Radboud University

Different rules, different policies: different identities

A comparative study on Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity in Flanders, France and the Netherlands

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Word of thanks

This study is the result of the contribution of many. We are very grateful for all the organisations and individuals that shared their knowledge and experience with us, be it during interviews and focus group discussions or by completing our survey. We also thank the province of West Flanders, the province of East Flanders, 11.11.11/4de Pijlersteunpunt, La Guilde and Wilde Ganzen Foundation for the financial and non-financial support offered to the study. We thank Partin, EUDiF and Vastenactie and several Flemish cities and municipalities for providing us access to their network. Many thanks as well to our interns Marit Lamers, Siem Bouwmeister & Clémence Honings and researchers Carine Viry & Lau Schulpen for working with us during various stages of the study. And finally, this study benefitted tremendously of the support received by the students of the postgraduate education program 'Sustainable Development' of the university of applied sciences of Howest/Vives and the program coordinators Kurt Debaere and Inge Vanderstraeten.

1 Introduction

The field of international development cooperation is constantly evolving as development goals are revised, interventions adjusted, and new development actors emerge. In the past, there were largely three types of distinguishable development actors: bilateral donors, multilateral organisations – like the World Bank and the United Nations – and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). We refer to these as 'established development actors'. Over time, it has been observed that the world of development cooperation expanded and became more diverse as new traditional donors (e.g. Bulgaria as a bilateral donor) and non-traditional actors, including private foundations, private development initiatives and companies have emerged (Richey and Ponte, 2014; Kinsbergen, 2014).

In this study, we zoom in on one of these non-traditional donors: northern based, small-scale, citizen led (mostly) voluntary development organisations. Here, these are referred to as 'Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity' or CIGS[1]. In various countries in the Global North, the number of CIGS has been growing since mid-2000 owing to macro-processes, such as globalisation and individualisation. According to the estimates by Pollet et al. (2014), Western European countries are likely to have between 100,000 and 200,000 CIGS. Consequently, CIGS are an increasingly prominent actor in civil society in many countries in the Global North but have often remained unnoticed or unrecognised by policy makers, established development actors and academics in the field. Their growing number has been accompanied by increased interest from both the world of academia and policy and practice.

Since mid-2000, alongside an increased interest among established actors, a growing number of studies on CIGS have contributed to an increased understanding of the role and identity of CIGS. However, so far, most of these studies have focused on single countries, studying CIGS from one particular country in the Global North. Multiple conferences and network events where researchers, CIGS support organisations and CIGS representatives themselves have participated have suggested significant differences in terms of identity and positioning of CIGS. No systematic understanding of these differences, nor of their origins and implications has been reached or researched thus far.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a first attempt was made to create a comparative study (Kinsbergen at al., 2020). The data allowed for mapping of the differences among CIGS in different countries for the first time. The findings confirmed that a comparative research approach would allow us to deepen our understanding of the role of CIGS further to an extent impossible for single country studies.

[1] We give a precise criteria for being qualified as CIGS in chapter 2 of this report.

In cooperation with a number of CIGS support organisations in Belgium (Flanders), France and the Netherlands, a start has been made with a European study on CIGS. In this report, we present the findings of the first phase of the study (2021–2022), which focuses on the identity of CIGS and their role and relations to their countries of origin in the Global North. Building on the findings of Phase I, in the second phase (2022–2023), their role, positioning and relations in the Global South will be studied.

We start this report by systematically analysing the similarities and differences of CIGS. We then try to come to an initial understanding of what causes the differences, and we analyse their implications for the role of CIGS in the landscape of international development. The report ends with a country typology starting from organisational characteristics of CIGS. In addition to furthering of the academic debate on CIGS by offering a comparative perspective, this increased understanding will also enable civil society organisations that support CIGS to tailor their service to them according to their different identity and role. This typology will also allow for phase II of the study to examine if and how the identity of CIGS affects their role in the Global South. Since both support organisations and academics recognise diversity in CIGS, we pay specific attention to two groups: (1) CIGS with young members, and (2) CIGS founded by people with a migrant background. We explain these two groups in more detail in the next chapter.

Radboud University, being the leading university in reach on the theme of CIGS, was responsible for conducting the study. This study was conducted in close cooperation and with the support of multiple civil society and government actors from Flanders (11.11.11/4de Pijlersteunpunt, the province of East Flanders and the province of West Flanders), France (La Guilde) and the Netherlands (Wilde Ganzen foundation), some of which are member of the 'Research & Action Network on European Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity'[2]. Staff from these support organisations provided the researchers with access to CIGS and key informants in their respective countries and shared their own experiences[3]. The support organisations also offered co-funding to the research project. Throughout this report, we refer to the above mentioned organisations as 'support organisations'[4]. While the study took place in close collaboration with them, academic integrity standards were respected at all times, and the independence of the study has been guaranteed and respected by all parties involved.

[2] Within this network, civil society organisations from nine European countries are currently active, and the aim is to expand this network further during the coming years. The network resulted from the two first editions of the European conference (2014 and 2019). For an overview of the participating organisations, see: http://europeannetworkforcigs.eu/members/. Radboud University is involved in the network as an academic partner.

[3] All this has been done in accordance with the European General Data Protection Regulation.

[4] We would like to extend our gratitude to all support organisations for the support offered during data collection and feedback process.

The report has been structured as follows: in the next chapter (chapter 2), the methodology used for data collection is elaborated on, this is followed by the analysis of the findings, which is divided over four chapters: i.e. characterisation of CIGS (Chapter 3), their role in Global North (Chapter 4), their role in Global South (Chapter 5) and their positionality (Chapter 6) respectively. The final chapter (Chapter 7) concludes the report by providing a 'country typology'.

2 Methodology

The study used a mixed method research design, combining survey data, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Data collection was done in close cooperation with the partner organisations and took place between October 2021 and May 2022.

For defining CIGS in this current study, we build on previous studies and define them as: (1) a group of people, (2) who give support in a direct way (3) to one or more developing countries. They are (4) small in scale and are (5) voluntary in nature. 'Small in scale' was interpreted in two ways: having fewer than 20 regular staff members, or an annual budget of less than €1 million. The voluntary nature was defined as being based on an upper limit of 20% of paid members in charge of the organisation (Kinsbergen, 2014, p. 57).

The study started from an analysis of relevant secondary data, such as reports, scientific articles and policy documents. The primary data collection started with an electronic survey being distributed among CIGS as a means to get an understanding of the key characteristics of the organisations and of the backgrounds and motives of CIGS members. The survey was distributed through email, newsletters and social media by the research team and CIGS support organisations. For the Netherlands, a previously developed database of Radboud University of Dutch CIGS was also used. The invitation letter accompanying the survey requested recipients have the survey completed by the founder and/or a key CIGS member[5]. The survey mainly asked questions about the organisation, but it also collected some socio-demographic information on the individual respondent completing the survey; we refer to this person as 'participant'. 1,436 individual organisations participated in the survey, out of which 942 organisations completed it. Of these 942 organisations, 788 organisations were identified as CIGS, meeting the criteria outlined above. Of these 788 organisations, some did not provide information for all questions, so depending on the information being analysed the overall response (n[6]) ranges between 736 and 788. The characteristics of the organisations and their members is summarised in Table 2.1. The analysis of the data collected through the survey was done through a combination of crosstabs, ANOVA, t-testing and nonparametric tests, including Kruskall Wallis and Mann U Whitney depending on the distribution of data. If the data did not show a normal distribution, we have reported the values as median values (instead of averages) to present a complete picture of the data. Using averages for a data with a lot of outliers (or being skewed) results in values that are either too big or too small and would therefore not be representative of the overall data.

[5] Although most CIGS are not member based, we use the term 'member' to refer to the either voluntary or paid staff of the CIGS.
[6] It was decided to also include the answers of participants who did not complete the survey. Due to the missing answers to survey questions (item nonresponse), the number of responses (*n*) might differ slightly per question. When relevant, the adjusted 'n' is reported.

	All countries	Flanders	Netherlands	France
Age (M)	65.1	63.3[a]	66.3[b]	61.7[a]
Religious (%)	39.5 (n=292)	35.8[a] (n=52)	40.9[a] (n=214)	36.2[a] (n=25)
Female (%)	39.9 (n=296)	47.3[a] (n=70)	36.5[a] (n=191)	50.7[a] (n=35)

Table 2.1 Descriptive statistics of the survey participants
*Note. Each subscript letter denotes a subset of country categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level. The results have been computed using the Crosstabs function in SPSS. For example, for the category of age, both France and Flanders are significantly different from the Netherlands.

As mentioned in the introduction, throughout our analysis, we pay particular attention to two groups:

1. Organisations with young members: We distinguish between an average age of 20–40 years old and an average age of over 40 years old.
2. Diaspora organisations: Diaspora organisations are defined as organisations whose founders have a migration background (founder or at least one of the founder's parents was born outside the country where the CIGS was based) and/or at least 20% of the members has a migration background.

Since we mainly reached out to CIGS through support organisations, our sample is susceptible to several biases, possibly affecting the representativeness of our sample. It is assumed that relatively younger and smaller organisations and those of a diaspora background might be underrepresented in the study since it is our experience from previous research and that of support organisations that these CIGS interact with support organisations to a lesser extent.

To minimise the risk of these biases affecting the study, special efforts were made to reach possibly underrepresented CIGS. In the Netherlands, the research team's database was further expanded via a Google search, adding more CIGS with young members or founders, more recently established initiatives and more CIGS from diaspora. In addition, special efforts were also made to reach diaspora organisations by having the survey distributed via the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF)[7]. It is also important to note that, since we were unable to reach out to all CIGS support organisations operating in the three countries in our sample, we do not claim to present a complete, representative picture of CIGS and the CIGS support system in the participating countries.

[7] A list of all organisations that distributed the survey is included in Appendix A.

However, as we cooperated with and talked to the largest support organisations in each country, we are convinced that we managed to get a proper understanding of the role and identity of CIGS in the three studied countries. In Flanders, the study was conducted in cooperation and with the support of 11.11.11/4de Pijlersteunpunt and the provinces of East Flanders and West Flanders. Since we mainly reached out to CIGS through these organisations, it is expected that CIGS from these two provinces are overrepresented in the sample compared to CIGS from other provinces. This could result in a (positive) bias of the findings as these provinces are currently known the be the most supportive of CIGS. However, since we also approached CIGS via other means, we tried to minimize the risk of such a possible bias.

Following the survey, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with members of CIGS to gain deeper insights into the role of CIGS in the Global North/ south and their positionality compared to other actors in the field. A total of 21 focus group discussions took place, each consisting of three or four organisations. A total of 72 CIGS participated in the FGDs. The organisations were selected via purposive sampling. When selecting the organisations, we aimed for a group of CIGS that reflected the variety both in terms of organisation characteristics and the backgrounds of their members (see Appendix A for more elaborate information on the sample). Where necessary, additional CIGS were also approached via CIGS support organisations to ensure a representative sample. Focus group discussions were conducted in two phases; the first phase took place in Flanders in October and November 2021 (with the support of students of the university of applied sciences of Howest/Vives) and phase two was conducted between February and May 2022. The discussions took between 90 and 120 minutes. Some of the FGDs were held online and some were held face to face. During the focus group discussions, participants were asked to give their opinion on five statements regarding the role of CIGS in the Global North/ south and their positionality compared to other actors in the field (see Appendix B).

To complement the experiences and ideas of CIGS on their positionality and role, key informant interviews were conducted with staff of CIGS support organisations, of larger development organisations and of government institutes. Each interview took between 60 and 120 minutes. A list of anonymised interviewees has been included in Appendix A.

Table 2.2 represents a summary of the total number of CIGS organisations from the survey, the number of CIGS from the focus group discussions and the number of interviews carried out in each country.

Country	Survey							FGD	Interviews
	Total	Background of founder(s) and member(s)			Age of members			Total	Total
		Non-diaspora	Diaspora	Unknown	Young	Not young	Unknown		
Flanders	160	106 (66.2%)	52 (32.5%)	2 (1.3%)	24 (15%)	143 (83.8%)	2 (1.3%)	40	5
Netherlands	551	387 (70.2%)	157 (28.5%)	7 (1.3%)	63 (11.4%)	482 (87.5%)	6 (1.1%)	20	12
France	77	2 (2.7%)	43 (55.8%)	32 (41.5%)[8]	19 (24.7%)	55 (71.4%)	2 (3.9%)	12	3
Total	788	495 (62.8%)	252 (32%)	41 (5.2%)	106 (13.5%)	671 (85.2%)	11 (1.4%)	72	20

Table 2.2 Summary of participants across countries for each methodological approach

[8] It is not allowed in France to ask about origin or country of birth (French constitution – Law on information and freedom, 1978) (Bleich, 2001). Besides, many French survey respondents preferred not to answer certain questions related to the background of the members (e.g., number of people with a migration background). As a result, there was limited information available to determine whether an organisation fit the definition of being 'diaspora'.

3 Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity

This chapter provides insight into the identity of CIGS. In other words, it aims to answer the *who, why, how* and *what* of CIGS. The chapter starts by providing an in-depth profile of the people behind these initiatives (Section 3.1), followed by the characteristics of the organisations (Section 3.2). Where relevant, significant differences between sub-groups, such as CIGS established by younger people, and those with a diaspora background, are highlighted.

3.1 The people behind the CIGS

This section provides an overview of the profile of CIGS founders and members and their initial motivations for starting CIGS.

3.1.1 Socio-demographics

The average age of members of the CIGS across countries is around 55.4 years: the lowest average age was 22 years old while the highest was 79[9]. Members of diaspora organisations are 51 years old on average, compared to non-diaspora organisation members who are 57 years old on average. We also observed that the members of French CIGS are relatively younger (Mean=52.8) than members of Dutch CIGS (Mean=56.4).

Most CIGS were established by men (35.9%) or by both men and women (36%). Only 26.8% of the CIGS in our sample were established only by women. When comparing the different countries, we observe that in France, women are more likely to establish CIGS on their own (41.6%) compared to the Netherlands (24.6%) and Flanders (25.9%). Men and women are approximately equally represented as members of CIGS in all three countries[10]. The percentage of female members is lowest in the Netherlands (47.6%), followed by Flanders (55.2%) then France (57.4%).

[9] Survey participants were asked to share the average age of the members of the CIGS they are part of.
[10] See Table 2.1

Almost 40% of the survey participants consider themselves to be part of a religious community; the majority of them (51.5%) identify as Catholic. An analysis of the educational background of our participants shows that nearly 80% have completed vocational or academic education and a large majority of them (66.6%) were married, having a higher than modal income.

3.1.2 Triggers and motives

We find that the most important trigger for people to initiate CIGS is travel abroad (22.1%), as can be seen in Figure 3.1. Not surprisingly, people with a diaspora background started CIGS more often, motivated by giving back to their country of origin (or that of their parents). It is interesting that young people founded CIGS more often because they were dissatisfied with the activities of established development organisations than older CIGS. Overall, when it comes to triggers to start CIGS, the results of our data are similar to those of previous studies.

The survey included an open-end question asking for participants' motivation for working in CIGS. We find that survey participants are mostly motivated to engage in the CIGS by a wish to contribute to improving society. One participant formulated this by stating their motivation was to "contribute to the fight against social inequalities and promotion of digital technology for sustainable development in the countries of the Sahel" (Member French CIGS, survey). A small share of survey participants mentioned how feelings of solidarity with people they are working with in countries in the Global South motivates them in their work: "Solidarity comes first. I want to give these children, born of abuse and rejected by society, hope for a better future. I would also like to give a smile to these abused and abandoned women" (Member Flemish CIGS, survey). Our results showed that this sense of international solidarity is more prominent among members of French CIGS than members of Dutch and Flemish CIGS. Other motivations for participating in the CIGS included helping children, interest in the development theme or target group and believing in the effectiveness in small scale development organisations.

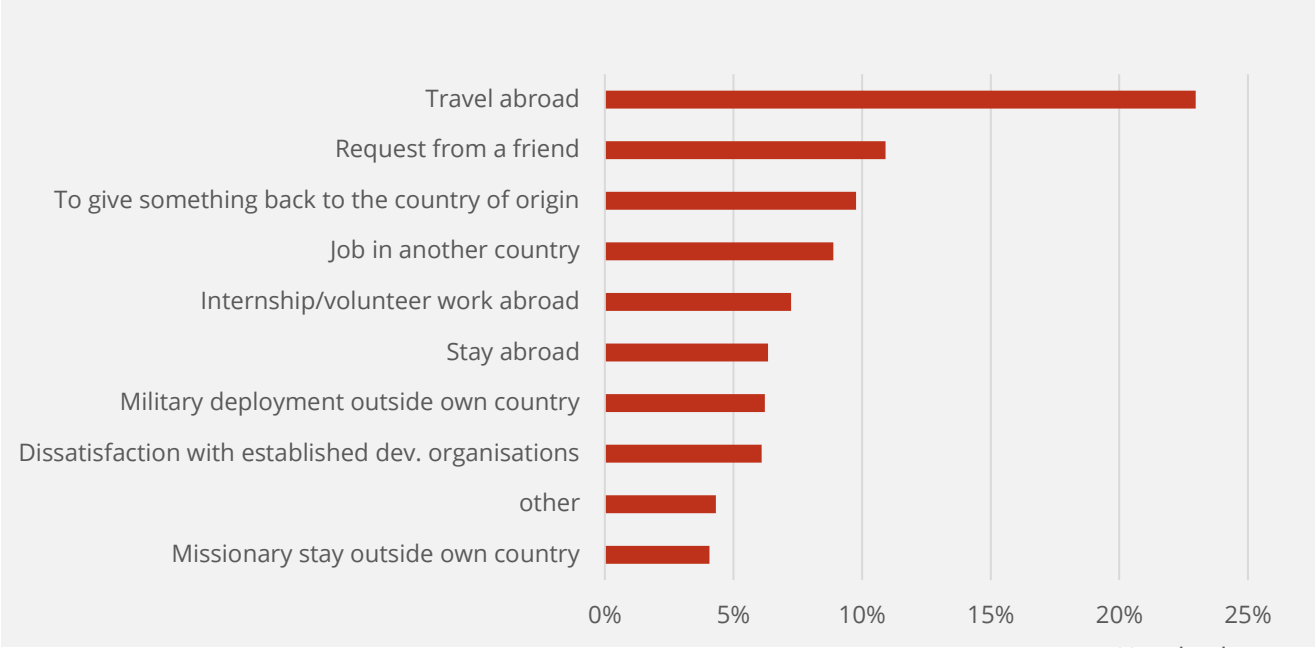

Figure 3. 1 Trigger to start a CIGS (%)

3.1.3 Commitment

When it comes to the commitment of CIGS members to their work for the organisation, it is striking that nearly all CIGS in our sample (94%) operated completely on a voluntary basis. No significant differences can be noted between countries in this regard. It is interesting that CIGS with younger members are more likely to have at least one paid staff member (14.2%) compared to CIGS with older members (4.5%) which suggests a different approach to running an organisation. This is especially striking considering that CIGS with younger members have lower budgets than CIGS with older members (see Section 3.3 for a more detailed discussion on CIGS budgets).

The survey participants invest a median number of 20 hours per month into their work for the CIGS, but some invest up to 220 hours[11]. We find striking cross-country differences when it comes to survey participants' time investments. French participants led the way when it comes to the amount of time spent on work for CIGS each month (Mdn=40), followed by Flemish participants who invested a median 25 hours every month, while Dutch participants invest the lowest amount of time per month (Mdn=20 hours). The data so far does not allow us to explain these differences, considering that we do know on which activities CIGS members spend most of their time.

[11] Participants who reported to spend more than 240 hours per month on their work for the CIGS (n=2) were excluded from the analysis as they were outliers. Including outliers in the analysis has the disadvantage that the data become skewed and does not portray the complete picture.

We find that members of Dutch diaspora initiatives invest significantly more time monthly than members of non-diaspora CIGS. One reason behind this could be the stronger connection between diaspora members and the people they are working with/for in the Global South. It could also be the case that they experience more pressure to make a significant contribution as mentioned by one FGD participant who mentioned that "their families in the homeland expect a lot from them"). Notably, we do not find the same pattern in Flemish CIGS[12].

In addition to their time, most CIGS members (91.4%) mentioned that they also invested private funds in their CIGS. Over half of the participants (54.1%) reported investing relatively small amounts of private money in the organisation, but some respondents also stated that they invested relatively large amounts incidentally (21.8%) or structurally (15.6%). Moreover, our results also show that members of Dutch and Flemish CIGS are more likely to invest private money compared to members of French CIGS. Many of the participants (43.5%) were observed combining their work at the CIGS with a paid job.

Now that we have a basic understanding of key characteristics of CIGS members, we move on to the organisational characteristics in the next section.

3.2 Organisational characteristics

Before we present organisational features of CIGS, we zoom out by showing the number of CIGS established each year in the countries participating in this study. Subsequently, we zoom in on three key characteristics of CIGS: their small-scale, their voluntary character and their informal nature.

3.2.1 The numbers of CIGS – a changing landscape

Our findings show an increase in the number of CIGS being established each year in the three countries until 2010, with the most notable increase in growth taking place between 2001 and 2010 (Figure 3.2)[13].

[12] As mentioned earlier, since it is illegal in France to ask about origin or country of birth (French constitution - law of information and freedom, 1978) (Bleich, 2001), there was limited information available for testing the hypothesis for French CIGS.
[13] It is important to mention that our sample only contains information on the CIGS still existing at the moment the survey took place. It is therefore difficult to make statements on the absolute number of CIGS and changes therein.

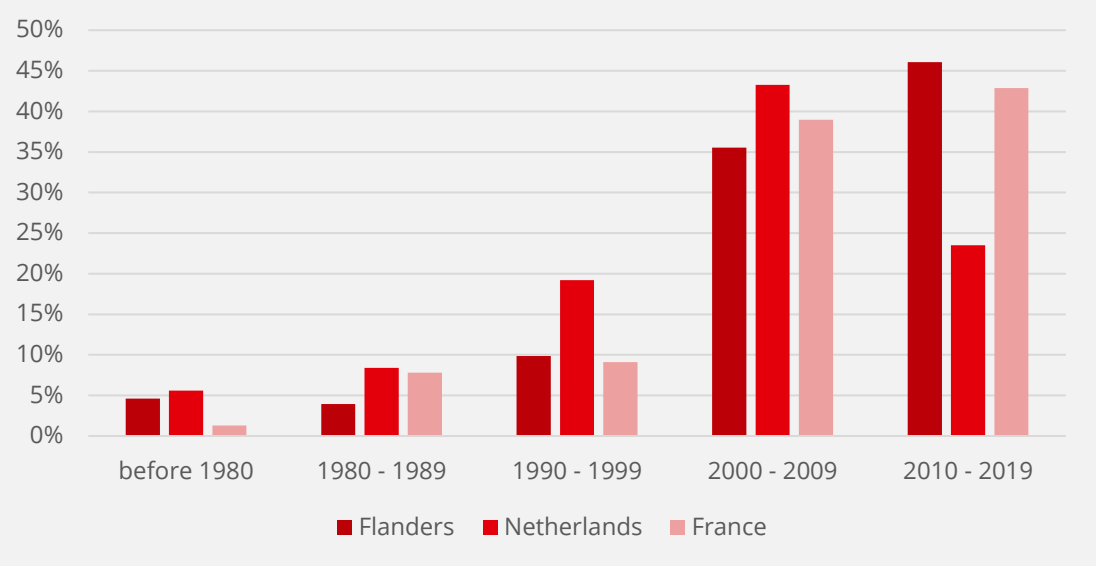

Figure 3.2 CIGS from our sample established per decade (%)

After 2010, we notice some interesting cross-country differences. In Flanders, the upward trend continued after 2010, primarily caused by an increase in diaspora CIGS (93% increase in growth between 1990 and 2009), as can be seen in Figure 3.3. The growth of non-diaspora CIGS stabilised (5% increase in growth between 2009 and 2019). The data does not allow us to explain the striking rise in the number of Flemish diaspora initiatives being established after 2009. In France, we find a similar but slighter smaller overall increase in growth of CIGS as a whole after 2010[14]. In the Netherlands, we notice a very different development when it comes to the growth of CIGS. We observe a significant decline in growth for both non-diaspora (-48%) and diaspora (-40%) CIGS between 2000 and 2019 (see Figure 3.4). In Section 3.4 we explain these different trends.

[14] See footnote 12 for an explanation of why for France we cannot distinguish between the growth of diaspora and non-diaspora CIGS.

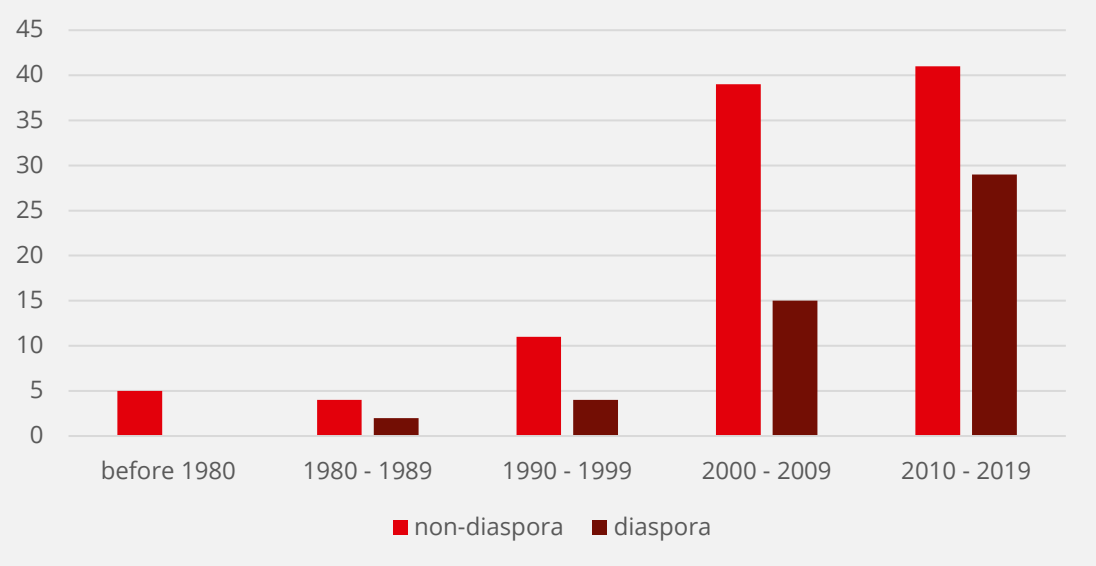

Figure 3.3 Flemish CIGS established per decade (absolute number)

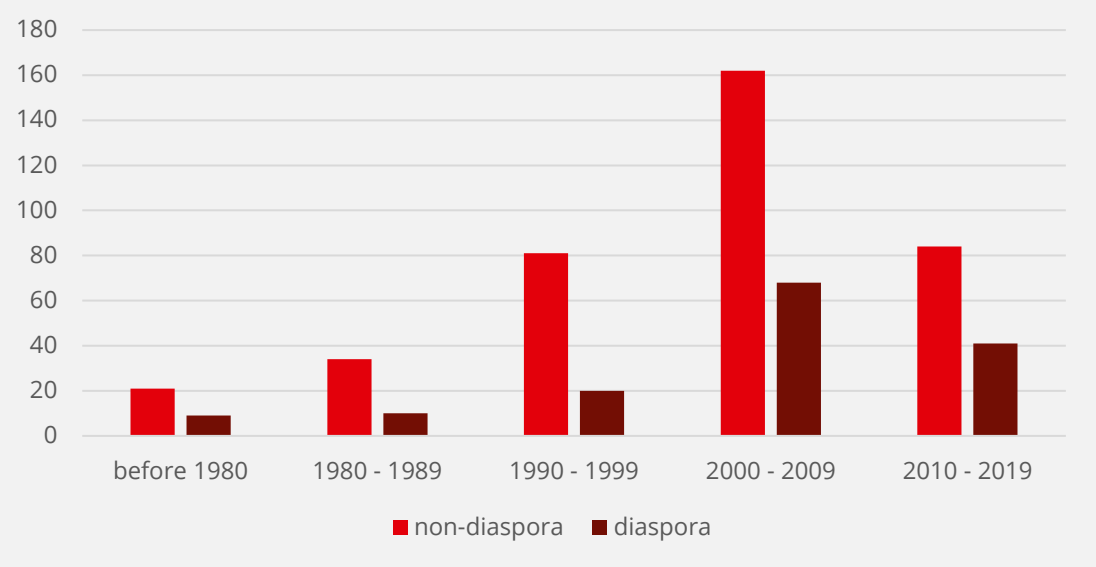

Figure 3.4 Dutch CIGS established per decade (absolute number)

3.2.2 Organisational size

The CIGS in our sample have a median number of six core members. Compared to Flemish (Mdn=7) and Dutch (Mdn=5) CIGS, French CIGS are the largest in terms of core members (Mdn=10). We also observe that older organisations have more core members while more recently established organisations have fewer.

In terms of money, the average[15] annual budget of Dutch CIGS in 2019/2020 was €61,552 (median budget: €28,500)[16]. The average budget of French (€31,967; median budget: €20,000) and Flemish CIGS (€34,882; median budget: €20,000) was significantly lower in 2019/2020 than that of Dutch CIGS.

In addition, we also found that CIGS with young members (<40) have lower budgets (Mdn=€16,250) than CIGS with older members (Mdn=€27,500). This can probably be attributed to the fact that CIGS with young members are often established more recently, and newer organisations have less access to funding opportunities compared to more established ones.

Similarly, when comparing diaspora and non-diaspora CIGS, we find that the budget of diaspora organisations is lower (Mdn=20,750) compared to the budget of non-diaspora organisations (Mdn=27,500) in 2019/2020. This is in line with the results found by Kinsbergen (2009). The focus group discussions and interviews revealed that some diaspora organisations have difficulties with acquiring funding due to language barriers, among other things.

> "Initially, all subsidies, projects and protocols were drawn up from the perspective of someone who is here [in Flanders], who knows the system and the expectations. [...] Or when it comes to SDGs, people may not know what that is about. [...] Language is also a problem. And everything has to be precise here. Many diaspora have a bumpier approach and they don't fit into that straitjacket." (Key Informant Flanders, 2022)

3.2.3 Budget sources

When it comes to sources of funding, private individuals are the most common donor for CIGS in the participating countries: 89.6% of the CIGS in our sample reported receiving donations from private individual donors (Figure 3.5). Despite this commonality, quite a number of differences can be found when comparing the CIGS donor landscape across the three countries. Compared to French and Dutch CIGS, Flemish CIGS rely more on financial support from schools. Unlike France and Flanders, support from private foundations[17] is most common in the Netherlands. French CIGS receive financial support from NGOs most frequently. An important difference can be noted when it comes to government support. Figure 3.5 shows receiving funding from the government is common among both Flemish and French CIGS, whereas there is nearly no government support available for Dutch CIGS. France and Flanders both have a decentralised support structure, in which public funding mainly runs through the cities, municipalities and provinces.

[15] The average values should be interpreted with caution since the data did not follow normal distribution. The median values follow a similar pattern as the averages.
[16] This resembles a 40% growth between 2016 and 2019 (see Figure 2.4 in appendix A).
[17] There was a small error in the French version of the survey where the option of foundations as a budget source was not included by mistake. Therefore the data of French CIGS funded by foundations is missing.

In this regard, interesting changes can be noted. While previously, similar to French and Flemish CIGS now, Dutch CIGS could rely on significant support from the government (provided through NGOs[18]) a serious decline can be noted here. In addition, an increase can be seen in terms of private forms of support, especially increasingly reliance on private donors and foundations and, to a lesser extent, companies. This confirms the suggestions made by Kinsbergen and Molthof (2021) that, following the disappearance of national government and development organisations' policies on public support and global citizenship from 2010 onwards, there has been a strong decrease in interaction between Dutch CIGS, the government and established development organisations. In chapter 6, we further analyse this difference and between the consequences.

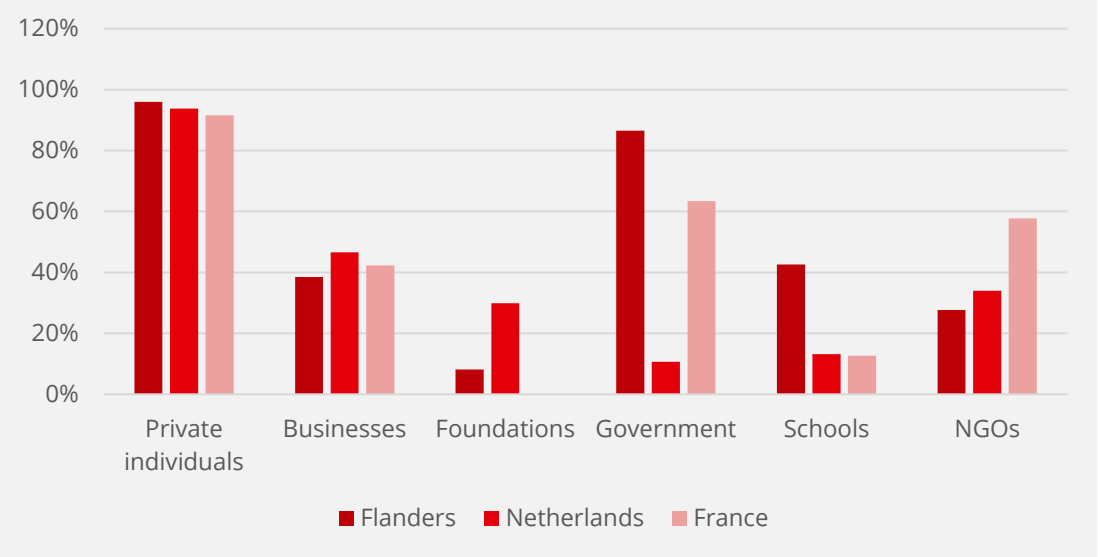

Figure 3.5 Frequency of different budget sources of CIGS (% of sample)

CIGS with younger members tend to rely less on private donors. Instead, they report receiving funding from companies more and more often, a source that, over the years, was rather insignificant for CIGS in general. As we zoom in on the three countries, we see an opposite trend in Flanders, where there are CIGS with older members receiving more funds from companies. In France, no significant differences were observed between funding of CIGS with younger or older members.

It is important to note that the type of donors CIGS work with seems to relate both to organisational characteristics and activities of CIGS (both in the Global South and North). We note that CIGS that worked with

[18] In France, government support runs through both NGOs and local governments (i.e., cities, municipalities and provinces). Public funding for Flemish CIGS mainly runs through local governments.

foundations to acquire funding usually had higher budgets than those funded through other resources – this was observed both in the Netherlands and Flanders.

Secondly, CIGS that receive a large portion of their funding from NGOs monitor and evaluate their projects more often. Similarly, the focus on activities of CIGS in the Global North is also significantly different across countries, but this is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

3.2.4. Informal nature

Beside their small-scale and voluntary character, it is their informal nature that distinguishes CIGS from other development organisations. CIGS are generally thought to be wary of red tape and proud of their small-scale, voluntary nature and people-to-people approach (Appe & Schnable, 2019). While this tendency is present among CIGS in all three countries, we find interesting differences when it comes to levels of formalisation. Dutch CIGS are the most formalised; more Dutch CIGS (75.3%) have a policy plan than Flemish (51.2%) and French (51.9%) CIGS. Similarly, more Dutch (89.9%) and French (92.2%) CIGS publish an annual report than Flemish ones (66.3%). These differences follow from different legal structures, rules and regulations, which are discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

4 CIGS in the Global North: how policy matters

In this chapter, we zoom in on the type of activities conducted by CIGS in the Global North and explore the rationale underlying these activities.

4.1 Activities in the Global North: what and why?

In most European countries that have a support system for CIGS, a public support agenda has been identified as a key driver for government (national or local) and/or established NGOs to build a relationship with CIGS (Pollet, 2014). As part of this rationale, CIGS are considered grassroot initiatives that are strongly embedded in local communities in the global north and are therefore expected to reach out to a larger number of citizens, inform them on and involve them in activities related to international development. It is not always clear to what extent CIGS align with this rationale and consider undertaking activities that go beyond fundraising in their contexts in the Global North to be of importance and, if they do, for what reason they do so. Therefore, in this section, we explore what type of activities CIGS undertake in the Global North, why they do it and if there are significant contextual differences between initiatives in France, Flanders and the Netherlands.

4.1.1 Types of activities

The type of activities that CIGS organise 'in their own backyard' varies widely, from art expositions to lectures at primary schools. Building on previous studies (see, for example, Kinsbergen and Schulpen, 2010; Develtere and de Bruyn, 2009 IOB, 2008, p. 53), we distinguish between direct and indirect activities. Direct activities allow for mutual interaction between the public and the CIGS. Examples are guest lectures, debates and information meetings. Indirect activities, such as newsletters, social media campaigns and interviews with the media, provide more one-way interactions, with CIGS informing their audience.

When questioned about the type of activities organised by CIGS in our sample[19], the most common answers included newsletters (71.1%), fundraisers (62.6%) and information meetings about the work of the CIGS (59.7%). Table 4.1 provides a summary of activities organised across countries (Figure 4.1 summarises these results as well)[20].

A close observation of the data shows some interesting comparisons across the countries. For example, fewer Dutch CIGS organise discussions and debates compared to French and Flemish initiatives. On the other hand, Dutch CIGS appear in more media interviews than the other two countries. Similarly, the percentage of indirect activities (including newsletters, media interviews and online campaigns) is lowest in France, while Dutch and Flemish CIGS rely heavily on these activities to interact with local communities. Flemish CIGS were more actively involved in online campaigns and in organising information stands at markets and fairs to reach out to the locals. When it comes to direct activities, French CIGS organise guest lectures most frequently, while information meetings and information stands are most popular among Dutch and Flemish CIGS respectively. In comparison, newsletters were the most common indirect activity across CIGS in all three countries.

When looking at the data, we observed that fewer CIGS with young members and fewer diaspora organisations reported having published a newsletter than organisations with older members and non-diaspora organisations[21].

	Netherlands	Flanders	France	Total
Direct activity				
Fundraiser	60.9[a]	70.1[a]	59.1[a]	**62.6**
Info meeting - organisation's activities	61.7[a]	59.2[a,b]	45.5[b]	**59.7**
Info stand	43.8[a]	74.1[b]	48.5[a]	**50.3**
Guest lecture	41.8[a]	34.7[a]	59.1[b]	**42**
Info meeting - developmental themes	15.6[a]	17.3[a]	15.2[a]	**16.8**

[19] We asked participants to mention activities they undertook before 2019, when COVID-19 significantly impacted their activities in the Global North.
[20] We prefer to discuss the results in the tabular form in our analysis in order to show the significant differences across countries based on a 95% confidence interval.
[21] Members of French CIGS are younger and more often diaspora, which might result in a bias due to some overlap between groups.

Debate	8.6[a]	14.3[a,b]	19.7[b]	**10.7**
Indirect activity				
Website	97.5[a]	80[b]	75.3[b]	**91.8**
Newsletter	74.9[a]	70.7[a]	42.4[b]	**71.1**
Interview media	52.7[b]	40.1[a]	34.8[a]	**48.6**
Online campaign	36.8[a]	41.5[a]	27.3[a]	**36.9**

Table 4.1 Percentage of CIGS that organised an activity in the Global North, for each country separately. [a, b,] Each subscript letter denotes a subset of version categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level. The results have been computed using the Crosstabs function in SPSS. For example, for the category of guest lecture, both the Netherlands and Flanders are significantly different from France. Similarly, for the category debate, the Netherlands is significantly different from France, and Flanders is not different from France and the Netherlands.

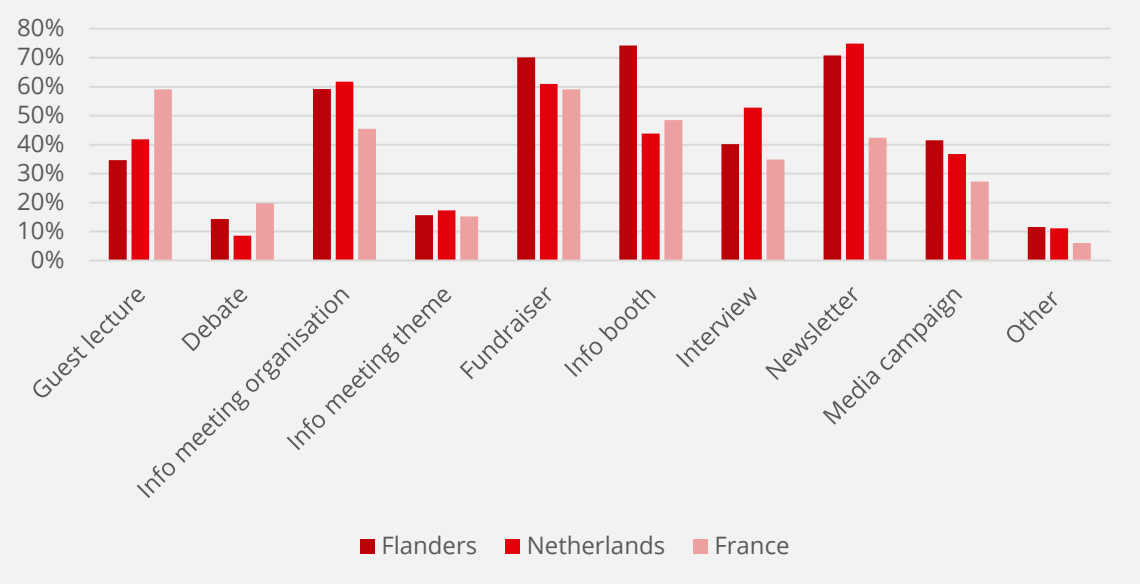

Figure 4.1 Percentage of CIGS that organised an activity in the Global North, for each country separately[22].

It is interesting to note the sharp decline in the overall number of Dutch CIGS organising activities in the Netherlands between 2008 and 2021. The significant decrease in the percentage of Dutch CIGS that organised discussions or debates from 41.4% in 2008 to 8.6% in 2021 is particularly striking.

[22] "Fundraisers" in the list include a variety of activities including (but not limited to) African dance evenings, cooking workshops, and sportive fundraisers such as bike trips.

Indirect activities – such as media interviews – also decreased significantly from roughly 66% to 52%, as can be seen in Figure 4.2. Although care is required in making causal statements, our longitudinal data suggests a strong relation between the absence of a public support policy in the Netherlands and the decreasing public presence of CIGS in the Netherlands.

As described in Chapter 3, Dutch CIGS started to rely more strongly on other donors – such as private foundations – which, unlike established NGOs used to do, do not require activities like public debates and information meetings on development themes/topics. Due to the lack of data, no similar systematic comparison can be made for France or Flanders. However, based on our data, it is safe to assume that no such changes have taken place in these countries, and that the changes observed in our data for the Netherlands reflect country-specific developments.

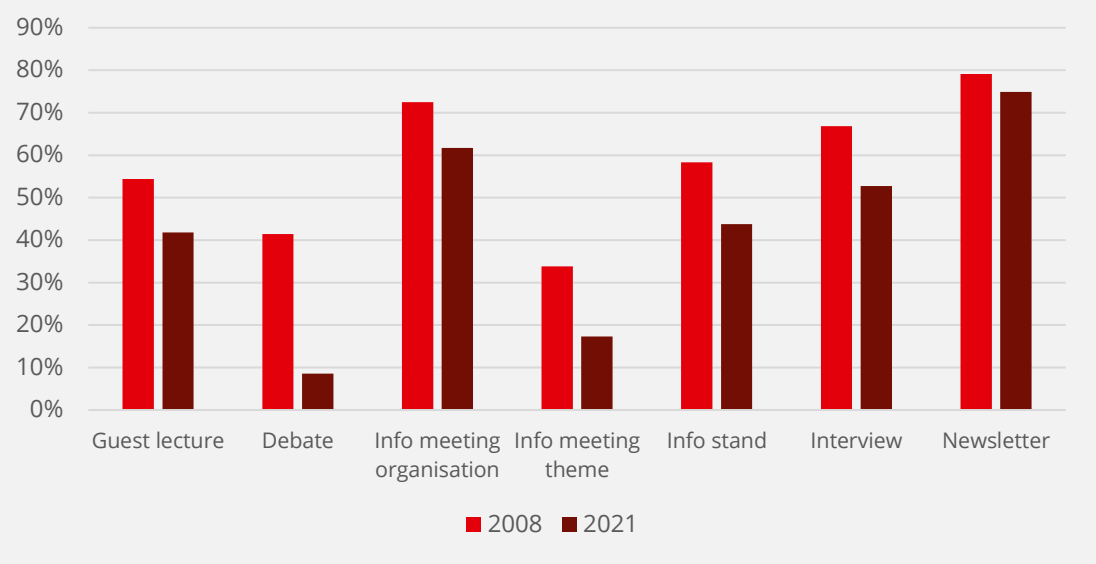

Figure 4.2 Percentage of Dutch CIGS that organised activities in the Global North, 2008–2021

4.1.2 Reasons for (not) organising activities in the Global North

Nearly all survey participants reported finding it (very) important to inform people about the development intervention of the CIGS (96.7%), to inform people about the problems faced worldwide (91.1%) and to convince people of the work of the organisation (91.3%) by organising activities in the Global North. Overall, the majority of focus group participants agreed that CIGS should consider it one of their core tasks to contribute to awareness raising. Interestingly, we find that Flemish and French CIGS are more motivated to increase general interest in and awareness of their audience regarding development cooperation through their activities than Dutch CIGS (see Table 4.2). Only 31.8% of Dutch focus group discussion participants considered awareness raising to be one of their core tasks, compared to 67.5% and 76.9% of Flemish and French CIGS respectively (see Figure 4.2).

"Raising awareness among the youth here, it's about the SDGs, it's about the climate, it's about everything. That's hugely important." (Founder Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion)

"Sharing one's experience and sharing all that one can encounter in the countries of the South, it must be done, especially with young people."
(Member French CIGS, focus group discussion)

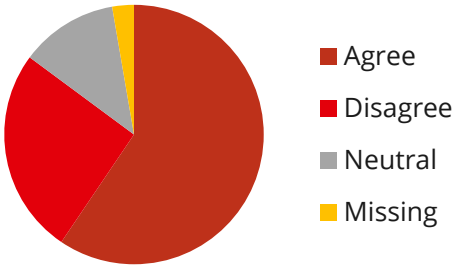

Figure 4.3 Opinion of FGD participants on awareness raising as core activity

Participants who disagreed with the statement (25.7%) or felt unsure about it (12.7%) often explained that the limited resources (time and money) at disposition of their CIGS should be spend on its actual *raison d'être,* which they consider to be supporting development activities.

However, several participants in the focus groups pointed out that even if raising awareness of problems in the Global South was not their (main) goal, they often did it anyway when talking about their work and/or raising funds.

"We have to profile ourselves so that you know who I am, that I am more than this Senegalese on television, that I have more to offer, that I know more, that I can do more. We are responsible to show the other side of our country because there are too many clichés." (Member Flemish diaspora CIGS, focus group discussion)

"Yes, fundraising always has the aspect that if you don't tell people what you do, you don't get anything. So you have to tell about what you are doing, you have to inspire people [...], and there is a bit of knowledge transfer in that, but that is not your main goal." (Member of Dutch CIGS)

"It is [raising awareness] more of a sub-product than a goal [...]. The mission is not to educate the North but to support the South." (Member French CIGS, focus group discussion).

"We agree that it is an essential mission [to raise awareness], but compared to the rest, it is given little time."
(Member French CIGS, focus group discussion)

For diaspora CIGS, organising activities in the Global North has additional reason compared to non-diaspora organisations. They considered it important to provide people in the Global North with a more comprehensive image of their country or culture of origin.

A founder of one of the Flemish diaspora CIGS, for example, explained how he considered founders of diaspora organisations to be "ambassadors of their country [of origin]". He also described how organising cultural events in Flanders can be a way for members of diaspora CIGS to integrate in the host country.

Generally, CIGS mention how organising activities is also conditional on most subsidy schemes of NGOs or government institutions. In line with what we discussed in Section 4.1.1, compared to Dutch CIGS, Flemish and French CIGS organise activities in the Global North as part of subsidy arrangements more frequently. Flemish CIGS receiving (mostly local) government funds organise more fundraisers, meaning many of them are found at fairs or markets and they publish newsletters more often. Similarly, a CIGS support organisation in the Netherlands that provides financial support to CIGS requires them to "encourage civic engagement among its supporters for international cooperation through communication, fundraising and education activities" (Wilde Ganzen foundation, 2022).

Indeed, we find that Dutch CIGS who receive funding from support organisations (Wilde Ganzen foundation or Vastenactie) organise more direct activities in the Netherlands – such as fundraisers and information meetings or stands – than CIGS who do not receive funding from support organisations. They are also more likely to set up social media campaigns.

Younger people are observed to be less inclined to engage in activities that consist of convincing people about the importance of development cooperation. Interestingly, when asked during the focus group discussions who the CIGS (aim to) reach with their activities; many mentioned that their activities targeted children or youngsters. Besides that, most activities reach the personal and/or professional networks of the CIGS members. Participants frequently mentioned that it was difficult to reach people outside of their own networks.

	Flanders	Netherlands	France
General interest			
Informing people about the problems people face worldwide	3.55[a]	3.25[b]	3.47[a]
Convincing people of the importance of international development in general	3.48[a]	3.12[b]	3.47[a]

Getting people to give more money to international cooperation in general	3.08[a]	2.90[b]	2.93[a,b]
Getting people to become actively involved in international development	3.16[a]	2.86[b]	3.22[a]
Organisational interest			
informing people about what the organisation is doing in the field of international development	3.62[a]	3.47[b]	3.64[a]
Convincing people of the importance of the work of the organisation	3.35[a,b]	3.24[a]	3.42[b]
Getting people to give more money to the organisation	3.37[a]	3.35[a]	3.29[a]
Subsidy			
The activities are a condition for obtaining subsidy	2.59[b]	2.04[a]	2.29[a]

Table 4.2 Importance of goals of activities organised in the Global North[1].

4.2 How policy matters

In the data above, we noted interesting contextual differences between CIGS in different countries when it comes to their role in the Global North. Although caution is required in interpretation, the data nonetheless consistently suggests a relation between the presence of established NGO and government policy on public support and the 'what and why' of CIGS activities in the Global North. The longitudinal data from the Netherlands is very supportive in affirming this relation, since national policy in this area has changed significantly. This is reflected in changes in the donors CIGS work with, changes in terms of the number of activities organised in the Global North and significant differences in the role CIGS play when it comes to strengthening public support.

The public support agenda has been one of the key drivers in the relationship between traditional actors and CIGS across Europe (Pollet, 2014). As discussed in 4.1, this agenda is built on the assumption that, because CIGS are strongly embedded in local communities in the Global North, they can reach a large and partly 'unconverted' or unconvinced part of the community in relation to international co-operation. Hence, it is assumed that strong public support policy can result in higher levels of public interest and belief in the importance of development cooperation in general, which could result in people becoming actively engaged.

Interviews with key informants showed that there is relatively strong global citizenship policy in Flanders and France and that CIGS are considered an important vehicle for this. Driven by this agenda, CIGS are supported by established organisations in both countries (see Section 3.3) and incentivised to strengthen public support. In a call for proposals, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) specifically states that microprojects are the right medium for engaging youth in France.

CIGS applying for funding from the provinces of East Flanders and West Flanders, for example, are assessed based on (among other things) their contribution to public support for development cooperation.

> "What they [CIGS] are better at than NGOs is taking their supporters along and creating support. NGOs should be grateful to CIGS for this creation of support and involvement." (Key Informant, Flanders)

> "4th pillars[23] are interwoven in the social system and can create awareness here and reach different groups than the other pillars." (Project officer province, Flanders)

Similarly, Dutch CIGS also used to be supported (financially and otherwise) by established organisations (as observed in Figure 3.7) because of the importance attached to public support for international cooperation. Since 2010, however, the attention for this public support rationale has vanished. As a result, CIGS are no longer part of Dutch policy agenda (see Kinsbergen & Molthof, 2021, for an elaborate overview of policy changes), resulting in a strong decrease in financial support from NGOs.

In response to the reduced financial support from development actors, and in combination with their increasingly bureaucratic approach, Dutch CIGS successfully sought alternative (often private) donors such as private foundations and, although to a lesser extent, companies (see Kinsbergen & Molthof, 2021, and Section 3.3 of this report). For these donors, contributing to public support is not an objective. As a result, Dutch CIGS are less incentivised to make efforts in this area.

Both representatives of Dutch CIGS and experts in the field of international development expressed worries about the disappearance of the public support policy and its negative effects on the level of public support for development cooperation in the Netherlands. One member of a Dutch CIGS reported that they did 'not […] waste any more time' interacting with the public, as people did not seem to be interested in international development. Other participants presented similar views.

[23] In Flanders, CIGS are also referred to as 4th pillar organisations.

> “I do think that solidarity and awareness have declined. Look, you used to have quite inspired ministers [...] and the newspapers published more about it. We have of course also changed as the Netherlands. Dutch society has a more neoliberal model now.” (member Dutch CIGS, focus group discussion)

> “You can spread this [information] here, but my experience is that it has very little effect. [...] I once gave a lecture in a church and then you think 'well this will make people enthusiastic'. But no... not one response. And that’s what I notice a lot.” (member Dutch CIGS, focus group discussion)

This suggests that reduced levels of public support for development cooperation among Dutch citizens might also be reflected in the declining number of people starting their own CIGS. While increasing the number of people starting their own CIGS has not been an explicit goal of public support policy in the Netherlands, Flanders and France, it could be seen as one of the areas where the strength of public involvement in international development can be noted. This finding is corroborated by the fact that, in Flanders and France where there is a stronger belief in CIGS as vehicles of public support which has made them very present in the public sphere, an increase in growth in the number of CIGS was observed over the past five years. Although it is not possible to prove a causal relation, this could be considered a reflection of how support for CIGS contributes to public enthusiasm for development aid, which is further expressed in the number of people starting their own initiatives.

5 CIGS in the Global South

This underlying study focused mainly on the identity of CIGS and their role and position in the Global North. The data also allows us to present a brief overview of the activities that CIGS undertake in the Global South. This will be discussed in more detail in upcoming research.

5.1 Where do CIGS work?

Figure 5.1 shows the ten most popular project countries of CIGS for each of the participating countries. Most of the CIGS in our sample operate on the African continent. The three most popular countries for Dutch CIGS are Kenya (n=94), Uganda (n=68) and Ghana (n=57). Flemish CIGS can mostly be found in Congo Kinshasa (n=26), Kenya (n=16) and Senegal (n=15). Burkina Faso (n=18), Senegal (n=12) and Benin / Cameroon / Madagascar / Morocco (n=11) are most popular among French CIGS.

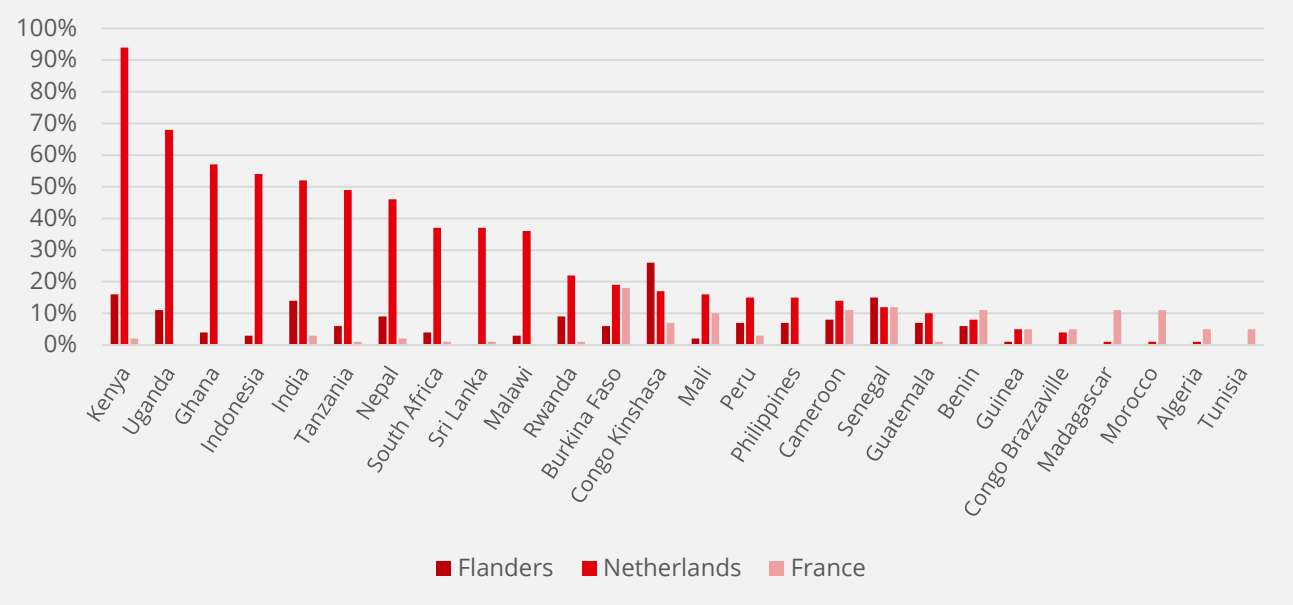

Figure 5.1 Top ten project countries

Looking at the top ten countries where CIGS from France, Flanders and the Netherlands chose to work, we can observe that they are mostly focused on the African continent with 18 African countries making it to the top ten destinations chosen by the CIGS in our sample. This is followed by Asia (five countries) while only two the countries in Latin America are a focal point for these CIGS.

Interestingly, Dutch CIGS seem to be more focused on English-speaking countries while Flemish and French CIGS usually seem to opt for French speaking countries with whom they also have a colonial history with.

5.2 What do CIGS do?

There is a large variety in interventions that CIGS undertake: from installing solar panels to starting community banks, from assisting orphanages to supporting peace processes. However, a closer look at the interventions shows that across the three countries, a large majority of CIGS (68.3%) aim to contribute to direct poverty reduction through interventions that aim to improve access to basic services (Figure 5.2). These interventions can be typified by what Korten (1987, 1990) defines as "first-generation strategies". In these cases, CIGS respond to immediate, often visible and mostly basic needs. CIGS do so especially in the field of education (80.7%) and health care (52.9%). The results show that Flemish CIGS invest more in access to basic services than Dutch CIGS, who tend to also focus on improving the position of disadvantaged groups. Interestingly, for CIGS from all three countries, the focus on participation in political decision-making and in conflict prevention and peace building activities is almost negligible (as is clear from Figure 5.2) French CIGS invest more in the development of the local economy compared to Dutch and Flemish CIGS.

We also observed from our data that CIGS with young members invest less in improving access to basic services than CIGS with older members. Instead, they opt for a more diversified portfolio of activities (based on the categorisation mentioned in Figure 5.2).

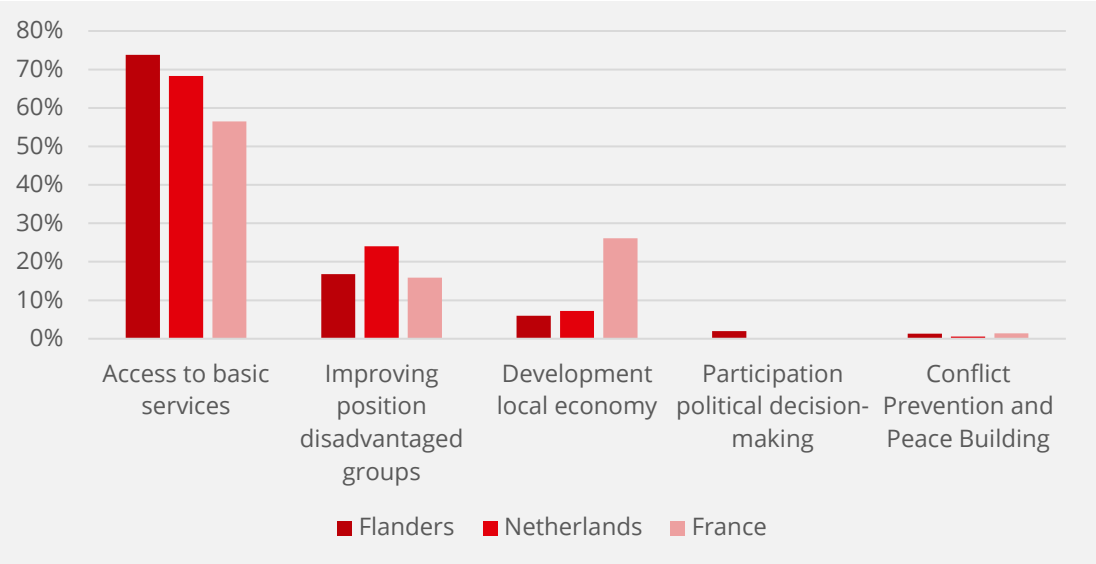

Figure 5.2 Intervention strategy (%)

When looking at the type activities CIGS invest in (Figure 5.3), we see a strong focus on education, healthcare and water and sanitation projects. In line with Figure 5.2 on intervention strategies, relatively few CIGS undertake activities that directly aim to promote political awareness or peace building; rather, most CIGS opt for more tangible projects where outcomes can be physically observed.

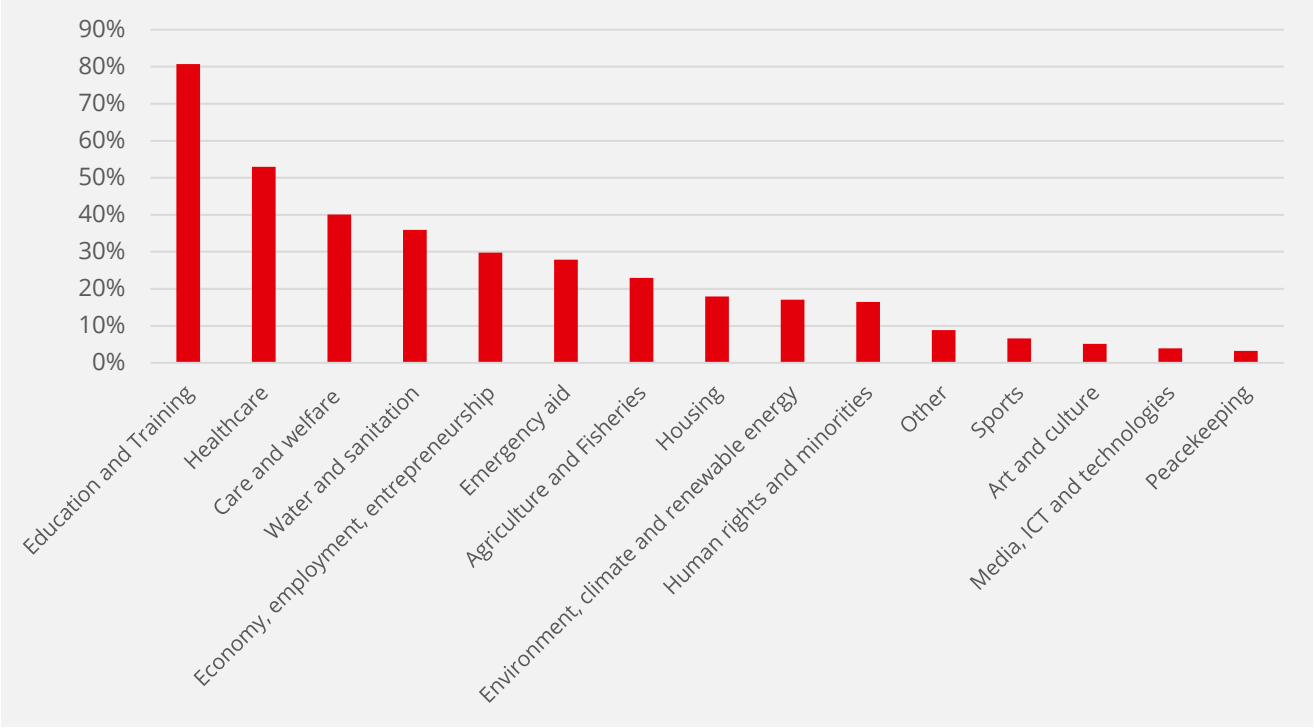

Figure 5.3 Thematic orientation of interventions (%)

Similar to CIGS responding to some donor's conditions to invest in public support activities, a similar influence of wishes, preferences and preconditions can be noted when it comes to development interventions. Being careful again with claiming a causal relation, it is notable that CIGS that receive funding from private individuals, companies and schools are more likely to invest in access to basic services and less likely to invest in conflict prevention, development of the local economy and improving the position of disadvantaged groups than CIGS who do not rely on these types of donors. Other examples are that CIGS that rely on government funding (national or local) invest more in salaries and the development of local organisations and initiatives funded by schools are more likely to invest in materials, such as teaching aids.

6 Positioning in the field: how rules and regulations matter

In this chapter, we aim to understand the position of CIGS in the field of international development in the Global North by looking at their interactions with other, more 'established' actors in the field, such as governments (national and local) and larger NGOs, and by examining the rules and regulations CIGS have to adhere to. To get a good understanding of the three different contexts, each of the following three sections focuses on one country.

6.1 Netherlands

We find that a large group of CIGS operate in almost complete isolation from the Dutch government and Dutch NGOs.

> "[...] we actually have very little contact with the government or development organisations or umbrella organisations. [...] we might want that, but the initiative must always come from our side. It will never come from the government." (Member Dutch CIGS, focus group discussion)

Several representatives of Dutch CIGS indicated being comfortable with this 'outsider' position: "We are not at all waiting for recognition from larger organisations. Because we simply know our place [...]. So let's just do our work at our level" (member Dutch CIGS). These participants indicated that they did not believe in or aim for collaborations with more established NGOs, mainly because of their different visions and approaches. Others, however, reported that they did not feel as if they were taken seriously or acknowledged by established actors. These feelings were mainly fuelled by the lack of (financial) support for small initiatives from the Dutch government and NGOs (see sections 3.3 and 4.2 for a more detailed discussion), but also by the fact that they were rarely approached by Dutch NGOs for collaborations.

> "As a volunteer organisation you are not always taken seriously. They think: 'they only do something on the side'. They are mistaken about the drive [...] to do those things, unpaid." (Member Dutch CIGS, focus group discussion)

> "It is often said that 'it's nice that those clubs [CIGS] exist'. But the system in which the money also partly runs through CIGS... that policy no longer exists. We used to have that, but it's all gone." (Member Dutch CIGS, focus group discussion)

It becomes clear that it was a case of mutual disengagement between CIGS and established organisations: CIGS explain how fewer funding opportunities, an increasingly bureaucratic approach and insisting on professionalisation pushed them away from established organisations.

NGO representatives, on the other hand, mentioned that the focus of CIGS on service delivery in the Global South was less and less aligned with the vision and strategy of NGOs, who are increasingly concerned with lobbying and advocacy (also based on the demands from the ministry). NGOs focus more on transcending global issues, such as climate, taxation, migration and the broad framework of the SDGs, which tend to be less in line with the work of CIGS, who work with more physical investments like construction, infrastructure development and the like (see Section 5.2 for a detailed discussion). Moreover, NGO representatives described how the push for decolonising aid and the promotion of localisation agenda has led to a tendency among NGOs to collaborate directly with organisations in the Global South instead of supporting initiatives in the Global North.

At the same time, while experiencing little support from established organisations, Dutch CIGS are under tremendous scrutiny. According to Partin, the branch organisation for CIGS in the Netherlands, "volunteers suffer from unnecessary over-regulation"[24] and a "tsunami of rules and regulations". This starts with the process of registering as CIGS. Unlike France and Flanders, in the Netherlands, it is not possible for CIGS to act formally without any form of registration. The most accessible and unavoidable step for CIGS is to register at the chamber of commerce. Registration as a '*Stichting*' (foundation) or '*Vereniging*' (association) is done by a notary and costs around 350 EUR. Registration requires CIGS to formulate an objective, form a board and formalise roles and positions in the organisation. It is virtually impossible for CIGS to operate without this registration, and research has shown that nearly all Dutch CIGS are registered with the Chamber of Commerce (Kinsbergen, Koch & Troost, 2021).

The next step for Dutch CIGS is to register as public benefit organisations, referred to in Dutch as '*Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling*' (ANBI). An important reason to register as an ANBIs are tax advantages: people who donate to an ANBI can deduct their gifts from their income tax. This step is also taken by most CIGS as many institutional donor request this. Nearly all (95%) CIGS in our sample hold this status. CIGS obtained the ANBI status a median number of two years after their first activity in international development. Having a policy plan and publishing an annual report are required for Dutch CIGS wanting to register as a public benefit organisation, explaining the high percentage of CIGS from our sample 'ticking these boxes'.

[24] https://partin.nl/stop-onnodige-regeldruk-voor-vrijwilligers-in-besturen-petitie/

Furthermore, once the initiative is running, CIGS face the mandatory[25] registration in the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) register and severe challenges in opening a bank account or transferring money because of the (expected) risk of money laundering or terrorist financing. This 'over-regulation' of the sector makes it increasingly difficult, and sometimes even impossible, for small initiatives to operate while considering their voluntary and informal nature[26].

6.2 Flanders

More than Dutch initiatives, Flemish CIGS receive support from established organisations such as local governments.[27]. This support is partly driven by a public support agenda (see Section 4.2 for a detailed discussion). Other reasons mentioned by NGOs and representatives of local governments for collaborating with or supporting CIGS are the large numbers of volunteers active in these small initiatives and municipal politicians wanting to support citizens in their activities.

Overall, CIGS consider the funding options available for small initiatives to be sufficient. Even so, opinions differed when it came to how CIGS representatives value the position of CIGS in the broader field of international development in Flanders. Some participants expressed concerns about an observed shift in responsibilities regarding international cooperation from the provinces to the lower-level municipalities, as they noticed that municipalities have less budget and available time to support CIGS compared to the provinces. Several FGD participants were also worried about the observed shift to the political right in Flemish politics, which has already resulted in less support for CIGS in several municipalities. Another participant, however, experienced that "the provinces [had] opened the doors to CIGS over the past years" (member Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion).

The differing experiences can likely be attributed to the fact that public funding for CIGS in Flanders is decentralised, mainly running through the provinces and municipalities. Hence, the amount of (and conditions for obtaining) public funding and support available for CIGS differs considerably by region and relates to the political voice and structures in that area[28].

Despite the support available to Flemish CIGS, the majority of Flemish FGD participants (60%) reported desiring more recognition from established actors for their work.

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[25] This has been made mandatory to prevent financial and economic crimes, such as money laundering, financing terrorism, tax fraud and corruption.
[26] We present the current state of rules and regulations in the Netherlands. Policies can be subject to change.
[27] See Section 3.3 for a detailed overview of revenue sources.
[28] As mentioned under Methodology, CIGS from East Flanders and West Flanders are overrepresented in the sample. The small number of participants from other provinces makes an extensive comparison between provinces statistically impossible. This could result in a (positive) bias of the findings as these provinces are currently known the be the most supportive of CIGS.

The first and most important reason for this is that CIGS consider (administrative) demands from established actors, such as monitoring and evaluation requirements and application procedures for funding to be unrealistically complicated or burdensome. Several FGD respondents claimed that support organisations demanded too much paperwork for small subsidies, which they considered to reflect a lack of recognition for the small-scale and voluntary nature of CIGS.

> "We have to put in more effort to get €2000 than they (NGOs) do to get €4000, which is just given to them." (Member Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion)

> "It is hard when we have to write proposals of thousands of words." (Member Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion)

We find that many support programmes and subsidy schemes for CIGS are designed to stimulate the professionalisation of CIGS and to improve the quality of their projects in the Global South. For example, 11.11.11[29] noted that "strengthening the quality of projects in the South [of CIGS], with a focus on sustainability, equal partnership and shared ownership" would be one of the main challenges for CIGS in the coming ten years (11.11.11/4de Pijlersteunpunt, 2020). Key informants from CIGS support organisations recognised how the focus of established organisations on professionalisation and quality improvement could result in unrealistic demands for small initiatives. They considered high administrative demands to be especially problematic for diaspora organisations and observed that, although some of the Flemish provinces and 11.11.11 are making considerable efforts to connect with / support CIGS from the diaspora, the issue of bureaucracy is at odds with the objective to support these organisations.

To counteract this issue, CIGS representatives expressed a desire for lower administrative demands and for support from established organisations in filling out paperwork (e.g. when applying for funding).

Second, focus group discussions and interviews with representatives from NGOs revealed that there is little cooperation between NGOs and CIGS in Flanders. Experts mainly attribute this to the fact that NGOs do not receive public funds to grant subsidies to CIGS, which means that support for CIGS comes at the expense of their own programmes. Consequently, CIGS and NGOs tend to view each other as competitors (for donors) rather than (potential) partners.

> "I think that the NGOs had to interpret us in the beginning… which is still far from [being recognised]. 'They take donors from our pool', I think that was certainly the first concern of large organisations." (Member Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion)

[29] 11.11.11 is a coalition of North-South established NGOs, unions, movements and various solidarity groups in Flanders.

> "They [NGOs] see us as rivals." (Member Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion).

It was also mentioned in the focus group discussions and interviews how prejudices of NGOs towards CIGS and vice versa can get in the way of collaboration. Like in the Netherlands, some CIGS reported feeling criticised or looked down on by NGOs for (expected) amateurism and naivety, while they themselves condemned NGOs for their overhead costs and inefficient approaches. Consequently, NGOs and CIGS merely exist 'side by side' without much interaction or collaboration. Despite these prejudices, the large majority of CIGS representatives would value an increase in cooperation between small and big initiatives, as well as among small initiatives, as this could lead to the exchange of knowledge and experiences and, ultimately, bigger impact. Moreover, they mentioned that one way to get more recognition would be through support in the exchange of knowledge with other actors active in the same region or same development theme.

Despite these issues, experts in the field observed a positive trend regarding the position of CIGS in the Flemish sector of international development. The first step in this shift was the establishment of a focal point for CIGS (4de Pijlersteunpunt), which provides small initiatives with advice, training, network events and, since 2017, limited funding (11.11.11/4de Pijlersteunpunt, 2020). The focal point has been integrated into 11.11.11[30], which has resulted in the CIGS having their own seat at the table within the development community.

> "I do feel that there is a positive evolution going on. I share the opinion that I think that there is not much interest [in CIGS] from the federal government, but what I have experienced is that with the support centre [4de Pijlersteunpunt], we do have an umbrella organisation that puts in a lot of effort to give the fourth pillars a face and a voice." (Member Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion)

> "Now the third and fourth pillar are equally next to each other within 11.11.11." (Member Flemish CIGS, focus group discussion).

Furthermore, Belgian law is more receptive for small scale initiatives compared to the Dutch legal system. In Flanders, CIGS can (and often do) operate without any registration or legal personality as a '*de facto association*', or '*feitelijke vereniging*' in Dutch. A de facto association has no obligation to publish any documents or draw up statutes. One third (33.1%) of the Flemish CIGS from our sample operated in this manner. This also explains why fewer Flemish CIGS have policy plans or publish annual reports. The other option for Flemish CIGS is to register as non-profit associations (66.3%), referred to as a '*Vereniging zonder Winstuitkeringk*' (VZW) in Dutch. A VZW has its own legal personality separate from that of its members.

[30] 11.11.11 is a coalition of North-South established NGOs, unions, movements, and various solidarity groups in Flanders

An important reason to obtain the VZW status is that it allows organisations, after several years of experience, to apply for certification to issue tax certificates. There are no additional costs associated with registering the CIGS, the only cost is for publication in the Belgian Official Gazette which is €135 and €190 approximately. The CIGS from our sample obtained this status a median number of two years after their first activity. Holding VZW status comes with several obligations, such as publishing an annual report, organising an annual general meeting and registration in the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) register. It does not require CIGS to have a policy plan.

6.3 France

The support French CIGS receive from established development actors (see Section 3.3) is partly driven by a belief that CIGS can contribute to the general interest in and awareness of development cooperation in general (see Section 4.2 for a detailed discussion). Different from the Netherlands and Flanders, the French federal government also explicitly values the work of CIGS in the Global South. In a call for proposals, the AFD recognises the strong potential of small initiatives to respond to the needs expressed by people in the Global South. Their close partnership with southern organisations is believed to allow CIGS to innovate and experiment in the field.

Our data shows that members of French CIGS felt strongly supported by established actors, specifically by local governments, NGOs (e.g. La Guilde) and other network and support organisations (e.g. FORIM). As described in chapter 3, French CIGS can apply for grants to local governments and specific NGOs.

> "There is a willingness on the part of these bodies to finance micro-projects like ours" (member French CIGS, focus group discussion).

As in Flanders, French government support for CIGS is decentralised and the amount of support available for small initiatives therefore depends on local political tendencies. In regions where far right political influence is stronger, local governments are reluctant to have strong connections with African countries (key informant, interview). In some cases, the support available for CIGS is also dependent on the personal preferences of the head of the local department (key informant, interview).

According to a staff member from a support organisation for CIGS, the French government considers support for CIGS as a means to achieving the SDGs since they believe that smaller organisations like CIGS can reach regions in the Global South that larger NGOs might not be able to. On the local level, part of the reason to support CIGS is to help them internationalise and build relationships with other stakeholders and territories, which could open new, international markets for the French government. According to this interviewee, authorities might also support CIGS to show the public that they want to be part of the transition to a more sustainable and fairer world.

Overall, members of French CIGS reported collaborating with NGOs more often than Dutch and Flemish CIGS. France is the only country where several participants reported being approached by NGOs for collaborations and vice versa. This can be partially attributed to a funding scheme of Agence Française de Développement (AFD), which encourages partnerships between larger and smaller associations. In their call for proposals, AFD states that they "want to promote the communication and cooperation between the small initiatives and the rest of the field, partially through this funding" (AFD, 2019).

Furthermore, just as in Flanders, the law in France allows citizens to start a small, informal initiatives without any form of registration. Any group of people can start an association under the *Association Loi 1901.* Such associations are not obliged to be legally declared but if the association wants to, for example, open a bank account, collect membership fees or arrange fundraising, it must become an *Association Declarée*. Declaration is free of charge and can be done online. This requires members to draw up statutes and formalise roles and positions in the organisation, but it does not require CIGS to write policy plans or publish annual reports. As a next step, French CIGS can be recognised as being of public utility, referred to as an *Association reconnue d'utilité publique (ARUP)* in French. Several conditions must be met to be recognised as such, like having a minimum annual budget of 46,000 EUR, having at least 200 members, operating in a democratic manner and adhering to other principles set by the association[31]. Almost 25% of French CIGS in our sample hold ARUP status.

On the other hand, similar to Flanders, a strong professionalisation agenda and focus on quality improvement of projects in the Global South can be observed in France. For example, AFD states in a call for proposals that there is a need for small initiatives to professionalise to be able to cooperate and participate in the field of international solidarity. This not only includes streamlining procedures but also training and orientation for professionalisation of HR practices. Corroborating this finding, an interviewee explained that the demand from donors for competencies and techniques is much higher than before because donors have become more and more result-oriented in their projects (key informant, interview). Since most CIGS have limited permanent staff and rely more on volunteers, it is difficult for them to meet these requirements. During the focus group discussions, many members of French CIGS considered such demanding application and reporting procedures to reflect a lack of recognition for small initiatives with limited capacities. It gave them the impression that the established actors preferred large-scale projects and that there is insufficient support and recognition for new, small and/or informal initiatives: "we don't need to be doctors without borders to do things. We can also make things happen at our own level" (member French CIGS, focus group discussion, 2022).

[31] We did not find any information on the costs involved with registering as a public utility.

A key informant also observed a shift of the local governments away from micro-projects and toward larger multi-stakeholder projects. Thus, while the threshold for starting an initiative might be low in France, the conditions for funding are quite complex, putting CIGS at a disadvantage compared to bigger NGOs that usually have paid staff for writing funding applications.

7 In conclusion: a cross-country typology

While CIGS across Flanders, France and the Netherlands clearly share a common identity that distinguishes them from other, more established development actors, our data shows significant and interesting cross-country differences in terms of their organisational characteristics, their roles in the Global North and their positions in the field of international development. We see differences, not only across countries, but also between other groups of CIGS, for example between CIGS with a diaspora background and non-diaspora CIGS and between CIGS with younger members and CIGS with older members. In this final chapter, we highlight the most important cross-country differences and bring together the two key explanatory factors.

Table 7.1 presents the distinctions between the countries in key areas, providing a typology of CIGS in each of the participating countries.

	Flanders	Netherlands	France
Identity			
(Changes in) no. of CIGS	Significant increase, specifically diaspora	Significant decrease	Steadily increasing, Largest share of diaspora
Size (budget / no. of members)	Medium sized (in terms of budget and number of members)	Large budgets, few members	Small budgets, many members
Formalisation	Still informal, but push for professionalisation	Most formal character	Still informal, but push for professionalisation
Budget sources	Public (schools, local government)	Private (companies, foundations)	Public (NGOs, local government)

Members and Founders	Men and women equally represented Middle aged members	Least female members Middle aged members	Most female founders Most members with migration background Youngest members
Role in the Global North			
Motivation	Strongly motivated to contribute to public support for international development through activities Incentivized by donors	Least importance to contributing to public support. Strong decrease of public support activities Mainly focused on fundraising / attracting volunteers Little incentivisation by donors	Strongly motivated to contribute to public support for international development through activities Incentivized by donors
Position in the field			
Position regarding established organisations	Approaching, interest from establishment, but also regional differences and a push for professionalisation	Strong detachment	Rather close, collaborations relatively common and incentivized, but also regional differences and a push for professionalisation

Table 7.1 Cross-country typology of CIGS

When comparing CIGS in the three countries, we conclude that: 1) government policy and 2) rules and regulations strongly affect the identity, role and positioning of CIGS. Both the Flemish and French contexts are more receptive to CIGS compared to the Dutch context.

First, the public support policy and (financial) support instruments pursuant to it in France and Flanders result in more activities being organised by CIGS in the Global North aimed at public support strengthening. Not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of conviction amongst CIGS that they have a part to play in this, in addition to the support they provide to countries in the Global South. This policy fosters engagement between established development actors and CIGS, which can result in each learning from the other and a larger and more pluriform civil society. However, the associated funding instruments also create risks related with a strong focus on 'professionalising' the work of CIGS. Established actors tend to consider that CIGS, with most of them being voluntary, need quality improvements and training, and that they should be subject to the same rigorous standards as they are themselves. Insufficiently recognising the different identity of CIGS runs the risk of established actors moulding CIGS after their own image, pushing CIGS away from them or demotivating them in their endeavours. The Dutch case is a marked illustration of this.

Second, we find that there is a more supportive (legal) environment when it comes to starting and running CIGS both in France and in Flanders. Legal requirements in the Netherlands include more thresholds to initiating and running CIGS, both in terms of bureaucratic requirements as well as in terms of financial costs involved.

Although caution is required, both contextual differences discussed above, could contribute to:

- more formal nature of Dutch CIGS: while this might have a positive effect on how CIGS operate as development actors (e.g. having a multi-annual policy plan could result in more longer term vision on development), this also risk to demotivate CIGS members
- the strong presence of Flemish and French CIGS in public sphere, resulting in more frequent interactions of citizens in these countries with international development, which could have positive spill over effects to international solidarity in a more broader sense.
- the decrease of newly established CIGS in the Netherlands. Whereas in France and Flanders it is possible to run a CIGS without any form of registration or payment involved, in the Netherlands more, and more costly steps are required to start a CIGS.
- the more detached position of CIGS in the Dutch context, compared to their counterparts in France and Flanders. Whereas in the Netherlands, there is fewer opportunity for interaction (e.g. mutual learning, access to resources) than in France and Flanders, these stronger interactions, with professionalisation being part of the strategy of established development organisations, could alter the identity of CIGS and affect motivations of CIGS members

We do not only find differences across countries, but also within groups of CIGS. First, we find that diaspora organisations have more female members, they invest more time (only true for Dutch initiatives), and they have smaller budgets.

CIGS with younger members are most motivated by dissatisfaction with established organisations, they have the most paid members but fewer members in total, they have lower budgets, they have stronger ties to companies (except for Flanders), more varied types of development interventions and attach less importance to contributing to public support. These findings suggest that the younger generation might have a more entrepreneurial approach to running an initiative compared to older generations.

Overall, both (part of) the country differences we note as well as the changes that took place in the Netherlands in the past decade can be carefully related to differences in terms of policy on the one hand and rules, regulations and law on the other hand. Therefore, the findings of our study provide policy makers in various countries valuable insights for future oriented policy making. The strong focus in the Netherlands in the past on professionalisation, in the end pushed part of the CIGS away from support organisation. Is the current Dutch situation the foreland of France and Flanders, where currently similar pushes can be noted? will changes in the political tide in Flanders affect the position of CIGS? And is this considered a problem or not? And is the current policy and belonging support system in France and Flanders an inspiration of how things could look like for policy makers in the Netherlands? Policy makers can use the contrasting findings of the different countries to their advantage. In addition, our data suggests that characteristics such as having a diaspora background and age of founders and members affects the identity of CIGS and these differences seem to be of relevance to consider in policy making and the design of support instruments.

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Appendices

Appendix A

A.1 List of interviewees

Netherlands

1. Representative of Dutch ministry of foreign affairs, October 2021
2. Former employee Dutch NGO, October 2021
3. Member of Dutch NGO, November 2021
4. Former member of the Dutch organisation for knowledge and advice on global citizenship and international cooperation, November 2021
5. Former member of the Dutch organisation for knowledge and advice on global citizenship and international cooperation, November 2021
6. Former member Dutch NGO, November 2021
7. Member Dutch NGO, November 2021
8. Former member of Dutch NGO, November 2021
9. Member of Dutch NGO, November 2021
10. Former member of partnership of CIGS support organisations, November 2021

Flanders

1. Member of Flemish NGO, November 2021
2. Member of Flemish NGO, December 2021
3. Member of CIGS support organisation, December 2021
4. Representative of the province of West Flanders, December 2021
5. Group interview with four representatives of Flemish provinces, December 2021

France

1. Member of CIGS support organisation, February 2022
2. Member of a local network for international development cooperation in the north of France, May 2022

A.2 List of organisations that distributed the survey

Netherlands

Radboud University (own database)
Wilde Ganzen Foundation
Vastenactie
Partin

Flanders

Province of West Flanders
Province of East Flanders
11.11.11/4de Pijlersteunpunt
Several Flemish municipalities and cities

France
La Guilde

Europe wide
EUDiF

Appendix B Statement focus group discussions

Part A: Global South

Statement 1: Without the support of the CIGS/citizen initiatives, many local organisations and communities would not receive aid.

Statement 2: It cannot be expected of the CIGS/citizen initiatives to contribute to systemic change.

Part B: Global North

Statement 1: CIGS/citizen initiatives should regard the contribution to knowledge transfers, awareness, and mobilization of the population in terms of international solidarity, as one of their core duties.

Part C: Position in the field

Statement 1: CIGS/citizen initiatives receive insufficient recognition from other actors such as the government and bigger development organisations or umbrella organisations.

Statement 2: CIGS/citizen initiatives do not cooperate enough with other actors from the Global North.