

Annual Report 2025



Secretary
21st of January 2026

1. Introduction

The year 2025 marked a period of consolidation, renewal, and strategic reflection for the European Network for Citizen Initiatives in Global Solidarity (ENfCIGS). Building on the foundations laid in previous years, the network expanded its reach, deepened its thematic engagements, and further positioned itself as a key European community of practice.

Despite a challenging political and funding climate across Europe—with shrinking civic space, tightened budgets for international cooperation, and the rise of polarisation—the everyday work of citizen initiatives continued to demonstrate resilience, creativity, and commitment to global justice. ENfCIGS served as a platform to analyse shared challenges, co-develop responses, and support member organisations in navigating their changing national contexts.

The network remained an informal yet highly active coalition, hosted by the secretariat of Stichting Wilde Ganzen, and driven by engaged members across 13 countries.

2. Development of the Network

By the end of 2025, ENfCIGS consisted of 21 member organisations spanning 13 European countries. Growth efforts continued through warm-contact expansion, with active conversations held with organisations in Hungary, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Luxembourg. One new member—Lianes Coopération from France—officially joined the network.

The network maintained its governance structure: a Coordination Group where all members are represented, a Secretariat responsible for coordination and communication, and three active Working Groups (Funding, Research, Capacity Building). The Coordination Group met three times in 2025 (20 March, 12 June, 9 October). These meetings provided strategic guidance, addressed operational challenges, and shaped the ongoing development of the network, including discussions on the upcoming third European CIGS Conference, the formalisation of the network structure, and the evolving civic and funding landscape.

3. Objectives and Values

ENfCIGS continued to work from its founding objectives and values, seeking to:

- Raise awareness of the relevance and contribution of CIGS to global justice and sustainable development.
- Strengthen capacity building for citizen initiatives by exchanging knowledge and good practices.
- Improve funding practices affecting CIGS, including access to flexible, long-term, and small-grant funding.
- Enable networking and peer-to-peer exchange among European actors supporting CIGS.
- Promote research that documents and analyses the ecosystem of CIGS in Europe.

These objectives reflected the network's shared conviction that citizens' engagement plays an indispensable role in international solidarity and that CIGS occupy a unique space in connecting local communities across continents.

4. Focus Themes 2025

The Annual Programme 2025 identified six interconnected themes:

- Global challenges and the role of citizen initiatives in addressing them.
- Shrinking civic space across Europe—affecting NGOs, volunteer groups, and CIGS.
- Public support for international solidarity—highlighting the importance of GCE.
- Global Citizenship Education for adults, especially through CIGS.
- Cross-border networking opportunities.
- Increasing European-wide knowledge of CIGS through research.

Throughout 2025, these themes guided the work of the Coordination Group and the Working Groups, and shaped the network's contributions to European-level discussions such as the DEAR Multi-Stakeholder Group.

5. Working Groups

The Working Groups remained central pillars of ENfCIGS' activities. Each group met independently and contributed to strengthening thematic expertise across the network.

5.1 Capacity Building Working Group

The Working Group met twice in 2025 (13 March and 18 September), focusing respectively on “Engaging young people and other less-reached groups” and on “Gender transformative approaches.”

Key insights included:

- Across Europe, youth engagement in CIGS is hindered by generational divides, lack of agency, and limited opportunities for meaningful participation.
- New types of youth-led and less formal citizen initiatives are emerging and require more flexible support structures.
- Gender transformative approaches vary widely across countries but face resistance in several contexts.
- Many organisations expressed interest in integrating feminist, decolonial, and intersectional perspectives into capacity-building work.

The group also discussed repeated Erasmus+ application rejections and explored alternative funding such as CERV.

5.2 Funding Working Group

The Funding Working Group met twice (15 May and 30 October). Together with a comprehensive comparative report on the funding of GCE across Europe, these meetings offered deep insights into the severe funding challenges affecting CIGS and GCE.

Notable developments:

- Public funding for GCE continues to shrink dramatically in many countries (Finland, France, Slovenia, Lithuania).
- Belgium and Catalonia remain exceptions, though uncertainty persists.
- Liquidity constraints for small CSOs remain a major bottleneck.
- Local fundraising practices vary greatly across countries and depend strongly on local economic conditions.

The group also examined co-funding mechanisms, local fundraising models, and the differences between government and private funding streams.

5.3 Research Working Group

The Research Working Group advanced the revisiting of the 2014 “Accidental Aidworker” study, extending data collection to multiple European countries. A special session on citizen participation in global development was prepared, linking research outputs to broader European discussions.

The group also explored the potential for a European webinar series leading up to the third CIGS conference.

6. Meetings and Exchange

The Coordination Group convened three times in 2025. Topics included:

- Expansion strategy and warm-contact recruitment.
- Progress of Erasmus+ and CERV proposals.
- Funding updates and national policy shifts.
- Organizational readiness for the 2027 European Conference.
- The evolving DEAR and EU funding landscape.
- The need for a Revision Committee to reconsider network structure in case of rapid expansion.

Network members also engaged in external educational events, conferences, and bilateral exchanges.

7. External Representation and Advocacy

ENfCIGS contributed to the DEAR Multi-Stakeholder Group through CISU and Wilde Ganzen. Members provided input on national strategies, public support for international solidarity, and methods to reach less-engaged groups.

The network also monitored European policy trends such as the EU Civil Society Strategy and shrinking civic space.

8. Communications

The Secretariat maintained the website, members' internal area, mailing lists, and thematic communication channels. Members were encouraged to contribute news and resources. Communication outputs supported the visibility of CIGS and shared European developments.

9. Outlook 2026

Key priorities include:

- Continued expansion of membership.
- Strengthening of all Working Groups and cross-group collaboration.
- Advancing research outputs and preparing for the 2027 conference.
- Monitoring EU-level developments in GCE funding and civic space.
- Increasing visibility of CIGS at national and European levels.