

Annual Report 2024



Secretary
3rd of June 2025

Introduction

The European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity (CIGS) brings together funders, capacity builders, national and regional networks to strengthen and amplify the role of citizen-led initiatives in global solidarity. It is a space for knowledge exchange, peer learning and sharing of best practices, and for celebrating citizen engagement in local sustainable development across the world.

Currently, the European Network for CIGS counts 20 member organizations from 13 different European countries. It remains actively engaged in extending its reach by welcoming new members and expanding to more European countries, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe.

The roots of this network go back to the first conference on CIGS in 2014, where scientists, funders, support organizations, local governments and national networks came together to exchange and collaborate. A second conference in 2019 renewed this spirit, leading to ongoing collaboration and the foundation of the network on 17th October 2021.

The network is an informal community of practice without legal status, hosted by the secretariat of Stichting Wilde Ganzen. It is guided by its coordination group and supported by three active working groups:

- Funding working group,
- Research working group,
- Capacity building working group.

In a simplified version the network aims to:

- Increase awareness about CIGS
- Improve capacity building for CIGS
- Improve funding practices for CIGS
- Enabling networking and peer-exchange between members and CIGS
- Increasing the knowledge of CIGS in European perspective

ANNUAL PLAN 2024

In 2024 the coordination group of the Network has agreed upon an annual plan that consisted of the following elements:

- Development of the network
- Objectives and values
- Focus themes
- 3rd conference

The European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity is committed to a coordination group where all members have representation. This inclusive structure is supported by a single secretariat that oversees coordination efforts, alongside four working groups each with its own coordinator (on a volunteer basis). These working groups focus on Capacity Building, Funding, Research, and Networks — though the Networks group remains inactive. It is to the working groups to further the focus on themes. A physical meeting did not occur in 2024 but on four occasions all members met online, and the intention is still to meet soon to initiate the process to organise the third European conference on CIGS.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK

Regarding the development of the network the intention of the coordination group for 2024 was to further expand the network with new members especially from European countries that are not yet included in the network. In this perspective 2024 was a rather silent year, no new members joined but several contacts were made. Prospective members were identified in: Sweden, Hungary, France, Malta, Ireland, Austria and Germany. These contacts will be further elaborated upon in 2025

As of 31st of December 2024 the network still consists of 20 members from 13 different countries.

Where several members have taken up the challenge to facilitate working groups. The Funding working group has not yet obtained an own coordinator. The Network working group remains silent.

OBJECTIVES AND VALUES

In the founding statement of the network the objective of the members is defined as providing active support to enhancing solidarity and partnering between European citizens and citizens elsewhere in the world. This is fundamental to further the European goals and values and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Active engagement of European citizens in the broadest sense is needed to safeguard human rights and sustainable development worldwide and these activities deserve to be cheered and supported.

The network focuses in this on enabling information and experience exchange between funders, capacity builders, local, regional authorities, government agencies, national unions, networks and research institutions in Europe that take a keen interest in supporting CIGS. In order to improve European practices, the network organises regular networking activities on the following key objectives:

- Raising the awareness of the relevance of CIGS in international cooperation,
- Improving capacity building efforts for CIGS aimed at strengthening the quality of their activities and expanding their vision on international solidarity (training, toolkits, guides, knowledge exchange, counselling, etc.),
- Improving funding practices of CIGS (knowledge exchange between grant makers on forms, tenders, grant procedures, proposal evaluation, monitoring practices, field visits, local consultants, etc),
- Enabling networking and peer-exchange between European CIGS and citizen initiatives globally,
- Increasing the knowledge of the community of CIGS in a European perspective through scientific research and exchange of information, data and experience.

The network does not intend to replace other European networks but be an open and safe space for enabling exchange of knowledge.

In 2024 the coordination group of the network met four times on the 11th of January, the 12th of April, the 6th of September and the 12th of December.

The established revision committee consisting of:

- Fundusz Partnerstwa (PL)
- EUCanAid (B)
- COP (IT)
- CLI (GE)
- 11.11.11 (BE)
- Wilde Ganzen (NL)

Met one time and advised the coordination group the following:

- The communities of practice on funding, capacity building and research are highly valued and should be maintained and developed,
- The network should look for further geographic expansion,
- The committee will seek contact with CONCORD through 11.11.11 to debate how these networks can be most complementary,
- The network declaration should be revised in face of the relation with other European networks,
- The network should organise a third European Conference on CIGS and pull resources for that purpose,
- The network will further facilitate and support the fundraising efforts of its members where needed and serve as a hub for establishing common projects.

FOCUS THEMES

In its annual plan the network has declared the following themes as being of importance to have further initiatives on. These were:

- European elections
- Global challenges
- Shrinking civic space in East, West, South and North
- Public support for International Solidarity
- Global Citizenship Education for adults through and with CIGS
- Cross-border networking opportunities for CIGS
- Increasing the knowledge of CIGS in European perspective

European Elections and Global Challenges

The European elections of 2024 were a key concern throughout the year, with a rise in right-wing and populist representation observed in multiple countries. This shift directly impacted funding and policy environments, threatening to reduce budgets for international cooperation and intensify scrutiny of CIGS activities. In response, the network's capacity building working group prioritized strategies to counter polarization, focusing on relationship building, advocacy, and global citizenship education as essential tools in safeguarding the role of civil society.

Beyond Europe, **global challenges** — from geopolitical instability to climate change and migration — underscored the urgency of international solidarity. The network's working groups explored how these challenges affect people worldwide, reaffirming the value of global solidarity initiatives led by small organizations.

Shrinking Civic Space in East, West, South, and North

Participants from Eastern, Southern, and Western Europe reported growing restrictions on civic space. In particular, discussions within the capacity building and funding working groups highlighted how civic space is increasingly constrained by national security discourses and administrative burdens. Initiatives like Partin's research into excessive administrative demands and Anders' Global Solidarity Map project sought to document and resist these trends, promoting positive examples of civic action.

Public Support for International Solidarity

Public support for international solidarity remained a crucial theme. The research working group noted the impact of right-wing budget cuts and the corresponding need to

mobilize European public opinion around global citizenship and solidarity. Plans were made to expand research beyond the earlier investigated countries, ensuring a broader evidence base for advocacy and influencing policy at EU and national levels.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) for Adults through and with CIGS

GCE emerged as a central element across multiple working groups and external events. The Budapest Conference on Global Education (November 2024) offered an opportunity to connect with potential new members from Hungary, Slovakia, Malta, and Austria. There, the secretary emphasized the importance of GCE in equipping adults to engage in global issues. Similarly, the research group explored opportunities to integrate GCE into upcoming funding proposals, while the capacity building group discussed how to adapt GCE efforts to counter nationalist narratives.

Cross-Border Networking Opportunities for CIGS

Cross-border networking for CIGS remained on the wish list. Efforts to invite new members from Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia) demonstrated the network's commitment to inclusivity but did only partially succeed. The third conference, now envisioned for late 2025 or early 2026, aims to bring our cross-border networks together physically and strengthen CIGS' European presence.

Increasing the Knowledge of CIGS in European Perspective

The research working group's ongoing comparative studies — including research on French, Belgian, Dutch, and Danish CIGS in Senegal and Nepal — highlight the diversity and impact of CIGS initiatives. There is a growing awareness that these small organizations contribute to global development in ways often overlooked by larger NGOs and funders. The planned expansion of research to include more European countries (with Wilde Ganzen funding support) will further elevate this perspective, positioning CIGS as key actors in Europe's global engagement.

FACILITIES

Despite the fact that the network did not meet physically in 2024 it has been able to organise 4 coordination group meetings and 4 working group meetings and in this way keep the network going.

Furthermore the secretariat of the network maintained an own website www.europeannetworkforcigs.eu and two email addresses on secretariat@europeannetworkforcigs.eu and capacitybuilding@europeannetworkforcigs.eu

Through the webpage www.europeannetworkforcigs.eu/internal the network makes available resources and news to its members.