

# Terms of Reference for the Civil Society Committee of the Joint Africa-Europe Strategy (2014-2017)

## 1. Role

The role of the Civil Society Committee (CSC) is to:

- Provide a platform for European civil society organisations (CSOs) to work together to ensure the participation of CSOs in the Joint Africa-Europe Strategy (JAES) at all levels
- Exchange and display information and expertise on JAES-related issues and ensure adequate outreach to all interested groups

The CSC will make efforts to ensure CSOs participation in the new architecture of the JAES resulting from the EU-Africa 2014 Summit, notably in the Annual Forum, the expert working groups and the other follow-up and implementation bodies for the 2014-2017 Roadmap.

The role of the Steering group is to:

- Channel information on behalf of and to the European CSOs with respectively the EU institutions and the African civil society steering group as regards the JAES
- Coordinate and plan joint actions to ensure a Joint Strategy that is participatory and responsive to CSOs interests
- Review and monitor the JAES' achievements

## 2. Structure

### a. The CSC

The CSC includes all interested European civil society organisations. All member organisations of the CSC must fit within the definition of civil society used by the civil society contact group study in 2006.<sup>1</sup>

Political parties cannot be members of the CSC.

Applications to join the CSC will be examined by the Steering group and the applicant organisations will be included on the CSC dissemination list if nobody in the Steering objects, based on the above-mentioned membership criteria. In case of objection, the Steering group will make a final decision. Members of the CSC receive all the minutes of the Steering group's meetings, as well as other relevant information concerning the JAES.

### b. The Steering group

The steering group is an inclusive body emanating from the CSC. Efforts will be made to ensure that it includes at least one representative of organised networks or groups of civil society actors representing a sector of activity or a section of society (development, environment, trade unions,

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<sup>1</sup> EU Civil Society Contact Group, [Civil Dialogue - making it work better](#):

*“Civil society organisations have four main characteristics:*

- o They are established voluntarily by citizens seeking to promote their concerns, values or identities;*
- o They are organised around the promotion of an issue or the interests of a particular section of society;*
- o They are autonomous from the state, which is essential if they are to provide credible contributions from their numerous and diverse constituencies;*
- o Finally, they do not aim at optimising profits.”*

youth, women/gender, human rights and democracy, peace and security, migrants, etc) and who have an interest in the JAES. In addition, different categories of CSOs can take part in the steering (NGOs, foundations, research centres, etc). Applications can be made once a year in September for new members to become part of the Steering group.

Participation in the steering involves four commitments:

- Participate on a regular basis in the Steering group meetings
- Accept to take on or share a specific mandate (see below)
- Seek a good level of information sharing and outreach with the CSC, other interested organizations or networks working in the same sector or section of Civil Society.
- Mention that the organisation belongs to the CSC when a member of the Steering group participates in meetings or takes the floor on issues relevant to the mandate of the Steering group.

Review of those commitments will take place on an annual basis.

### **3. Functioning of the Steering Group**

The Steering Group meets at least four times a year, and more when needed.

Among the mandates to be shared among the members of the Steering group:

- The relations with the EU institutions
- The relations with the African CSOs steering group
- Setting up the meetings of the Steering Group and ensuring an agenda in close coordination with the other members and disseminating the minutes to the CSC based on a rotation system
- Representation and outreach to relevant stakeholders and dissemination of the information collected back to the broad CSC and SG group.

Other specific mandates may arise at a later stage, and this list is not exhaustive.

The SG hosts a face- to –face meeting with the CSC at least once a year.

The mandates are being discussed in the Steering group once a year to see whether changes are required on the occasion of an annual meeting between the CSC and the SG.