

FOUNDING STATEMENT OF the European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity

The members of the European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity (CIGS) are actively 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.

One profound form of active engagement is a CIGS. This can be by a volunteer based local community organisation or a small non-governmental organisation (NGOs), that is connected in global solidarity with a local community organisation in the Global South and supports citizens in realizing their sustainable development ambitions and in safeguarding their most fundamental human rights. A huge number of European citizens are participating voluntarily and actively in such initiatives as board members, volunteers, donors or sympathisers. All these citizens and initiatives together constitute a broad European movement of global solidarity that exists in all European countries¹ and is taking shape due to the efforts and choices of European citizens in their own right. The huge spatial dispersion of these initiatives makes the movement as such capable to deal with the complex global challenges of today.

In many European countries these initiatives find official recognition and are supported by local, regional, national authorities, agencies, research institutions, unions, regional or national NGOs, with; advocacy, networking, co-funding, training, research and coaching. This in order to enable these CIGS to achieve the best possible impact in furthering sustainable development and human rights in and outside Europe. Due to this, in each European country different support practices for CIGS have developed and different organisations have been established. In a world that is increasingly complex and interconnected there is an urge to learn from each other in order to increase the impact and efficiency of support practices for CIGS. We are now at a point where we want to enhance the exchange of knowledge and experience on a European level to further increase and improve the impact of European CIGS in the world.

In order to achieve a Europe where citizens play an active and positive role in the achievement of sustainable development and human rights worldwide, the European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity strives for the improvement of support practices for CIGS in Europe. It does so through exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices between its members regarding advocacy, networking, co-funding, training and research. Practices that are relevant to the European community of CIGS and lead to increasing their impact in the sustainable development of communities worldwide. Furthermore the network intends to assist CIGS in making good use of the funding possibilities and capacity support available.

¹The Accidental Aid Worker. A Mapping of Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity in Europe, I. Pollet, et al, 2014, states that there are approximately 100 to 200 thousand of such initiatives in Europe.

The network invites all European funders, capacity builders, local, regional and national authorities, government agencies, national unions, networks and research institutions to take a keen interest in supporting CIGS, support the mission of this network and join it.

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.

Furthermore the members are encouraged to undertake common initiatives that lead to:

- Promotion of the solidarity between Europe and the Global South,
- An increased exchange of knowledge and experience between CIGS,
- A better understanding of the needs of the CIGS on a European level,
- Increased visibility and relevance of the work of CIGS in Europe,
- Better understanding of the impact of national regional and local policy and legal practices on CIGS in Europe,
- European policies that better reach communities in and outside Europe and result in more citizen solidarity,
- More possibilities for CIGS to participate in the initiatives of the European Union that lead to global sustainable development,
- Peer-reviews and peer-learning on their support practices for CIGS.

The network will organise a European CIGS conference, on a regular basis: a European event where new knowledge, experiences and good practices are shared. Where networking is facilitated and where common ground between support organisations for CIGS can be found.