

# Annual Report 2023



**Secretary**  
**3rd of April 2024**

## Introduction

The European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity is the European network for funders, capacity builders, national- and regional networks that support and unite citizen initiatives in global solidarity. A network that facilitates the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practises. A network that supports and cheers citizen engagement in local sustainable development everywhere.

The European Network for CIGS consists of 20 member organisations from 13 different European countries. The network seeks extension by new members and expansion into new European countries.

The network was the result of a first conference on CIGS in 2014 when scientists, funders, support organisations, local governments and national CIGS networks came together and a second conference which was held in 2019. After this last conference participants came together several times and started to collaborate online as well. This resulted in the founding of the network on the 17th of October 2021.

The network has currently no legal status. It is an informal exchange platform for its members. The secretariat of the platform is provided by Stichting Wilde Ganzen/IKON. The platform is led by its members through the coordination group and there are as well three working groups active:

- 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 2023

In 2023 the coordination group of the Network has agreed upon a annual plan that consisted of the following elements:

- Development of the network
- Objectives and values
- Focus themes
- Facilities

Objectives of the network were to further develop with new members and improve its structure. Revisit its objectives and look forward to a future European conference in order to further formalise itself. It was to the working groups to further the focus themes. A physical meeting did not occur in 2023 but at several moments the 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 2023 was to further expand the network with new members especially from European countries that are not yet included in the network.

In 2023 the following organisations joined:

1. COP (Piedmont region, Italy)
2. RESACOOOP (Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, France)
3. Lafede.cat (Catalonia, Spain)
4. SLOGA (Slovenia)
5. Grupa Zagranica (Poland)
6. VBPlatforma (Lithuania)
7. LAPAS (Latvia)

As of 31st of December 2023 the network consists of 20 members from 13 different countries. Possible members from Slovakia and Portugal have been approached.

In 2023 the facilitation of the working groups became successively more decentralised. The Capacity Building working group is now facilitated by the Collective Leadership Institute from Germany and the Partnership Foundation from Poland. The Research working group is led by the research partner of the network the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Development sociology of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Radboud University in Nijmegen the Netherlands. The Funding working group has not yet obtained an own coordinator. The Networking working group has not yet started its operations.

## 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 focusses 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 2023 the coordination group of the network met three times on the 12th of January, the 13nd of April and the 21st of September.

During 2023 the coordination group intended to establish a revision committee. The following member organisations have declare access to this committee:

- 11.11.11 (Belgium)
- EUcanAid (Belgium/EU)
- Partnership Foundation (Poland)

The committee has not yet been instituted and there is a need to invite some more members in order to create a more equal representation.

## FOCUS THEMES

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

- Shrinking civic space in East, West, South and North
- Public support for International Solidarity
- Global Citizenship Education for adults through and with CIGS
- Funding strategies for the Southern partners
- Creating new funding opportunities for CIGS
- Cross-border networking opportunities for CIGS
- Increasing the knowledge of CIGS in European perspective

**Shrinking civic space** is one of the issues that reappears on the agenda of the coordination group. In 2023 the secretariat participated in the closing conference of the project 'Reclaim our Civic Space'. It is Europe wide observed that legislation for CIGS to operate in their country of origin is becoming stricter and that in many countries of the global south the administrative burden is increased and restricted. How differences in this respect impact CIGS was as well shown in the research 'Different rules, different policies: different identities'. This research as well related to the next topics on the list were it was found that CIGS from countries with less restrictive policies tend to work more on **public support for international solidarity and global citizenship education**. This resulted in important insights that helped with advocating for less restrictive policies for CIGS. This year the funding working group shared insights on the 'Support of local authorities to CIGS', both in Europe and the Global South and on 'Localising development' and how to devise **funding strategies** that work on these issues. A group of 11 member organisations submitted a successful proposal to the DEAR programme of the European Union DG INTPA to create **extra funding opportunities for CIGS** in 11 member countries. The capacity building working group shared experiences on quality assurance in adult education for CIGS and on CIGS capacity building in times of European elections. The subject of **cross-border networking opportunities for CIGS** is not yet covered very much but the Dutch and Belgian members of the network take an active stance in this way and were actively creating crossborder networking opportunities on their respective national days. Least not least, the research working group met several times and produced a new study in the beginning of 2024 titled 'Citizens & Sustainable Development'. This further **increased the knowledge of CIGS in European perspective** and is being actively shared with people in Europe.

## FACILITIES

Despite the fact that the network did not meet physically in 2023 it has been able to organise 3 coordination group meetings and 7 working group meetings and in this way keep the network going. Nevertheless a

Furthermore the secretariat of the network maintained an own website [www.europeannetworkforcigs.eu](http://www.europeannetworkforcigs.eu) and two email addresses on [secretariat@europeannetworkforcigs.eu](mailto:secretariat@europeannetworkforcigs.eu) and [capacitybuilding@europeannetworkforcigs.eu](mailto:capacitybuilding@europeannetworkforcigs.eu)

Through the webpage [www.europeannetworkforcigs.eu/internal](http://www.europeannetworkforcigs.eu/internal) the network makes available resources and news to its members.