in September 2015, while the final document of the Summit was formally adopted on 21 October 2015 as UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 entitled “**Let's change our world: Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development**”.

The main backbone of the Agenda is the **17** Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**) elaborated in detail in **169** interconnected sub-goals. It is a widely agreed platform to address the most important challenges of today. By consensus, UN member States have reached the set goals of the Agenda 2030 and are trying to make our planet a better place to live by 2030.

The UN's main body for evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development goals at global level is the UN High Level Policy Forum (**HLPF**), which has been operating since 2013. Member States present their achievements in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 through voluntary

¹⁰ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

national reviews on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, which they present each year in June at the aforementioned high-level political forum.

Why are SDGs important?

- They provide a universal framework to guide policies and actions for sustainable development globally.
- They balance social, economic, and environmental sustainability.
- They promote collaboration between governments, private sector, civil society, and citizens.
- They help measure progress and hold countries accountable.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are:

1. **No Poverty** - End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. **Zero Hunger** - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. **Good Health and Well-being** - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

4. **Quality Education** - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. **Gender Equality** - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation** - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.



7. **Affordable and Clean Energy** - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth** - Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
9. **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure** - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.

10. **Reduced Inequality** - Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities** - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
12. **Responsible Consumption and Production** - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. **Climate Action** - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. **Life Below Water** - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. **Life on Land** - Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, and halt biodiversity loss.
16. **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions** - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable institutions at all levels.
17. **Partnerships for the Goals** - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Institutional architecture of IDC and SDGs

5.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)¹¹ is an international, intergovernmental organisation founded in 1961 in Paris. It aims to foster economic cooperation, trade and progress and the development of democracy and the market economy.

There are currently **38 members**, mostly countries with high levels of economic and political development.

The OECD plays a key role in the context of global solidarity and international development cooperation, in particular through its subbody Development assistance Committee (DAC).

The Committee has **31 members** (30 countries plus the European Union) and coordinates global activities in the area of international development cooperation and assistance.

¹¹ <https://www.oecd.org/en.html>

Its aim is to provide a central global forum for discussion on equal and fair economic development and assistance to countries lagging behind in the process, so-called developing countries, i.e. the fight against poverty and exclusion.

European IDC landscape

There are several key EU institutions and bodies that play important roles in international development cooperation:

| Institution | Role in Development, Aid, and Sustainability |
|---|---|
| <p>European Commission (Directorate - General for International Partnerships - DG INTPA and Directorate - General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - DG ECHO)</p> | <p>Implements development and humanitarian policies, manages funds.</p> |
| <p>European External Action Service (EEAS)</p> | <p>Coordinates foreign policy and on-the-ground EU delegations.</p> |
| <p>Council of the EU (Development & Humanitarian Aid Councils)</p> | <p>Adopts policies, coordinates member states.</p> |
| <p>European Parliament (Committee on Development - DEVE and Committee on Foreign Affairs - AFET)</p> | <p>Legislates, budgets, oversees EU actions.</p> |
| <p>European Court of Auditors</p> | <p>Ensures proper use of EU funds.</p> |

Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)¹² is responsible for designing and implementing EU development policy and cooperation programs worldwide. It manages funding and partnerships aimed at poverty reduction, sustainable development, and supporting partner countries.

Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO)¹³ handles the EU's humanitarian aid efforts, providing emergency assistance and relief in crises worldwide.

The European Commission proposes legislation, manages programs, and represents the EU in international forums related to these fields.

European External Action Service (EEAS)¹⁴

- Supports the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (currently Josep Borrell).
- Coordinates EU foreign policy, including development cooperation and humanitarian aid.
- Oversees EU delegations worldwide that implement development and aid programs on the ground.
- Ensures coherence between development, humanitarian aid, and broader foreign policy objectives.

¹² https://commission.europa.eu/about/departments-and-executive-agencies/international-partnerships_en

¹³ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/index_en

¹⁴ <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/en>

Council of the European Union

- Particularly the **Foreign Affairs Council**, which meets in different configurations, including:
 - The **Development Council**: focuses on development cooperation policies.
 - The **Humanitarian Aid Council**: addresses humanitarian policies and crisis response.
- The Council adopts EU positions and policies based on Commission proposals and coordinates member states' actions.

European Parliament

Plays a key role in shaping development and humanitarian aid policies through, debating and adopting legislation, approving the budget for development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and exercising democratic oversight over the Commission and other institutions. It has specific committees, such as the Committee on Development (**DEVE**)¹⁵, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs (**AFET**)¹⁶, which also deals with the humanitarian aid aspect.

¹⁵ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/deve/home/highlights>

¹⁶ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/afet/home/highlights>

International Development Cooperation in the EU

There are several other important instruments, frameworks and policies which define EU's development cooperation and sustainable development policies:

- **European Development Fund¹⁷ (EDF)**

The main instrument for providing development aid to African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries, focusing on poverty reduction, economic development, and governance.

- **Global Europe Instrument¹⁸**

The EU's main funding instrument for external action (2021-2027), covering development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and crisis response globally.

- **Partnerships and Dialogues**

The EU fosters strategic partnerships with regions and countries (e.g., African Union, Caribbean states) to tailor development aid to their priorities.

- **EU Civil Protection Mechanism¹⁹**

Supports coordinated responses to disasters inside and outside the EU, enabling efficient deployment of resources and expertise.

- **DG ECHO's Humanitarian Aid Programs**

Provide emergency relief in conflict zones, natural disasters, and pandemics, emphasizing principles of neutrality and impartiality.

¹⁷. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/european-development-fund.html>

¹⁸. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/funding-instruments/global-europe-neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument_en

¹⁹. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en

- **Key Humanitarian Principles**

The EU follows the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, working closely with international organizations like the UN, Red Cross, and NGOs.

- Aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**), the EU focuses on:
 - Reducing poverty and inequality
 - Promoting sustainable economic growth
 - Strengthening governance and human rights
 - Supporting climate action and environmental sustainability

EU and the SDGs

The European Union (EU) is strongly committed to the implementation and promotion of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of its broader agenda for sustainable development.

The EU integrates the SDGs into its policies, strategies, and external actions, aiming to foster economic prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability both within its member states and globally.

To advance the SDGs, the EU employs a multi-faceted approach:

Policy Integration and Coordination

The EU incorporates the SDGs into its overarching policy frameworks, including the European Green Deal, the Europe 2020 strategy, and the Multiannual Financial Framework. This ensures that sustainability principles guide policy-making across sectors such as energy, agriculture, environment, transport, and social affairs. The EU promotes coherence among its internal policies to align with the SDGs' objectives.

Monitoring and Reporting

The EU monitors progress towards achieving the SDGs through regular reporting mechanisms, including the European Sustainable Development Strategy and the annual EU SDG Monitoring Report. These assessments provide data-driven insights to guide policy adjustments and ensure accountability.

International Cooperation and Development

Through its external policies and instruments, such as the European Development Fund and the Global Europe program, the EU supports partner countries in implementing the SDGs. The EU emphasizes poverty eradication, climate action, gender equality, and sustainable economic growth in its development cooperation efforts.

Funding and Investment

The EU allocates substantial financial resources to SDG-related initiatives, investing in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, research and innovation, social inclusion programs, and climate resilience projects both domestically and internationally.

Engagement with Stakeholders

The EU actively collaborates with member states, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, and international partners to foster a shared commitment towards the SDGs. Platforms for dialogue and partnerships enhance coordinated action and knowledge exchange.

Legislative Action

The EU adopts legislation that supports sustainable development objectives, including environmental protection laws, social standards, and regulations promoting responsible consumption and production.

In summary, the EU's approach to the SDGs is comprehensive, combining policy coherence, financial investment, international solidarity, and multi-stakeholder engagement to contribute effectively to the global sustainable development agenda.

Here are some key examples of specific EU initiatives and programs that illustrate how the EU



The European Green Deal

- **Overview:** Launched in 2019, the European Green Deal²⁰ is the EU's flagship strategy aimed at making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

²⁰ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en



- **SDG Links:** It primarily addresses SDG 13 (Climate Action), but also contributes to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 15 (Life on Land).
- **Initiatives:** Includes policies on clean energy transition, circular economy, biodiversity protection, pollution reduction, and sustainable agriculture.

Horizon Europe

- **Overview:** Horizon Europe²¹ is the EU's research and innovation framework program (2021-2027) with a budget of over €95 billion.
- **SDG Links:** Supports various SDGs by funding research projects on health (SDG 3), climate change (SDG 13), clean energy (SDG 7), and sustainable industry (SDG 9).
- **Initiatives:** Encourages innovation to tackle global challenges such as pandemics, climate change, and sustainable resource use.

Global Europe Instrument

- **Overview:** This is the EU's main financial instrument for external action (2021-2027), integrating development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and neighborhood policies.

²¹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

- **SDG Links:** Focuses on eradicating poverty (SDG 1), promoting peace and justice (SDG 16), and fostering partnerships (SDG 17).
- **Initiatives:** Funds projects in partner countries to enhance governance, resilience, climate adaptation, and social inclusion.

European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)

- **Overview:** The European Social Fund Plus²² (ESF+) supports employment, social inclusion, and education across EU member states.
- **SDG Links:** Directly contributes to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality).
- **Initiatives:** Focuses on skills development, combating poverty, and facilitating labor market integration.



EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030²³

- **Overview:** Part of the European Green Deal, this strategy aims to protect and restore biodiversity across Europe and beyond.

²². <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en>

²³. https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

- **SDG Links:** Supports SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).
- **Initiatives:** Establishes protected areas, restores degraded ecosystems, and promotes sustainable land use.



European Climate Pact

- **Overview:** The EU Climate Pact²⁴ is a platform to engage citizens, communities, and organizations in climate action.
- **SDG Links:** Focused on SDG 13 (Climate Action) and related goals.
- **Initiatives:** Facilitates knowledge sharing, supports local climate initiatives, and promotes sustainable lifestyles.



EU Circular Economy Action Plan²⁵

- **Overview:** Aims to reduce waste and promote sustainable production and consumption patterns.
- **SDG Links:** Directly targets SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).
- **Initiatives:** Includes measures on product design, resource efficiency, and waste reduction.

²⁴ https://climate-pact.europa.eu/index_en

²⁵ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en

Conclusion

This handbook has been developed as a practical and strategic resource to support civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Western Balkans and beyond in their advocacy efforts toward building fairer, more just, and sustainable societies, especially in the context of international development cooperation and sustainable development.

6.

Through a comprehensive overview of public advocacy concepts, institutional frameworks, and policy instruments, it aims to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to engage effectively in democratic processes and contribute meaningfully to public discourse and policy development.

This handbook offers a structured approach to the advocacy process—from problem identification and strategic planning to communication, implementation, and evaluation. It also situates advocacy within broader regional and international contexts, including the institutional landscape of the European Union, international development cooperation, and the global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These frameworks provide important entry points and leverage for CSOs to align local efforts with global standards and commitments.

As civil society continues to operate in increasingly complex and often constrained environments, sustained engagement, adaptability, and collaboration remain essential.

The effectiveness of advocacy initiatives depends not only on sound planning and execution, but also on the ability to form strategic alliances, harness evidence-based approaches, and maintain long-term vision and persistence.

We encourage all organizations utilizing this handbook to approach advocacy as a continuous learning process—one that demands reflection, innovation, and solidarity. Let this guide serve not only as a reference but as a catalyst for action, cooperation, and systemic change. With informed, strategic, and united efforts, civil society can continue to be a powerful force for advancing human dignity, social justice, and sustainable development.

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