

EPLO Strategic Plan 2010 to 2012

(1) Introduction to EPLO

EPLO is the platform of 27 leading NGOs, think tanks and NGO networks which share an interest in promoting sustainable peacebuilding policies among decision-makers of the European Union.

(2) Mission

EPLO's mission is to influence European decision-makers to take a more active and effective approach in securing peace and non-violent forms of conflict resolution in all regions of the world.

(3) Values

EPLO and its members are committed to the advancement of sustainable peace in the world, enhanced involvement of civil society in the transformation and resolution of conflict, and non-violent forms of intervention. In this work, EPLO and its members are committed to the principles of respect for all human rights, non-discrimination, gender equality, cultural diversity, sustainable development, and the promotion of good governance and the rule of law at local, regional, national and international levels.

(4) EPLO's Overall Objectives

EPLO aims to influence the EU so it promotes and implements measures that lead to sustainable peace. EPLO wants the EU to recognise and act on the connection between peacebuilding, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development worldwide. EPLO's objectives are:

- 1) To develop and advocate for common policy positions and to bring its members' analysis into EU policy-making in order to increase the EU's capacity to design and implement measures that lead to peace in conflict-affected areas.
- 2) To highlight the crucial role that civil society plays in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and crisis management.
- 3) To raise awareness within the EU of the links between peacebuilding, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development worldwide, and of the need to integrate a gender perspective into peace and security work.
- 4) To promote understanding of EU policies on conflict so that citizens and communities both in the EU and in conflict-affected areas can hold the EU to account.
- 5) To build solidarity and co-operation amongst its members and with other NGO networks.

(5) EPLO's Achievements 2006 to 2009: Where are we now?

During the period of EPLO's last Strategic Plan (2006 to 2009) EPLO has grown significantly in terms of members, activities, staff and budget.

EPLO Overview: 2006 and 2009		
	2006	2009
Member Organisations	17	27
Working groups/clusters	3	8
Staff	2.5 plus an intern	4.5
Income	€ 229,196	€ 286,099
Budget	€ 96,406	€ 307,800

EPLO: Member Organisations

Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management ♦ Civil Society Conflict Prevention Network—KATU ♦ Conciliation Resources ♦ Crisis Management Initiative ♦ European Network for Civil Peace Services ♦ European Centre for Conflict Prevention ♦ ESSEC Iréné ♦ Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior—FRIDE ♦ Glencree ♦ International Alert ♦ International Center for Transitional Justice ♦ International Crisis Group ♦ International Security Information Service - ISIS Europe ♦ Interpeace ♦ Kvinna till Kvinna ♦ Life and Peace Institute ♦ Nansen Dialogue Network ♦ NGO Support Centre ♦ Nonviolent Peaceforce ♦ Partners for Democratic Change International ♦ Quaker Council for European Affairs ♦ Pax Christi International ♦ Saferworld ♦ Search for Common Ground ♦ Swisspeace ♦ Toledo International Centre for Peace—CITpax ♦ World Vision

In 2008, EPLO commissioned an external evaluation, which was carried out by a leading expert in the study of EU foreign policy. It contained an assessment of EPLO's impact and its conclusions were very positive, stating that, **"It is clear that EPLO has developed into an effective and dynamic network in the seven years of its establishment"**. Its findings included that EPLO has an excellent reputation in Brussels, where it is perceived as a serious partner by the EU institutions.

What policy-makers think of EPLO:

"EPLO is well-known in many parts of the EU institutions and, where it is known, it is generally seen as a seriously professional, high quality and trustworthy player. EPLO has impacted on a range of policy areas, documents and discussions through an increasing range of access points in ways and to an extent which represent a major achievement in advocacy terms. It has access and influence in the Council of Ministers secretariat, the Commission and the Parliament." ***From external evaluation of EPLO 2008.***

Where has EPLO had an impact?

"EPLO has had an impact in a variety of different ways: from securing greater access for, and respect of, civil society, to impacting on actual policy positions in the European Commission, Council of Ministers and European Parliament, to affecting the structure of funding instruments and funded projects. This represents a considerable achievement in the EU policy arena and indicates EPLO's success in achieving a number of its strategic goals." ***From the external evaluation.***

EPLO carries out regular internal evaluations by asking its members for their views. The internal evaluation in 2007 and member consultation in spring 2009 showed that most members are satisfied with EPLO's work and progress.

Summary of EPLO member consultation 2009

- 90% of EPLO's members believe that it is mainly or completely meeting its objectives
- 95% of EPLO's members believe that EPLO adequately advances their interests

The consultation also showed that many members felt unable to judge whether or not EPLO is meeting its objectives. Partly for this reason, EPLO is setting out its objectives in this strategic plan and intends to explicitly report and evaluate its work against its objectives. In terms of communication with members, the External Newsletter, contact with the office, and general assemblies were judged to be working well, whereas the Internal Newsletter and website could both be improved.

EPLO's achievements include:

Establishment of the Peacebuilding Partnership: Building on EPLO's proposal to create a European Peacebuilding Agency, EPLO, in close co-operation with the European Parliament and the European Commission, contributed to the creation of the Peacebuilding Partnership (PbP) under the Instrument for Stability, which was finally adopted in 2006. The PbP includes mechanisms for dialogue between EU institutions and civil society and funding for civil society organisations' work on peacebuilding.

Establishment of a structured dialogue between the EU Council and civil society: Since 2007, EPLO has arranged briefings at the Committee for the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM), following two years of dialogue meetings from 2005 onwards. The subjects of the briefings are agreed in advance with the EU Presidencies according to interest e.g. during the French Presidency there were briefings on Georgia, Afghanistan and mediation.

Bringing analysis from conflict-affected areas into EU decision-making processes: By acting as a focal point for civil society expertise on conflict issues, EPLO has been able to bring civil society analysis to the attention of policy-makers on numerous occasions, including bringing those from conflict-affected areas to Brussels. EPLO is able to play this role because of the reputation it has established in Brussels and the wide geographical reach, local knowledge and networks of its members. In 2009, EPLO has organised or co-organised roundtables on the Northern Ugandan peace process, the Middle East, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh.

Recognised hub of expertise: EPLO is frequently called upon by the EU institutions to provide peacebuilding expertise. A key function of EPLO's office is respond to these requests and to identify expertise in its members and their networks. A testament to EPLO's success, is that it receives more requests than it is able to respond to.

Influencing EU policy: Through its presence in Brussels and active participation in policy debates with decision-makers and among NGOs, EPLO has raised awareness of the importance of peacebuilding. It has drawn attention to the principles underlying, approaches to, and results of peacebuilding in its common positions and related advocacy work. This has had an influence on EU policies, as traced in the recent external evaluation of EPLO's work.

(6) Update on the Context: Critical Issues for EPLO

Although EPLO has achieved much since its establishment – and partly as a result of EPLO's work – there is, if anything, an increased need for strong civil society voices campaigning in Brussels to influence the EU's response to conflict. At the global level, there are new challenges that peacebuilders need to face. EU policy-making in this field remains complex and the lack of public awareness of EU action has led to an accountability gap which EPLO helps to fill.

6.1 The Global Context

Developments in global politics of relevance to peacebuilders include:

- A world in which fifty or so fragile states will continue to threaten the security, human rights and economic opportunities of their populations and present a huge and stubborn challenge to the EU's and other multilateral institutions' attempts to improve governance, increase peace and stability, reduce poverty and ensure the fulfilment of human rights.
- Questioning international strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq and the related broader re-assessment of statebuilding efforts.
- The impact of the new administration in the US, including a change of approach to the Middle East.
- The changing balance of power in international politics and the increasing power of China, India, Russia, and Brazil with their varied approaches to conflict outside their borders.
- The threat to peace posed by climate change.
- The destabilising effect of global organised crime and its role in undermining peace processes and in lengthening and causing conflicts.
- The impact of the recession on global peacebuilding efforts and its complex interaction with causes of conflict in different contexts.
- The concept of fragility is increasingly used by the EU, other donors and Member States, which is an encouraging sign that they are trying to adopt the kinds of holistic approaches, such as the whole-of-government approach, which are most effective in fragile contexts.

6.2 EU Policy Developments

There are important developments at the EU as it comes to terms with the changing global context and seeks to play an effective role in international affairs. EPLO's members, Steering Committee and EPLO office staff have identified the following as EU policy developments of importance to EPLO:

Lisbon Treaty reforms:

When the Lisbon Treaty comes into effect, the EU's institutional set up will change. There will be a period of adaptation as the EU develops its Common Security and Defence Policy. This will take place at a time when economic problems will place constraints on the willingness of Member States to make the commitments necessary to implement the Treaty. In a significant development, the Treaty lists conflict prevention and peacebuilding among the aims of EU external action. It also includes the establishment of a European External Action Service (EEAS), which is an unprecedented opportunity to bring peacebuilding into the heart of EU foreign policy, as well as to overcome some of the existing weaknesses in the EU's response to conflict. There is a strong risk however that, if poorly thought out and implemented, the Treaty reforms will actually exacerbate existing problems.

Currently, responsibility for conflict and security is divided between the European Commission and the Council of the EU, with the Parliament playing a role when it comes to the allocation of funds. In practice, the limited coordination between the two main institutions can lead to conflicting or

confusing actions in particular conflict-affected areas. One of EPLO's longstanding advocacy objectives is a Peacebuilding Directorate within the EEAS.

Other institutional changes:

From 2009, there will be a new set of European Commissioners and EPLO will seek to secure their support for peacebuilding.

Developments in ESDP:

There is a growing demand from EU citizens and from those affected by armed conflict for the EU to deploy crisis management missions. EPLO advocates for the effectiveness and accountability of the ESDP for example by carrying out research on links between local societies and ESDP Missions.

In an attempt to apply a comprehensive approach in the ESDP, a plan for the partial integration of civilian and military responses to conflict was developed and agreed to during the French Presidency. The plan involves bringing together the two directorates at the Council Secretariat responsible for planning ESDP Missions: currently one directorate is responsible for civilian missions and one for military missions. EPLO has expressed its concerns that the plan could have an adverse impact on the EU's civilian ESDP Missions, leading to the absorption of the civilian dimension into the military dimension.

The effectiveness of the EU's civilian response to conflict is also at risk due to the inadequacy of resources available, including challenges in the recruitment, training and deployment of the right civilian experts. The preparation of the Civilian Headline Goal 2010 provides an opportunity to address some of these issues.

Conflict, development and statebuilding:

The EU is developing new policy frameworks on security and development and on its approach to fragile states. There is a welcome attempt by some policy-makers to bring broader thinking and emerging knowledge on the limitations of previous statebuilding efforts into EU policy. While there have been, and will likely continue to be, positive developments at the policy level on the links between conflict and meeting development objectives, EPLO remains concerned about programming and the implementation of policy in conflict-affected contexts.

EPLO has recently worked on peacebuilding and development in order to push the EU to tackle the root causes of conflict in its development assistance programmes and to ensure that its development work is conflict sensitive. The EU's approach to statebuilding will be a key aspect of its response to conflict, covering its support to conflict-affected countries under its development instruments and the Instrument for Stability, as well as its rule of law activities under the ESDP. The finalisation and implementation of the new frameworks provide an opportunity for EPLO to influence policy-making. A key challenge for the EU is how to apply the whole-of-government approach within the European Union. There is resistance to whole-of-EU approaches from those who seek to preserve the separation of different policies.

Gender, peace and security:

With the adoption of the EU's Comprehensive Approach to the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 in December 2008, the EU now has a more coherent policy framework to guide its actions on gender and peacebuilding. Despite important developments at the policy level, the EU institutions are some way behind the curve in terms of integrating gender into their peacebuilding work. At one level, this is demonstrated by the fact that senior managers and representatives are wholly or overwhelmingly male (for example, all regional EU Special Representatives are men); on another level, the integration of a gender lens into the EU's political and peacebuilding analysis in conflict-affected countries simply has not happened yet. Civil society organisations face similar challenges when it comes integrating gender into their own work.

6.3 Long-standing Challenges

In addition to changes to the context, there are long-standing issues related to EU policy-making that EPLO has to take into account in its work. These include:

Prioritising conflict prevention:

One of EPLO's key messages is that longer-term conflict prevention measures are more effective than short-term crisis response. It emphasises this in all its advocacy work and will shortly begin a review of the implementation of the commitments set out in the Gothenburg Programme on conflict prevention.

Securing financial support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding work:

Questions will remain about how effectively the EU uses its financial resources and the extent to which they contribute to meeting its objectives on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. EPLO will continue to advocate for greater support for civil society conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives – from 2001 to 2008 just 3% of European Commission funds for conflict prevention and peacebuilding was distributed to civil society. In addition to its ongoing work on the Instrument for Stability, EPLO is campaigning for conflict prevention and peacebuilding to be (re)integrated into the EU's development instruments (the EU's development assistance programmes) and for support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding to be included in the new financial perspective 2013-2020 (the seven-year framework for EU spending according to which annual budgets are prepared).

EPLO will work increasingly on regional funding instruments (programmes) advocating for the inclusion of support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, for example, in pre-Accession funding and in the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument.

Inconsistencies across EU policy-making:

The EU's actions to support peace are frequently undermined by its policies on other issues, including on trade, energy security and justice and internal security policy.

Complexity of EU decision-making:

Multi-level decision-making within the EU makes it a difficult advocacy target, especially when combined with continuous changes at the national level; EPLO tries to work with all relevant policy-makers, including the European Commission, the EU Council, the European Parliament and Member States.

Relationship between national and European levels:

Decisions on Common Foreign and Security Policy are still made by Member States, although this will change to some extent when the Lisbon Treaty enters into force; EPLO does not currently have the capacity to carry out the advocacy in Member States' Capitals that would bolster its work in Brussels. Member States themselves hold different views on the role of the EU and within the Member States and the institutions, there are different conceptions of European interests, European security and Europe's role in the world.

(7) EPLO's Specific Objectives 2010 to 2012

Over the next three years, EPLO needs to build on what it has achieved thus far, it needs to capitalise on the reputation it has established and increase and use its visibility and access to policy-makers.

EPLO needs to take advantage of the opportunities to influence the EU that are currently available and to become better at using its key resources: the knowledge, expertise and reach of its members and the EPLO office in Brussels. From its members, it can gather information on what works in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, analysis of specific conflicts, and assessment of the implementation of EU policy in conflict-affected areas. The EPLO office makes a critical contribution with its knowledge of policy-making and the political scene in Brussels and its analysis of EU policy developments.

EPLO faces choices related to its level of engagement: should it work at a high political level and attempt to change the direction of the EU or should it carry out “technical” work, promoting smaller incremental changes? In fact, EPLO tries to do both, believing that work at the two levels is usually – although not always – mutually reinforcing. EPLO will continue to work on policy, programming and implementation. A second choice relates to whether to carry out pro-active or reactive work. While most of EPLO’s work fits into the former category, it could free up capacity to carry out more responsive advocacy work as important opportunities arise frequently, and often at short notice.

Based on an analysis of the context and the resources at its disposal, EPLO’s specific objectives for the next three years are set out below.

Policy Objectives

1. To ensure that conflict prevention and peacebuilding have a prominent place within the structures and institutions of the EU

- To secure a prominent place for conflict prevention and peacebuilding structures within the reformed institutional set up of the EU, including establishing a Peacebuilding Directorate functionally linked to other EU institutions.
- To advocate for coherent and practical ways to build peace, highlighting the need for effective civilian responses.
- To persuade key policy-makers of the importance of implementing effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding measures and of the need for consistency across EU policy-making.
- To outline integrated, consistent policy-making and a whole-of-EU approach which put conflict prevention and peacebuilding at the centre of EU external affairs.

2. To secure increased resources for conflict prevention and peacebuilding

- To increase overall resources available for EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities through inclusion of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the financial perspective 2013-2020, annual budgets, and funding programmes.
- To increase resources for activities carried out by conflict prevention and peacebuilding civil society organisations, including EPLO members.

3. To make the EU’s conflict prevention and peacebuilding work more effective and hold the EU institutions to account

- To contribute to the implementation of the recommendations set out in *Partners Apart: Enhancing Cooperation between Civil Society and EU Civilian Crisis Management in the Framework of ESDP Missions*.
- To bring the analysis of EPLO members and their partners into EU policymaking in order to improve the EU’s policy and programming on specific conflicts by (co)organising meetings on specific conflicts (EPLO manages the process; it does not develop common positions on specific conflicts).

- To bring assessment of the implementation of EU policy into debates in Brussels.
- To promote recognition of and support for civil society conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities in conflict-affected areas by the EU institutions.

4. To make EU development assistance more conflict-sensitive

- To ensure that EU development policies and practices adequately incorporate conflict prevention and peacebuilding – in line with the whole-of-EU approach – and thus contribute to the achievement of sustainable peace worldwide.
- To promote and monitor conflict sensitivity in the use of EU development assistance, including in fragile contexts, through funding programmes and the work of the European Investment Bank.

5. To bring high quality gender analysis into EPLO's work and into EU policy-making

- To contribute to the implementation of the EU's Comprehensive approach and of National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325.
- To go beyond UNSCR 1325, raising awareness of the need to incorporate a broad approach to gender into the EU's work, including integration of gender throughout analysis and programming.
- To advocate for the EU to have better gender balance at senior level.
- To improve the integration of gender analysis into EPLO's work.

Organisational Change Objectives

These objectives will help EPLO to effectively manage the internal changes that are necessary for it to meet its policy objectives and to address the challenges identified above. EPLO has grown significantly and its members are committed to continued growth; this growth needs to be carefully managed including putting safeguards in place to ensure that member participation and ownership are maintained.

For a peacebuilding network, managing organisational change is a strategic issue: one of EPLO's overall objectives is to promote solidarity and cooperation in the peacebuilding sector, and it needs a strategy helps it to meet this objective.

1. To maintain and/or improve EPLO's reputation and to make effective use of the access and reputation that EPLO currently has

- To establish a group of EPLO allies in the European Parliament through implementing the EP strategy (adapting the strategy to take account of the changing role of the Parliament set out in the Lisbon Treaty).
- To consolidate the current level of contacts and access at the European Commission and in the Council Secretariat and to improve contacts with Member States' representatives in Brussels.
- To identify, establish and maintain contact with key policy-makers in the post-Lisbon institutional structures, including the European External Action Service the Offices of the President of the EU and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs.
- To improve and increase strategically useful networking with other NGOs and networks.
- To consistently produce content that is clear, concise, user-friendly, and reflects the expertise of EPLO and all its members.

2. To expand EPLO's membership in order to increase its legitimacy and diversity and to enlarge the pool of expertise at its disposal

- To accept at least five new members, covering at least three countries not currently covered by EPLO.

3. To secure funding for EPLO in the medium-term in order to minimize time spent on fundraising and to contribute to EPLO's long-term sustainability

- To secure funding to maintain EPLO's activities at the current level for three years.
- To identify new sources of reliable funding for EPLO's work.

4. To make EPLO's work informative, inclusive, efficient and rewarding for those involved in it in any capacity

- To work in an inclusive, efficient and flexible way, making it attractive and easy for all EPLO's members to be involved, insofar as they have the capacity.
- To work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- To feed information, evidence and analysis from conflict-affected countries into EU policy-making via EPLO members, EPLO member representatives and the EPLO office.
- To free up capacity for EPLO to respond to opportunities to influence EU policy-making that arise.
- To adapt the roles of Director, Steering Committee, Officers and Working Groups in light of EPLO's growth and its changing needs.
- To take steps to monitor, record and regularly evaluate EPLO's impact against these strategic objectives and such other specific goals and objectives that may be set during the three years of the Strategic Plan.
- To develop workplans using the objectives set out here as a framework.

Overview of objectives:

Specific objective	Contributes to overall objective:
Policy Objectives	
1. To ensure that conflict prevention and peacebuilding have a prominent place in the structures and institutions of the EU	1)
2. To secure increased resources for conflict prevention and peacebuilding	1) 4) 5)
3. To make the EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding work more effective and hold the EU institutions to account	1) 2)
4. To make EU development assistance more conflict-sensitive	3)
5. To bring high quality gender analysis into EPLO's work and into EU policy-making	3)
Organisational Change Objectives	
1. To maintain and/or improve EPLO's reputation and to make effective use of the access and reputation that EPLO currently has	All
2. To expand EPLO's membership in order to increase its legitimacy and diversity and to enlarge the pool of expertise at its disposal	All
3. To secure funding for EPLO in the medium-term in order to minimize time spent on fundraising and to contribute to EPLO's long-term sustainability	All
4. To make EPLO's work informative, efficient and rewarding for those involved in it in any capacity	All

Annex 1: What are EPLO's Activities?

In order to meet its objectives, EPLO will undertake a set of activities, some take place on a daily basis, others are occasional. The types of activities EPLO carries out are listed below. Detailed descriptions of EPLO's activities and how they relate to its strategic objectives will appear in its annual workplans.

In implementing its activities, EPLO will strive to ensure that its work is:

- Results-based
- Focused on meeting specific, concrete objectives
- Based on evidence from across the peacebuilding sector
- Illustrated with examples from the work of its members and others
- Focused on the *implementation* of policy, as well as policy development

Activity 1 Network coordination and governance meetings

This includes meetings of EPLO's General Assembly, which brings together all EPLO members to make decisions, and meetings of the Steering Committee of seven elected representatives of member organisations, which oversees EPLO's work. This activity ensures that EPLO is member-owned and member-driven.

Activity 2 Internal communication activities

For a network to function effectively, internal communication is essential. In EPLO, this takes the form of a monthly newsletter, updates for working groups, briefings, and the EPLO website

Activity 3 External communication and publications on the EU and conflict

EPLO will continue to produce its external newsletter, which has over 2000 subscribers and contains news on EU external affairs. EPLO will produce policy papers, statements and briefings covering issues relating to the EU and peacebuilding.

Activity 4 Development of common positions and joint advocacy work

EPLO will develop empirically-based analytical positions on which it will base advocacy strategies. EPLO has thematic working and *ad hoc* groups bringing together representatives from its member organisations covering a range of issues. These groups meet whenever possible and carry out discussions by phone and e-mail.

Activity 5 Training seminars

Training on areas of EU policy and practice, including development co-operation, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and funding, will be organised by the EPLO office.

Activity 6 EPLO office helpdesk

The EPLO office responds to individual requests for information about EU policies, programmes and institutions.

Activity 7 Support to EPLO's work with the EU Presidencies

EPLO will continue its close co-operation with EU presidencies, leading to meetings, reports and significant policy commitments on the role of civil society in EU conflict policy.

Activity 8 Events in EU Member States

To support Member States to play a constructive role in shaping the EU's response to conflict, EPLO will participate in policy meetings in Member States. With its broad network, EPLO is well-placed to make links between policy-making in Brussels and in Member States' capitals.

Activity 9 EPLO briefings and policy meetings in Brussels for EU officials, Member States' representatives and MEPs

EPLO will organise meetings bringing together experts from EPLO members, partners, other NGO networks, EU institutions and Member States to discuss the EU's response to conflict. EPLO organises briefings on particular conflicts and topics, whenever possible bringing people from conflict-affected areas to provide their analysis.

Activity 10 Liaison work in Brussels and beyond

EPLO's office in Brussels establishes and maintains contacts with EU officials, Member States' representatives and MEPs in order to channel expertise from its members into policy-making. It is also involved in strategic networking on behalf of EPLO, including contact with potential members and allies.

Activity 11 Participation in policy dialogue in Brussels

It is important for civil society representatives to be present at meetings taking place in Brussels in order to put forward their views on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. EPLO arranges for its members and their partners to participate in events in Brussels.

Activity 12 Fundraising

The Office leads on securing funding for EPLO's work.

In addition, EPLO office in Brussels carries out a range of management and administrative tasks and EPLO's Steering Committee provides governance and strategic oversight.