



**European Commission**

**Framework Contract Commission 2011**  
EUROPEAID/129783/C/ SER/multi

Lot 1: Studies and technical assistance in all sectors

Letter of Contract No. 2014/351923

**Roadmaps for EU engagement with Civil Society**

**Taking stock of the RM process in countries with  
non-enabling environments**

**Lessons learnt and good practices**



This project is funded by



Project implemented by

## **Support facility to EU Delegations in the elaboration and follow up of Country Roadmaps for engagement with Civil Society Organisations**

Extract from: The EU Roadmap process: taking stock  
Capitalisation report

### **Authors of the Report:**

Coordination, editing and main author: Beatriz Sanz Corella (TL)

Contributions from:

Key experts from the RM Facility: Juan Nicolás Adán (Key Expert 2) and Pamela van de Bunt (Communication expert)

Non-key experts: Susana El Kum Molina, Gemma Pinyol, Lydia van de Fliert-Bukman and Tine Veldkamp

Proofreading and editing: William Pringle, Paulina Toporek

### **Contractor name and address**

EPRD Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development Ltd.

Szkolna 36A Street,  
25–604 Kielce, Poland

Phone: +48-41-3453271

Fax: +48-41-3452587

E-Mail: eprd@eprd.pl

### **DISCLAIMER**

**This report has been prepared by the Roadmap Facility with the financial assistance of the European Commission. The views expressed herein are those of the experts and therefore in no way reflect the official opinion of the European Commission**

## 1. Introduction

The ability of CSOs to participate in different domains of public life depends on a set of preconditions commonly referred to as the "CSO enabling environment", for which different actors hold responsibility. To operate, CSOs need a functioning democratic legal and judicial system – giving them the de jure and de facto right to associate and secure funding, coupled with freedom of expression, access to information and participation in public life. The primary responsibility to ensure these basic conditions lies with the state<sup>1</sup>.

For this report, this second cluster includes the countries which are not in a situation of fragility (as they are already analysed under the cluster 'Fragility' regardless of the situation of the environment and their level of income) and which have a grade of < 0,45 in the Enabling Environment index (EEI) produced by CIVICUS<sup>2</sup>.

Thirty countries fall under this category, with twenty-six roadmaps being finalised. Of these, twenty were assessed for the purpose of the present report. It was not possible to assess some of the roadmap documents even though they are ready, namely those of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Russia and Egypt, as they are considered highly confidential. Feedback forms for some of these countries were, however, consulted.

The case of Burundi is also worth mentioning as the country has experienced turmoil and a constantly evolving and degrading context since the roadmap document was signed. In the past six months EUD personnel was repatriated and all structural cooperation put to a halt. All of this makes the country eligible for the fragility cluster and the roadmap document, as it was drafted, out-dated vis-à-vis the new context.

The RM Facility provided support to a number of EUDs under this category, through field missions (Rwanda and Kenya) and remote assistance (Uganda and Kazakhstan, Venezuela and Bolivia). Some EUDs recruited their own TA (Madagascar, Venezuela, etc.).

## 2. The context vis-à-vis the 3 ambitions of the 2012 Communication

### 2.1. The environment in which CSOs operate

In spite of the widespread recognition of CSOs as critical development actors, recent years have witnessed a rising tide of restrictions on civil society, which not only defies fundamental freedoms and international promises, but also undermines any development goal, as the consortium members of the Civic Space Initiative<sup>3</sup> report and the 2013 CIVICUS "State of Civil Society" report concludes. Since 2011, more than fifty restrictive laws have been passed or considered worldwide that would restrict the formation, operation, and funding of CSOs, as well as the right to peaceful assembly. This trend has been more acute since 2013.

Generally, legal barriers to CS include restrictions to entry into the sector and/or run operations (e.g. through imprecise, incomplete or restrictive legal frameworks; cumbersome and/or arbitrary registration procedures; establishment of parallel regulatory mechanisms such as endorsement of new laws and/or amendments that limit CS participation; or simply by putting no means for law implementation), limitations to the freedom of speech, assembly and advocacy, and/or restrictive financial regulations (e.g. restrictions or the need to obtain prior approval to receive international funding). This is the case of countries like Djibouti,

---

<sup>1</sup>EC (2012): The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations. Brussels, 12.9.2012. COM(2012) 492 final

<sup>2</sup><http://www.civicus.org/eei/>

<sup>3</sup>Submission on an Enabling Environment for Civil Society to the UN High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, ARTICLE 19, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and the World Movement for Democracy

Madagascar, Gambia, Swaziland and Jordan amongst others. Laws are often vague and arbitrarily implemented, impose prohibitions that are biased and do not reflect legitimate policy aims, or are severe and disproportionate to any legitimate development or even counter-terrorist goal.

When it comes to “political” action by CSOs, it is only tolerated to a very limited extent in certain contexts, often circumscribed to selected topics, agreed to by the authorities. Human rights and governance-related actions (including the fight against corruption, governance of natural resources, etc.), which might imply confrontation to central government, tend to be limited, controlled and even forbidden (e.g. strikes, demonstrations). CSOs operating in these areas and challenging the status quo are particularly targeted, and remain at risk of unwarranted government interference and harassment, including arbitrary closure, severe sanctions or imprisonment of their CS leaders (e.g. Azerbaijan, Venezuela). Generally speaking the media is under government control and independent journalists are often at risk, even when advocating for basic development rights.

Yet, allegedly in most of the contexts, a number of courageous individual CSOs are able to keep governance and human rights in their agenda, even if adaptations may be necessary (e.g. through adapting the jargon and using available spaces for dialogue). Of particular interest is the case of women’s and youth organisations, which seem to be “well tolerated” for conducting gender related work through behavioural change and rights-based approaches.

It is also to be noted that several of the countries assessed increasingly require CSOs to “harmonise” their activities with government priorities in national development plans (e.g. Uganda, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Bolivia, Jordan, etc.). While justified in the interest of aid effectiveness, these requirements may underline CSOs’ right of initiative and limit CSOs’ ability to reach out to marginalised communities or focus on issues neglected by governments.

Last but not least it is also worth mentioning that the CS landscape is strongly determined in several of the contexts assessed by a deep political cleavage between those CSOs that support the executive (e.g. GONGOs, co-opted CSOs<sup>4</sup> and even Royal NGOs in some contexts such as Jordan) and those CSOs that struggle to keep their independence and/or exercise opposition. This situation often results in an acute polarisation of CSOs, which works to the detriment of CS effectiveness. Yet, in several of the contexts assessed, the fabric of civil society is rapidly evolving (e.g. Vietnam) as new and younger organisations, networks and groups (often led by women and/or youths) emerge in the arena, thus shaping the discussion of the state of civil society.

Also, and despite the huge challenges, a number of positive trends can be identified in some of the contexts, including the existence of vibrant mass media sectors (e.g. Vietnam, Zambia), the “publicisation” of the debate around CS or the adoption of legislation more favourable to CSOs and the right to assembly (e.g. Tajikistan, Jordan) and/or related to access to information (e.g. Morocco).

## 2.2. CS involvement in public policies

CSOs’ actual involvement in the elaboration, implementation and/or monitoring of public policies both at local and national level shows a mixed record, depending on the context (and political will) and on the legal and institutional frameworks. In countries where legislation is not favourable, participation is very limited, symbolic and often selective. This is the case in contexts such as Gambia, Djibouti and Madagascar. In countries where the legislation and related policies are in principle favourable to CS, even if promoted by international donors (as in Uganda and Zambia), and/or where governments target and exercise control over certain types CSOs (as in Honduras and Vietnam), the degree of CS participation, at least of specific sectors within CS that are not critical to the government and in sectors that are not considered

---

<sup>4</sup> See next section for a more elaborated explanation on GONGOs and co-opted CSOs.

controversial, is more apparent and exercised through different formal and informal mechanisms. These mechanisms are mainly developed at sector level as national development policies. Human rights and governance issues are considered 'too sensitive' and 'confrontational' to allow for "dissenting voices".

All in all, as one would expect from an environment that is not conducive for CS operations, participation remains circumscribed to non-challenging sectors, such as the provision of basic services where CSOs are acknowledged for bringing in added value, particularly in terms of reach out to vulnerable groups. This is apparent across regions, in countries like Kazakhstan, Uganda and Honduras.

In other sectors, CS involvement is weak and even "superficial", and often, as aforementioned, forced by international donors active in the country (when they have the leverage). Also, when formal spaces for dialogue are available, involvement is often limited to "friendly" CSOs (i.e. the so-called GONGOs, co-opted CSOs) and to broad and general "non-binding" consultations, and/or CSOs are mainly invited to provide input at the formulation stage of the policies (i.e. monitoring and evaluation are out of reach for them).

It is also important to understand that unlike GONGOs, co-opted organisations in the above mentioned countries have a long history of leading or being involved in political changes, so their focus and approach is strongly political. It is difficult at this stage, with the information available, to identify what type of organisations are co-opted by governmental powers, but it seems that mass organisations such as trade unions and movements are the type of organisations that tend to be close to government, while NGOs and women, youth and community based organisations struggle to keep independence through self-censorship or confrontation.

Some positive developments are nevertheless to be noted, as briefly evoked, at sector and local level. In Zambia, CSOs are present in the 30 existing sector advisory groups, and active in budget monitoring, including budget support. In Madagascar and Ethiopia, even if participation at national level is very limited, some budget monitoring and service quality control at community and local level is taking place (e.g. the Ethiopian Social Accountability programme in Ethiopia). Also, in Kyrgyzstan, Public Advisory Councils (PACs) have been established since 2011 to provide oversight and monitoring of the work of various government bodies, in most line ministries and agencies. At local level, CSOs are also highly involved in decision-making processes.

### 2.3. CS capacity

Reportedly, notwithstanding the risk of generalising, CSOs in non-enabling environments are confronted with technical and political shortcomings. In technical terms, with very few exceptions, CSOs in non-EE countries still lack important strategic planning and management skills. They face difficulties in defining organisational visions, evolving into transparent institutions and developing capacities to deepen in production of knowledge and sound empirical research. In political terms, weak leadership and legitimacy make coordination and articulation of common positions difficult, even though coordinating bodies exist. It is clear that CS capacity in this context is undermined by its relationship vis-à-vis government, as well as by relations among CSOs. Issues such as governments' strategies to limit CSOs, monitored governance and human rights organisations, and co-option over certain organisations create a divide within CSOs. Self-censorship as well as a lack of incentives to be accountable are common issues which, in turn, undermine CSOs' capacity to get organised and become credible.

Reportedly, in several of the contexts assessed, CSOs are also confronted with a lack of sustainable sources of income and funding (except GONGOs and Royal NGOs). This often leads to competition among CSOs over the available funds rather than coordination of activities.

Nevertheless, positive trends can be identified in certain countries. In several of the contexts assessed, the EU and MS have been supporting long-term programmes aimed at developing CSOs' capacities. Particularly in ACP contexts CSO capacity has developed through a number of capacity development initiatives focusing mainly on the technical and managerial as well as institutional capacities, including CS internal governance systems. For example, in Uganda a Quality Assurance Mechanism (QuAM) is being established to strengthen the integrity of CSOs/NGOs. In Zambia, 73% of CSOs are part of umbrella organisations. There also exist a large number of sector networks and coordination groups such as in education, gender and HIV, and sporadic alliances among them occur often.

### 3. The RM process

Despite the challenges posed by the contexts, around 85% of the countries considered (twenty six out of thirty) have finalised their RMs for the period 2014-2017 and are now in the process of implementing them. In other countries, such as Rwanda and Angola, the process is underway and a document is expected to be ready in the coming months.

#### 3.1. About consultation with CSOs

As with the contexts of fragility, roadmap processes in non-enabling environments are characterised by the **comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of the consultation processes organised with CSOs around the roadmap**. It is true that most of the EUDs have carried out several consultation sessions with CSOs. Some of the consultations were sectorial (e.g. Kyrgyzstan), hence focusing on the focal sectors of EU cooperation, while others were structured in order to gather information for the RM (e.g. Morocco, Jordan, Zambia). In some countries, consultations were organised coupled with written surveys reaching out to a wide spectrum of CSOs. This is the case of Kenya, Djibouti and Azerbaijan. In other countries parallel bilateral meetings with key informers or CS leaders (Kenya) were also organised. Only occasionally, INGOs were also invited to provide their contributions (Djibouti).

#### 3.2. About dialogue with Member States (MS)

All of the roadmaps analysed evidence involvement from MS during the elaboration of the roadmap. In some contexts (e.g. Ethiopia) the EUD used already existent and performing coordination mechanisms – such as donor governance coordination groups – to consult MS. For the rest of the countries, specific meetings relating to the drafting process of the RM were organised. In most cases, MS attended the meetings, yet their contributions and feedback were rather limited. In all cases however, MS have endorsed the RMs.

At implementation level, MS involvement varies from country to country, but in general is expected to be low. While in countries such as Ethiopia, Morocco, Tajikistan and Uganda, MS financial mechanisms have been identified to support the implementation of the RM, in the rest of the countries (except for five RMs where no instruments are identified) it is envisaged that the EU provide most of the funding. Important to note as an innovative practice, the RM for Morocco has also included funding sources from INGOs receiving MS funding in the instruments and programmes envisioned for the implementation of the RM.

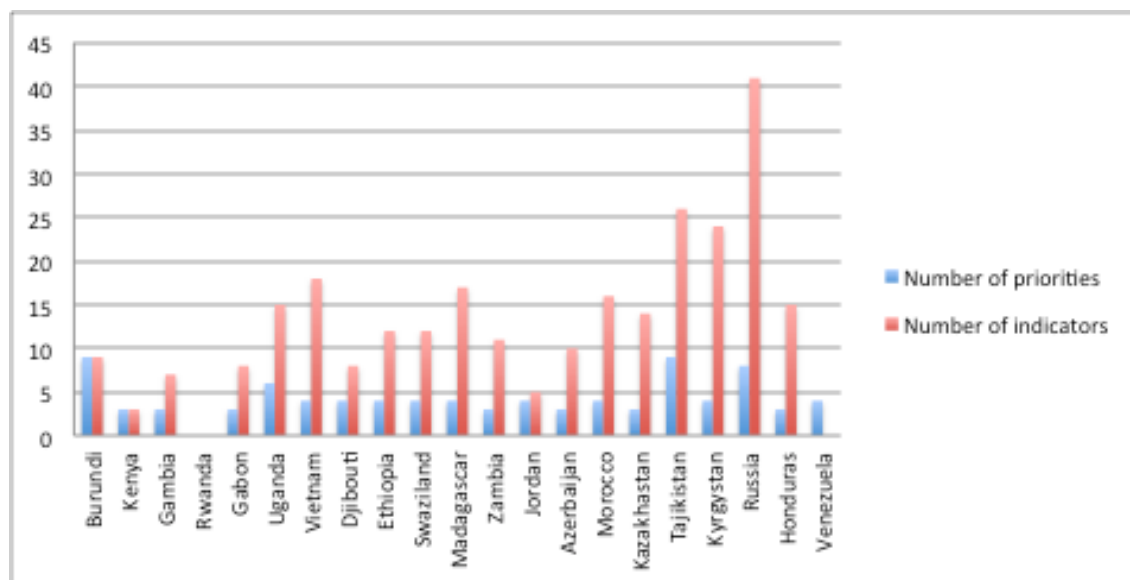
### 4. The contents of EU engagement

Content-wise, the RMs assessed are mixed, portraying both specific as well as general priorities and indicators. The fact that almost half of the RMs contain general and broad priorities may be due to the challenges posed by a non-enabling context (often in constant evolution) or the often-ambivalent position of the government vis-à-vis CSOs. Another

underlying reason could be the need to reach a consensus with MS in such difficult conditions for engagement.

On average, roadmaps for countries in non-enabling environments have four to five priorities. Only very few, such as Honduras, Zambia and Azerbaijan, have only identified three priorities. Most of the countries have identified four priorities, while others, like Russia, Tajikistan and Burundi, have identified more than 8 or 9. More detail is provided in the figure below, which also depicts the number of indicators per roadmap assessed.

**Figure 1: priorities and indicators in the RM assessed**



Considering the importance of the environment as the key factor in these contexts underlining CS action, and despite the challenges that any work in this regard entails, RM priorities linked to the enabling environment are present in all the roadmaps assessed. In countries like Russia, Venezuela and Madagascar, the RMs have more than one priority related to the first ambition of the 2012 Communication. EE priorities vary from country to country as they respond to different degrees of restrictiveness of the environment (and hence of what is feasible to support/aim towards). Priorities range from monitoring the evolution of the environment (including changes and impact of the legislative and institutional frameworks) to facilitating (as a third neutral party) the relations between the state and CSOs, research generating evidence of the positive impact of CS roles and work at different levels, or supporting intercultural and interreligious initiatives of dialogue to smooth social cleavages. Only Swaziland did not include any priority related to the EE.

#### Examples of innovative practices to promote the EE

- Conduct a mapping study to identify CSOs focusing on the promotion of good governance and transparent and accountable government, including a catalogue of CSO activities (Kazakhstan).
- Public awareness-raising campaigns targeting the general public and explaining the negative effects of official corruption and inadequate or poor, unchecked reporting on government activities. The campaigns should also include positive information about the introduction of programme budgeting and greater budget transparency. (Kyrgyzstan)
- EUD/MS/Other Donors (OD): TECS and CSFII - Evidence based research on impact of the Civil Society Proclamation (CSP) and directives on work of CSOs and consultations with CSOs on various subjects, such as the role of mass based organisations, income generation activities for civil society in Ethiopia and the interface between regional and



federal level in the civil society sector (Ethiopia)

- Continue to support basket fund arrangements such as Amkeni Wakenya (UNDP) to harmonise development partner procedures and reach out to grassroots organisations (Kenya)
- Operational support to initiatives that support interreligious and intercultural dialogue on issues related to governance, social cohesion and the Rule of Law (Madagascar)
- Hold dialogue forums (in Hanoi and other selected cities) with civil society actors to promote discussion and dialogue on the role of civil society actors (Vietnam)
- As part of its call for proposals EIDHR/ENPI 2014, the EU has identified a specific priority for supporting actions in Jordan that contributes to monitoring and following up on the path of reforms, and the Association Law has been specifically mentioned as a topic to be closely monitored (Jordan)
- Facilitate platforms for debate and initiatives, through the participation in meetings and events promoted by CSOs and focusing on sensitive human rights issues (messages, stakeholders, partners, suitable platforms and coordination efforts) (Tajikistan).

Priorities linked to the involvement of CSOs in public policies (the second overall ambition of the 2012 Communication) are also widely represented in all the roadmaps assessed. All RMs have at least one priority devoted to enhancing CS participation in national and/or sectorial policies as well as to international development programmes. It must be noted that some of these priorities remain quite general by referring to CS participation in service delivery and in national policies. Other RMs are more focused, aiming at promoting CS involvement into public policies through specific sectors such as agriculture (Morocco, Zambia), social sectors including social protection (Gambia and Tajikistan) and energy (Jordan). It is interesting to note that no RM included as a priority the reinforcement of existing policy dialogue mechanisms between government and CSOs, and that some EUDs included strengthening the participation of CSOs in EU development programmes and policies (for instance in Ethiopia).

#### Examples of innovative practices to promote CS participation in public policies & dialogue

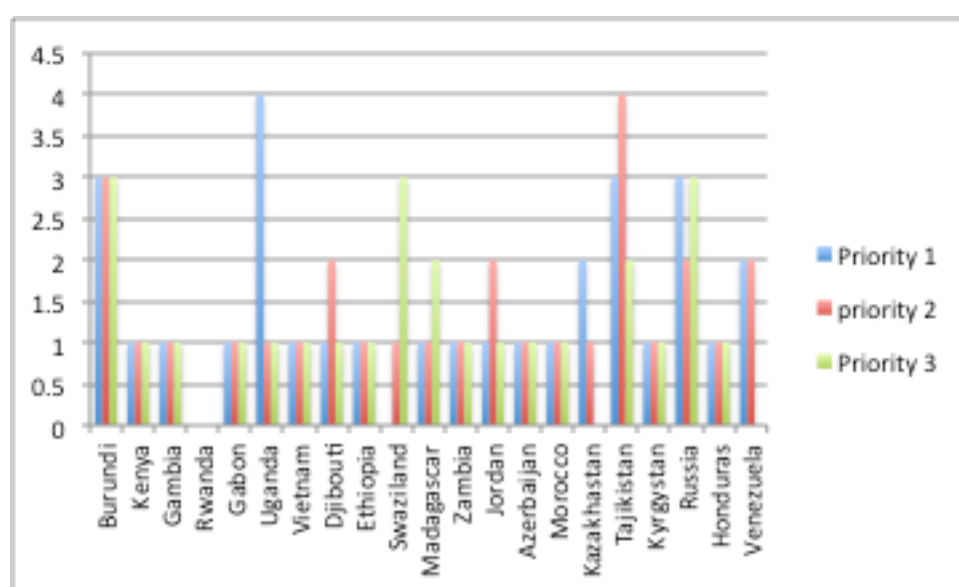
- Sectorial mapping/CS assessment in the focal sectors of EU cooperation to deepen the knowledge and understanding of CS involvement (Honduras)
- Accompanying technical assistance provided to the government to set standards for, regulate and monitor social services by CSOs (Kyrgyzstan)
- Support innovative CS initiatives to fight corruption (Madagascar)
- Send a calendar to CSOs well in advance with all the dialogue events foreseen in the year and their expected contributions (Morocco)
- Conduct a study to explore potential ideas for linking the corporate sector with CSOs including case studies and recommendations on how to build bridges between VCSOs, the private sector, and government agencies (Vietnam)
- EU funded programmes should integrate at least one indicator related to CS involvement (Honduras)
- EU grantees are to be trained/mentored by TA in the use of advocacy tools (Venezuela)
- Allocate ad hoc funds for CSOs' projects aiming at participation in policy focused and governance initiatives as well as at systematic monitoring of implementation of PRSP (Tajikistan).



Capacity is also well represented in all the RMs assessed. Only in the case of Venezuela does the RM not have a priority related to strengthening CS capacities, while the RMs of Burundi, Swaziland and Russia contain three priorities devoted to supporting CS capacity development. Overall, capacity development needs revolve around networking, fundraising, internal governance, enhanced legitimacy as well as budget monitoring. One area of particular attention is the strengthening of coordination and cooperation among CSOs and the reduction of cleavages amongst organisations in an effort to overcome the challenges that hinder CS capacity to influence and promote change.

Examples of innovative practices on capacity development	
▪	Systematic approach of bringing EU funding beneficiaries together as a community of practitioners leading to mutual empowerment (exchange of best practices led by the TA supporting the EDF funded Civil Society Fund) between old and new CSF grantees, possibly to be enlarged with the beneficiaries of other programmes as well (Ethiopian Social Accountability programme, the DFID-led Civil Society Support Programme, etc.) (Ethiopia)
▪	In order to promote partnerships/networks among CSOs in implementing projects, the Financing Agreement "Support to Civil Society and Media in Jordan" will assist selected CBOs by contracting NGOs (either national or international) to provide them with training activities in various fields (e.g. key topics such as team-building, strategic planning and communication, lobbying, advocacy) and to support the building of alliances or networks among organisations (Jordan)
▪	Development of training modules for training of CSOs on different topical issues regarding organisational management and development cooperation (Swaziland)
▪	Set up of a NGO help desk under the Coordinating Assembly of NGOs (CANGO) to share information on EU funding and other relevant information on project cycle management (Swaziland)
▪	The EUD is to introduce new funding modalities with more flexibility to support strategies for sustainability, encourage a more programmatic approach including longer term funding, support for consortiums to enable multiple dimensions of an issue to be addressed by NGOs collaborating and increase effectiveness/ impact (Uganda).

Figure 2: Breakdown of priorities in the RM assessed



**Mainstreaming does not appear as a priority in most of the RMs assessed, but rather as a mechanism through which dialogue and CS participation can be further promoted.** This is

particularly relevant in social sectors, such as health education, etc., which are considered to be non-confrontational and which offer an entry point to deepen CS engagement. Around 13 RMs include CS mainstreaming in different sectors of interventions (e.g. Madagascar, Kazakhstan).

Some of the RMs assessed also underline the complementarity of instruments (both geographic and thematic) in order to support CS mainstreaming. This is the case for Zambia and Tajikistan. Others make reference to CS mainstreaming, but mechanisms to support this are not clearly identified.

Finally, regarding **the level of involvement of MS in the implementation of the RM, it is difficult to define a general trend**. In some countries, such as Morocco, Zambia, Uganda, Ethiopia and Tajikistan, the involvement of MS can be considered high, with even joint actions identified, while in the rest of the countries it should be considered medium to low. It can be observed that such involvement is highly influenced by the existence, on the one hand, of MS programmes dedicated to support CSOs and, on the other hand, by the existence and performance of both ad-hoc and formal coordination mechanisms around CS and/or broader governance issues among MS and development partners.

## 5. SWOT analysis

Strengths and opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RM is an invitation to deepen knowledge of political economy analysis of State-CS relations and think strategically on how to support CSOs and, in turn, increase aid effectiveness to development and democratic governance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RM process might create some frustrations within the Delegations due to lack of support for implementation or unexpected political changes. Keeping up the momentum and the importance of the process will be key.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The possibility to strengthen EU – CS relations in partner countries through RM processes. RMs can become a mechanism to set a structured dialogue in partner countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While MS have been actively participating in the RM elaboration, some remain vigilant when it comes to implementation level. This means MS do not incorporate new activities to their agendas as result of the RM, rather the RM are ‘adapted’ to MS’s on-going programmes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important degree of involvement with MS at formulation and implementation level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In most cases, the analysis remains quite general (and un-confrontational despite the challenges posed by the context) and key issues are mentioned but not further developed. This is the case for those countries where CSOs are co-opted by government, creating a cleavage within CS landscape (Honduras, Venezuela, Jordan...).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to deepen CS mainstreaming in key cooperation sectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weak capacity to operationalise CS mainstreaming or to identify entry points as well as to use aid mechanisms in a complementary manner.</li> </ul>