INSPIRING DEMOCRACY

OPERATING MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY POLICY DIALOGUE

INSPIRED
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European Partnership for Democracy

The European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) is an independent European non-profit organisation supporting the development of democracy outside the European Union. As a network of European civil and political society organisations, EPD advocates for a stronger presence of democracy support on the EU's agenda and facilitates the exchange of knowledge among practitioners. EPD is the first Community of Practice on democracy assistance operating at the EU level. As such, its added value lies in its capacity to bring together and to connect the work of organisations focusing on a wide range of themes and stakeholders. In this way, EPD seeks to contribute to the effectiveness and the quality of the programming and implementation cycles of democracy support at the EU level.

Two members of EPD's Community of Practice have participated in the INSPIRED programme and contributed to this Handbook:

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) assists political parties in new and emerging democracies. The organisation's approach is characterised by facilitating dialogue. NIMD provides safe environments for political parties in a country to meet, overcome distrust and work together on political issues. In addition NIMD also works directly with parties to strengthen their capacities, and provides education programmes for potential politicians. NIMD works in more than 20 countries in Africa, Latin America, The Middle East, Asia and Eastern Europe.

Club de Madrid

The Club de Madrid is the world´s largest, independent group of democratic, political leaders, committed to addressing the challenges of democratic transition and consolidation there where they can make a difference. The principal added value of the Club de Madrid is a unique membership of nearly 100, democratically elected, former Presidents and Prime Ministers, from over 60 countries, willing and able to share their diverse expertise, experience and networks in support of democratic values and leadership worldwide. As former Presidents and Prime Ministers, no longer in public office, Club de Madrid Members are not politically constrained and thus freer to share their experience and offer strategic advice.

OPERATING MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY POLICY DIALOGUE AND INTEGRATED DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALDA	The European Association for Local Democracy
ANC	African National Congress
AusAid	Australian Agency for International Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CdM	Club de Madrid
CEMI	Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIVIO	Fundación Ciudadana Civio/Citizens for Europe
CMD	Centre for Multiparty Democracy
COHEIRS	Civic Observers for Health and Environment: Initiative for Responsibility and Sustainability (ALDA-led programme supporting active participation of citizens)
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CPR	Congress for the Republic
CSIP	Centre for Social Integration Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DCM	Data Collection Methods
Demo Finland	Political Parties of Finland for Democracy
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DG DEVCO	European Commission Directorate General for Development and Cooperation
EC	European Commission
ECLAC	The UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEF	East Europe Foundation
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
EU	European Union
EUROsociAL	European Commission regional technical programme for social cohesion support in Latin America
FDTL	The socialist political party Ettakattol in Tunisia
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

GONGO	Government organised non-governmental organisation
ICP	Institute of Constitutional Policy
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSPIRED	Integrated Support Programme for Inclusive Reform and Democratic Dialogue
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NP	National Party
OAS	Organisation of American States
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMDH	Organisation marocaine des Droits Humains
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PASC-Tunisie	Programme d'Appui à la Société Civile, EPD-led programme in Tunisia
PCM	Project Cycle Management
RAC	Rapid Assessment for Capacity Development
RAPID	ODI's Research and Policy in Development team
ROMA	RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SPREAD	ALDA-led programme in Belarus for strengthening an inclusive and empowered society
SWOT Analysis	Analysis outlining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S Agency for International Development
UTICA	Tunisian Employers Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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INTRODUCTION

1.

Like it or not, democracy is not a necessary precondition for a functioning state, much in the same way as a functioning state is not the necessary result of democratic rule. Crude as it might seem, this fact helps to explain the fairly unclear position of 'Democracy Support' within the development agenda context. It is hard to determine to what extent it is part of a different, broader agenda, that of 'Good Governance', and in which ways it is related to state or institution building.

Although at first sight the connections appear to be clear, this interpretation is often done from a normative standpoint and could easily stem from wishful thinking. Some say that the only way to ensure the inclusiveness and sustainability of economic and political institutions is through democracy, while others argue that democracy can only work upon sound administrative structures that translate the will of the people into concrete actions. It is indeed very difficult to draw the line between democracy and development, and even harder to determine to what extent both fields are interconnected.

In specialised literature, as well as in most of the donors' portfolios, it is generally assumed that the label of 'democracy support' refers to issues such as human rights, gender, rule of law and the support to parliaments, political parties, civil society, media and, above all, elections. However, when going through this list of truly meaningful but quite disparate elements, one has the feeling that democracy support is a sort of patchwork in which the international community has decided to paste those issues and themes that didn't fit into the (good) governance scheme. A brief glance at its evolution over the years reveals that such an observation is not wide off the mark.

2.

Although some organisations and governments were already engaging in activities to promote democratic change in the 1970s and 1980s, it was not until the beginning of the 1990s that democracy support started to play a central role in foreign and development policy. Until then, the Cold War and the security issues that it entailed had prevented Western governments from engaging in practices that could jeopardise the geo-strategic balance between the two confronting blocs.

The Vienna Conference on Human Rights of 1993 represented a real turning point in this respect. The adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the establishment of the High Commissioner for Human Rights were seen as the natural evolution of the newfound interest in democracy and human rights. This was indeed a response to the changing global context following the third wave of democratisation spanning from the mid-1970s in Portugal and Spain, to Latin America throughout the following decade, to the

end of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

This renewed interest in democracy happened to coincide with the realisation by the World Bank, among other major donors, of the shortcomings of its approach towards Structural Adjustment Programmes. They started to realise that bad developmental results were not just the fruit of bad economic policies, but that they could also be attributed to a 'crisis of governance' and all sorts of 'political obstacles'. The resulting upsurge of Good Governance initiatives introduced a new political dimension into traditional technical cooperation.

For many years the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank had focused their efforts on training selected groups of high-level officials to *understand* the implications of liberal economic policies. It was this focus on the technical aspects of development, which underpinned the creation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1965.

As a result of the aforementioned historic developments, two separate lines of work have been consolidated into what one could describe as fields or specialisations. On the one hand, there are a set of initiatives aimed at promoting, protecting or supporting democracy and democratic values, while on the other, a wide range of programmes pursue the objective of 'good governance' through institution-building and rather ambitious and comprehensive projects of administrative or sector reform. From a normative perspective, these two fields should not be at odds with each other. Although democracy support and state building are of course not the same thing, any true democrat would intrinsically wish that functioning states build their strength from democratic foundations. Likewise, international donor organisations should not be afraid to promote democratic values and insist that governance can only be considered 'good' if it respects those values.

Yet, as is often the case within the international sphere, an overly pragmatic rationale in dealing with persistent and new problems resulted in finding far-from-perfect solutions. Decisions were often taken on the run, building upon the realities resulting from previous solutions, whether they worked or not. The same happens frequently with software, when increasingly complex and large programmes are built on existing ones and end up inheriting their original bugs, adding up to a labyrinth that heavily contrasts with ideal computing. This might be a way of explaining many of the long-standing inconsistencies that practitioners are facing today, but it doesn't justify the fact that they keep persisting in the same original error; namely, addressing governance and democracy separately, while they are really two sides of the same coin.

The results are there for us to judge. Whilst the majority of the countries in the world describe themselves as democracies, an alarming number are stuck in what Thomas Carothers (2002) famously called "grey zones" (situated somewhere between a fully-fledged democracy and dictatorship). Despite their apparent democratic and human rights deficits, most of these countries continue to receive a significant degree of international support, predominantly in the

form of technical assistance; a feature that helps perpetuate the status quo and keeps the ruling elites in power.

This bleak picture conceals the genuine democratic deficit experienced by citizens living in these 'grey' democracies. Therefore, it is clear that it can no longer be enough to have self-proclaimed democracies. We now need to work on improving the quality of these democracies, so that in time, all those countries move out of the shadow of the grey zone and operate on truly democratic principles and procedures which place the values of human rights and democratic participation at the heart of their functioning and existence.

3.

What is particularly interesting about the case of the EU is that the separation between governance and democracy support is taken as a fait accompli, presenting two separate worlds of different sets of actors, approaches and working methods. With respect to governance, there is a more or less settled number of companies, consulting firms and national implementing agencies which mobilise expertise from all the Member States and compete for large contracts under the labels of technical assistance, institution-building and twinning.

These interventions usually cover the fields in which the state is supposed to play a leading role in providing services to its citizens; such as trade, security, justice, agriculture to name a few. At the same time, a growing family of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and political foundations, deal with a plurality of more 'political' issues, as diverse as human rights, parliamentary support, political party support and electoral observation.

All these fall, as previously mentioned, under the all-encompassing label of democracy support. Most commonly funded through European Commission grants, these actors operate with a certain degree of autonomy in designing and implementing their projects, a feat that allows them to remain adaptable to the ever-changing environment in which they operate. Needless to say, the lion's share of funding is allocated to the governance sector, partly because the overall technical approach towards development policy is deeply rooted in the European Union's DNA.

One could argue that this technical approach fits the organisational culture of the EU institutions, especially that of the European Commission. It is true that there is a rather unfair general tendency to highlight the many flaws of the EU governance system and its external action, without acknowledging the inherent constraints that its institutions face in their everyday work. In many ways, EU cooperation is conducted according to the same pragmatic approach adopted by Jean Monnet and the founding fathers over half a century ago, when trying to overcome the resistance of the first Members States to embark on a political union. The approach's philosophy is to move smartly along with procedures without messing around with politics.

Arguably, this original choice of approach has had important implications that still resonate today and precondition the EU's response to key challenges it faces, such as the recent financial crisis. Outsiders and insiders alike find it hard to understand the unbelievably low political profile of such a powerful structure – founded on principles such as human rights and democracy – in which the 'technocrats' from Brussels are generally accused of deliberating in the shadows to get their own way.

The only way for the EU to overcome this deficiency is to move beyond the artificial separation of governance and democracy support. Such an integrated approach, which strives to improve the essence and nature of democracy must surely incorporate technical assistance, but cannot be limited to this. EU officials' greater exposure to, and familiarity with the political particularities and nuances of the countries receiving assistance would make a huge difference in devising and funding correctly targeted programmes and strategies for both governance and democracy support.

In addition, a greater engagement of stakeholders – both at a local and European level – can also help in moving beyond the classic governance versus democracy support debate and towards a more comprehensive, coherent and streamlined strategy. Above all, aid strategies sketched and painted to the colours of local partners have more chances of resembling a portrait of the local needs and desires of each receiving country.

The EU seems to have realised the shortcomings of its current approach. While its different bodies are indeed entrenched in an institutional struggle, the composition and structure of the new Commission headed by Jean Claude Juncker reflects the need for complementary portfolios and aligned targets. The consolidation of the EU's Trade, Development, Humanitarian Aid, Enlargement and neighbourhood policies under the strategic umbrella of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy indicates that the EU is moving in the right direction towards such a comprehensive approach.

There is much more behind the decision of dealing with governance completely detached from democracy support than simply an overriding organisational culture. In fact, a relative feeling of success exists within the European institutional corridors; one that prevents any radical change of approach within the development system. In spite of recent moves to improve the way in which assistance is delivered, such as the Backbone Strategy or efforts by the Directorate General for Development and Cooperation (DEVCO) to ensure more effective capacity building, the overwhelming feeling within the EU institutions is one of 'business as usual'. 'If it ain't broke don't fix it', still seems to be the guiding principle, with the success story of the 2004 enlargement process seen as solid justification for continuing the focus on technical assistance.

Indeed, back in the early 1990s, the European Commission was facing a thrilling and unprecedented challenge. A wave of 12 candidate countries was to enter the Union at more or less the same time, presenting a unique test for the EU,

not only with regard to managing the integration of this large number, but also when it came to helping the newcomers reform their own institutions to make them fit for membership, This was particularly challenging, since these institutions had been defined by the powerful nature and consolidated bureaucratic influence of the public administration in post-communist countries. Therefore, a quick intervention was required in order to prevent those public administrations from collapsing and to prepare them for managing the complexity of adopting the *acquis communautaire*; i.e. the entirety of EU laws and norms.

Obsolete procedures needed to be updated to model new managerial principles while the rule of law and market economy needed to be consolidated. The whole enterprise was carried out through technical assistance programmes (mainly PHARE, but also SAPARD and ISPA), either in the form of classical consultancy contracts or through the mobilisation of Member States' public servants. This innovative and clever approach fostered a series of tools for peer-to-peer exchange, namely Twinning, TAIEX and SIGMA.

One year before the accession of the first 10 new Member States, the Court of Auditors published a report on Twinning, identifying it as the main instrument to support institution-building in candidate countries[1]. This report was interpreted as an endorsement of an overall positive and even "laudable initiative" from the Commission, which decided to expand the use of these tools to other countries as part of the new European Neighbourhood Policy.

Yet the success of technical assistance varied, with notable success in pre-accession countries, but with rather modest results in neighbouring countries. This discrepancy can mainly be attributed to the EU's varied ability to apply conditionality. "We have the carrot but we lack the stick", as an officer in charge of transposing the Twinning instrument to the southern Mediterranean countries once put it. Indeed, officials took a long time to pick up on this bleak reality. When it came to pre-accession countries, the route to membership had a clear political end, which simply isn't the case for the countries in the neighbourhood.

Within the enlargement process, officials could concentrate on the technical aspects of institution-building because the political ones were being dealt with at the highest level. The Copenhagen criteria[2] couldn't be clearer: "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities", together with the "existence of a functioning market economy". Last but not least, the "ability to take on the obligations of membership" or, in other words, to have the capacity to assimilate 17.000 pages of legislation that – at the time – comprised the *acquis communautaire*. Furthermore, negotiations over the 31 chapters of this *acquis* were being held in Brussels while the EC carried an on-going assessment of the administrative capacities of the 'candidates' (the terminology is rarely innocent and gives a

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[1] 2003/C 167/02 Special Report No 6/2003 concerning twinning as the main instrument to support institution-building in candidate countries together with the Commission's replies.

[2] Conclusions of the Presidency, European Council in Copenhagen, 21-22 June 1993, SN 180/1/93 REV 1.

hint of the political balance underlying the relations at the time between Brussels and the Central and Eastern European countries about to join). Bad results in the negotiations could even bring down a government in any of the acceding countries, with public opinion losing its patience with the process.

In any case, the big political framework of accession created the incentives for change within the national administrative structures and among their ruling officials. These were thoroughly committed to achieving significant results and, in general, didn't dare to block the process to preserve their prerogatives. In many ways, the 2004 EU Enlargement process is a textbook example of alignment between the political, the policy and the administrative levels.

This, however, has not at all been the case with today's neighbouring countries, with which the EU has continuously sought to replicate the same *modus operandi;* i.e. to export its own model, basing its appeal on the positive conditionality that invariably underpins its relations with other countries. Yet, offering different degrees of association is not quite the same as offering membership and this has seriously curtailed the efforts of the EU to ensure that holistic and genuine democratic reforms are taking place in the so-called partner countries. Indeed, the political elites of the neighbouring countries have shown a strong aptitude in the cat-and-mouse game, pursuing those administrative reforms that might grant them privileged access to the EU market, without taking the risk of making their institutions more inclusive, accountable or participatory.

What seems even more frustrating is that by supporting low-profile reforms and by adopting this managerial and technical approach towards development, the EU is contributing to some extent to the entrenchment of these grey democracies. As mentioned earlier, terminology is not innocent and the rather defensive connotation of the metaphor branding the European Neighbourhood as a 'ring of friends' reveals that the main concern for the EU was – and many would argue still is – security.

In order to protect itself, the EU has prioritised building strong states over the consolidation of the freedoms and rights of the people living in the partner countries. This approach has led some observers to believe that the separation between governance and democracy was not an arbitrary development, but rather an element of a conservative strategy that placed European self-interest and security fears over European values. This may or may not be true; what matters however is that values have been finding their way through external policies, especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ensuing enlargement process. This is notably the case with the development of a European 'democracy and human rights agenda'.

4.

In the early 1990s, aware of the role that civil society played in overthrowing communist rule, with such notable examples as the *Solidarność* in Poland and the *Charta 77* in Czechoslovakia, the European Parliament began to advocate innovative ways of providing support to dissidents and human right defenders abroad. The result was the launching of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in 1994, which would later become a fully-fledged financial 'instrument', unique in its political ambitions and operational approach. The EIDHR distinguishes itself from every other EU instrument in the fact that it doesn't require third country governments' consent to operate, a feat that enables funds to reach organisations that are under scrutiny precisely because of the nature of their work.

The EIDHR's objective of promoting democratic culture through a bottom-up approach differs radically from previous attempts for democracy promotion, which focused mainly on supporting the rule of law structures and 'constructing' institutions: a sort of top-down democratic engineering with doubtful results. Through a system of Country-Based Support Schemes (CBSS) and regular calls for proposals, domestic CSOs are encouraged to define their own objectives according to their local needs and cultural sensitivities[3].

The EIDHR has been presented as a 'non-ideological' tool in order to avoid contestation within the EU itself. Despite this, it has very important political implications; its objectives, modalities and emphasis on working with civil society are all signs of a bigger and wider process. At last, politics is emerging, not only by shifting the scope of the politics *of* development (the political reasons behind funding decisions), but also because the neutral and 'aseptic' profile that characterised the EU stance is timidly starting to shift towards genuine action to deal with politics *in* development (the recognition of the role of politics in democracy support actions).

The funding available under the EIDHR is relatively modest. The sums of €1.1 billion for the years 2007-2013 and €1.3 billion for the period 2014-2020 are nothing compared to other external action-related instruments and are a drop in the ocean compared the overall EU budget (€960 billion for 2014-2020). Nonetheless, anybody familiar with development processes would agree that very often it is the smallest and apparently weakest input that produces the most significant change. As such, it is widely agreed that the EIDHR's main asset is not financial clout, but rather the transformative potential of its approach. Although initially designed to complement other instruments, its decentralised *modus operandi* has produced a type of contagious effect within EU delegations and is now perceived as playing a key role in mainstreaming democracy and human rights at local level.

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[3] In practice things aren't that 'beautiful' though. Obviously, calls for proposals already have their own objectives and the EC filters and selects the kind of local allies that better suit the EU's agenda in the country in question; furthermore, the draconian procedures and not-so-logical frameworks limit the EU's outreach to a handful of western-oriented CSOs that very often hold closer ties with foreign donors than with the local population.

Moreover, the EIDHR has paved the way for a new generation of initiatives targeting civil society that are either embedded in other financial envelopes or in regional and thematic programmes. Such initiatives include the Instrument for Stability (which has recently become the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace), Non-State Actors and Local Authorities Programme (now Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities Programme), Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, Euromed Youth and gender grants. This new momentum for civil society and democracy support has given birth to new institutional structures, such as the Anna Lindh Foundation and the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). The latter's creation – a product of an inter-governmental initiative promoted by the Polish Government – also highlights the important role of new Member States in shaping a landscape that is more favourable for democracy support.

Indeed, the EU's renewed interest in democratic transition reflects its internal reality; after the wave of accessions of 2004 and 2007, the new Member States appear as depositaries of very relevant experiences in terms of their own transition to democracy[4]. These experiences represent their main added value within the international community of aid providers, in which they are still perceived as 'newcomers'.

However, their emphasis on democracy also reflects their own history, with the recent and vivid memories of their own struggles making them strongly sympathetic towards those countries that are going through similar processes at present. Realising that the democratic impetus of the third wave of democratisation was slowly fading and that disguised autocracies were settling into a dangerous comfort zone, these new Member States helped push the EU Council to approve the 'Agenda for Action on Democracy Support in EU External Relations', resulting from the Council Conclusions of 2009. This proved to be a key year in democracy support, since the UN Secretary General's Guidance Note on Democracy of the same year set in motion future developments within the United Nations structure as well.

The new importance awarded to democratic transitions in the EU's external action happened to be rather prophetic[5], as the events in Tunisia and the whole Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region would reveal. All of a sudden, as is often the case with these things, the Arab Spring caught the EU on the wrong foot, with the newly formed European External Action Service (EEAS) still taking shape and the entire EU apparatus adjusting to the institutional shake-up resulting from the Treaty of Lisbon.

[4] The European Transition Compendium (2009) is an example of the internal moves that are currently taking place within the EU decision-making bodies; the new Members States took the initiative to put together "a non-exhaustive compendium of experiences, good practices and expertise in the field of political and economic transition", including the management of external aid (as recipients), a legitimate and quite clever way of positioning themselves in the market of the EU's technical assistance.

[5] EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, JOIN(2012) 27 final.

Since then, the EU has found itself at a critical juncture. While its role as a global player keeps weakening alarmingly, a struggle among EU institutions about the right strategy and approach to supporting democratisation seems to have dominated a huge amount of the staff's energy and resources. This underlying conflict and tension is due to an apparent clash of views on the approach and function of international assistance.

Diplomats and officials from the EEAS are willing to engage in a more politically-smart approach towards cooperation and often blame the Commission (and in particular DG DEVCO) for being entangled in its own procedures, figures and levels of expenditure. DG DEVCO, on the other hand, insists on the importance of sound management and accountability, on the need for steering actions to results and on ensuring that the taxpayer's money is spent in a responsible and foreseeable manner. What is frustrating about the situation is that these approaches can and should be complementary, much in the same way that governance and democracy are. Both are equally necessary and both depend on each other to unleash their full potential to produce change.

5.

The wide array of political, ideological and geo-strategic circumstances that determined the former state of affairs has given way to a different context in which donors are not only expected to promote their interests but also their core values. There are more and more signs that the tide is changing. A growing number of practitioners and experts assert that the efficiency of technical assistance is much more limited than what was assumed before, for the simple reason that not even the most enlightened technocrat can deal with the multiplicity of factors that play a substantial role in the processes leading to social transformation.

Those forces intervening at different moments, from different angles and with different and often unpredictable effects, are what comprise the so-called 'political will', a notion that has acted as a sort of blindfold or curtain that donors do not feel in a position to unveil, at least openly. Understanding what lay behind this term implied meddling into domestic affairs and could be interpreted by the recipient governments as a new form of interventionism. So the existence – or lack – of political will turned out to be the magic formula for successful – or unsuccessful – programmes of technical assistance.

Aware of the fact that change in whatever country or sector could only happen if it was driven from within, the international community gave birth to a brand new principle that has become the cornerstone of the development rhetoric: the principle of ownership. Nowadays there is broad consensus on the importance of basing international development cooperation on locally-owned agendas for reform. But what do we mean by 'locally'? How are those agendas created and how representative are they? Should they be set by the recipient government alone? In other words, for local ownership to be legitimate and effective, *who is to own* the agenda for reform?

The answers to all these questions cannot be of a technical nature. On the contrary, they demand that donors and practitioners speak openly about the values that are inherent to their understanding of democracy and essential for democratic consolidation, such as inclusiveness and participation. So in the end the value-based approach that applies to democracy support also becomes valid from the standpoint of governance: while it might be true that no change can occur without political will, it is also correct to say that no reform – of institutions or policies – lasts without a broad consensus on its objectives and direction.

It is at this precise point where governance and democracy support converge. For this to materialise, there is no need to re-invent the wheel, but rather to coordinate existing approaches and instruments in a comprehensive manner. This has been the main goal of the Integrated Support Programme for Democratic Dialogue and Inclusive Reform (INSPIRED), which has provided the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) with the means to develop the Operating Model presented in this handbook. By identifying the existing pieces, analysing their strengths and structuring them around clear values and operational requirements, EPD hopes to contribute to the new ways in which the EU seeks to reinforce its position on the global scene by asserting its core values and supporting good governance as a means to effectively promote democracy and human rights.

The Operating Model has not been conceived as a closed product, but rather as a tool for advocacy that can serve to promote a fruitful and continuous debate between international donors – EU and other – and practitioners of democracy support. In this regard, the handbook is meant as an open invitation to explore new operating mechanisms for a more efficient and 'integrated' delivery of assistance.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

There is a long list of handbooks, manuals and methodologies providing practitioners with an overview of the interplay between development and politics and also with an arsenal of tools through which to affect policy. Tomas Carothers and Diane De Gramont's quintessential "Development Aid Confronts Politics" explores the role of politics in development, while a range of tools and techniques for assessing and influencing policy change have been developed by researchers of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI); from the recent 'ROMA guide to policy engagement and influence' to the 'Knowledge, Power and Policy'. This recent outpour of research and practical approaches linked to a political and policy dimension indicates the increasing interest of donor organisations and other major players in the field of democracy support in "politically smart methods" (Carothers and De Gramont 2013). In this mind-set, these players are shifting their focus towards policy reform as one of the key ways to produce substantial change in developing democracies.

The aim of this Handbook is not to compete with such reputable sources. These aforementioned references could very well constitute the foundation for a whole new field, which has not only captured wide academic attention in recent years but is gradually changing the way in which major international donors shape their support programmes. This handbook is also not intended as a contribution to the academic debate, nor is it meant to present a fully-fledged methodology.

Instead, it presents what is often referred to in the business sector as an **'Operating Model'**. Operating models are designed to address the complexity of systems by breaking them down into their individual components and analysing the way in which these components interact. Being abstract by definition, their function is to identify the features, dynamics and driving forces that explain the way in which a system operates. This is exactly what is needed to bridge the gap between the fields of Governance and Democracy Support that for historical reasons have been tackled separately by many donors, including the EU itself.

Rather than showing how governance and democracy support work in general, the Operating Model sets out a proposal on how they could and should interact, in order to fulfil their purpose of reinforcing democratisation processes in partner countries in a sustainable manner. It is addressed therefore first and foremost to the Community of Practice, and especially to those practitioners working in or closely with donor organisations.

In practical terms, the problem for international donors and practitioners alike is that of expectations. Programme or project objectives tend to be overly ambitious, although evidence shows that the capacity of external actors to influence political processes in partner countries is quite limited and that important changes take place from within. It is therefore time for a more

modest approach, one in which donors, international NGOs and implementing agencies take on a new role, acting mainly as catalysts or facilitators in on-going processes of reform that are driven by local stakeholders. Instead of getting carried away by idealistic – and often narrow – pre-conceptions of what democracy is or should be, our key role should focus rather on opening new spaces for dialogue, promoting trust amongst confronted actors and, last but not least, building strong linkages between the programming of international cooperation and locally-owned agendas for reform. In this respect, policy dialogue appears to be the most suitable instrument at hand, both in terms of ensuring local democratic ownership and a deeper impact of international assistance. The advantage of the policy cycle is that it allows a broad range of stakeholders to intervene in the public arena. Focusing specifically on policy rather than, governance in general for example, offers a common ground for discussions that combine the technical and the political aspects of very concrete and tangible problems in society.

Here, the real meaning of the term 'stakeholder' comes to the fore and regains its true meaning: for domestic actors to become stakeholders, they need to feel that they have indeed a 'stake' in reforms. It is no secret that people are more concerned by things that they have close to heart, which is why it makes sense to involve them in a dialogue about policy – in other words – finding solutions to concrete problems.

However, policy dialogue is of course not panacea either. If it is to produce results that are in the interest of the wider population rather than only a few elites, deliberations about policy choices must become more inclusive and participatory than has been the case in most donor-led interventions so far. Indeed, despite various recent attempts to promote the empowerment of the least advantaged groups in society, more practical means to ensure the inclusiveness and participation of policy making are needed. The added value of the Operating Model is precisely that it provides an overview of different tried and tested practices that can help donors achieve this goal.

This handbook is the final outcome of an EU-funded programme which included projects focused on facilitating inclusive and participatory policy dialogue in five different countries: Ghana, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco and Tunisia. The idea underlying the choice of these target countries was to test the same set of tools and techniques in five very different contexts and to observe what worked and what did not.

This is what the **Integrated Support Programme for Inclusive Reform and Democratic Dialogue (INSPIRED)** has been all about: bringing high-level principles into common use by applying them in different contexts and then drawing lessons from these experiences to turn them into practical guidance.

Under the lead of a local partner organisation, one operating in each country, each of these 'pilot' projects tackled one specific issue that could be addressed through policy reform: from women's representation in political life (Ghana) to ethnic minorities and the media (Kyrgyzstan), and from social justice (Tunisia)

and free trade agreements (Moldova) to youth involvement within regionalisation policies (Morocco). Although for the sake of comparability the local partners were asked to follow some general methodological guidelines, they were actively encouraged to select and apply only those tools that were best suited for their local particularities and realities. The Operating Model has therefore been moulded considerably by the lessons learnt throughout the implementation of those projects.

The Operating Model is structured into three phases: i) Collective Assessment, ii) Consensus Building, and iii) Monitoring and Donor Alignment. The cornerstone of the whole process and main outcome of the consensus-building phase are the Roadmaps for Reform: i.e. documents outlining a set of priorities agreed by those stakeholders that have taken part in a given policy dialogue process. Eventually, the success of the Operating model hinges on the willingness of donors to take these Roadmaps into consideration when designing and programming technical assistance, so that institution-building or any other initiative tackling governance is done within the framework of a locally owned process of policy reform.

The key choices to support institutional and policy reform in partner countries should correspond to the needs of domestic stakeholders – not only government, but also political parties, civil society organisations, trade unions, business associations, think tanks, and indeed any other groups that will eventually be affected by those reforms. Though few would disagree with this vision, its implementation is undoubtedly difficult. This is precisely the contribution that EPD would like to make with this Handbook: presenting ways of applying those principles that are widely accepted but rarely implemented.

The Handbook is divided into three chapters. Chapter I presents the Integrated Support Programme for Inclusive Reform and Democratic Dialogue (INSPIRED). Chapters II and III describe the Operating Model that has resulted from this programme. More specifically, Chapter II explains the main principles and features of the Operating Model. Chapter III outlines the preconditions for the Operating Model to function, including the steps that are needed before donors can launch inclusive and participatory policy dialogue processes, before presenting the three phases of the Model: Collective Assessment, Consensus Building, and Monitoring and Donor Alignment. In the Annex, readers can find a description of the pilot projects and a list of lessons learnt from them.

An informed reader will immediately recognise the central role that the notion of 'process' plays in an approach like the one presented in this Handbook. This is not only because the needs of societies are seldom static and usually evolve in unpredictable ways, but also because democracy is a process in itself; or rather the sum of a series of simultaneous processes. This reality implies that any external intervention aiming to support democratic processes needs to remain agile, swift and adaptable. In this vein, the Operating model draws on best practices from three different fields that are closely linked to democracy support: policy dialogue, conflict transformation and technical assistance. A number of selected practitioners from these fields took part in a knowledge-

sharing process and their contributions allowed INSPIRED to broaden its empirical basis by building on knowledge from similar projects and initiatives. This process particularly enabled INSPIRED to 'fill in the gaps' of the Operating Model, where the programme did not yield conclusive results.

In the same spirit, the purpose of the Handbook (and the website that was used to collect practices from other contexts) is not to provide a closed or final 'product', but rather to open the door for a sustainable debate within the community of practitioners about effective means of implementing actions that reinforce democratic governance in partner countries.

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I. THE PROJECT

Factsheet

Project title

- INSPIRED – Integrated Support Programme for Inclusive Reform and Democratic Dialogue

Partners

- European Partnership for Democracy (lead)
- Club de Madrid (CdM), Spain
- Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), Netherlands
- The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), Ghana
- East Europe Foundation (EEF), Moldova
- Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH), Morocco
- Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI), Tunisia
- Institute of Constitutional Policy (ICP), Kyrgyzstan

Target countries

- Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Tunisia

Budget

- EUR 1,562,644 million, funded by the European Union through the Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

Duration

- September 2012 – November 2014

Overall objectives

I. Contribute to the development of a culture of democratic dialogue in transitional contexts based on the principles of political pluralism, inclusiveness and participation amongst relevant stakeholders of political society and civil society (in five target countries)

II. Contribute to the operationalisation of the Agenda for Action of the Council Conclusions on Democracy Support in EU's External Action of November 2009 (development of an Operating Model)

Specific objectives

1. Generate a culture of dialogue and trust amongst key stakeholders in the democratic political and institutional reform process of the selected countries;

2. Contribute to the development of national roadmaps for political and institutional reform in one locally identified key area in each of the target countries, which is sustained by broad political and social consensus;

3. Contribute to enhancing the coherence and coordination of EU policy instruments, while facilitating the process of monitoring and permanent dialogue between the EU and local stakeholders;

4. Facilitate processes of collective learning (South/South) and the identification of good practices that can inform further EU policy developments in the area of Democracy Support;

5. Design a comprehensive and replicable methodology ('Operational Model') consistent with the recommendations of the 2009 Council Conclusions and the Agenda for Action.

Main results

- Roadmaps and Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform have been adopted by local stakeholders

- The EU and other donors have been informed of the Roadmaps and recommendations

- A comprehensive and replicable methodology (Operating Model) has been designed based on the experiences of the country projects and other available best practices

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Background

On 17 November 2009 the European Union Heads of State and Government adopted the **Council Conclusions on Democracy Support in EU External Relations** and a related Agenda for Action. For the first time in the EU's history, the Member States agreed on a coherent set of principles for the implementation of democracy support, based on a comprehensive understanding of the realities underlying democratisation processes. According to the text of the Council Conclusions, the EU should:

I.   adopt a **country-specific approach**;

II. work in **dialogue and partnership** with partner countries;

III. increase its **internal coherence and coordination**;

IV. **mainstream democratic values** into governance assistance;

V.   strengthen **international cooperation** with other institutions; and

VI. create **more visibility** for its democracy support actions.

At the same time, the newly created EEAS was entering the scene, generating hopes inside the European democracy support community that the newly adopted approach would get a strong supporter that could take the lead in transitioning it into practice. It was helpful in this regard that the aforementioned principles responded to longstanding demands of many organisations working on democracy support, reflecting at last an emerging consensus among academics and practitioners about *how* democratic processes should be supported. After all, who would argue against the need for the EU – or indeed any other international organisation – to apply a country-specific approach or to create true partnerships through dialogue and consultations?

What had proved difficult in the past, however, was to ensure that principles such as the ones mentioned in the Council Conclusions translated into democracy support actions in the field. The simple truth is that international organisations like the EU are just too big to change course overnight. Even when institutional and policy change has been agreed at the highest political level, the bureaucracies charged with implementing that change face the difficult task of overcoming path dependencies, existing organisational cultures, and the dynamics already in place between different organisational units.

So when DG DEVCO launched a restricted call for proposals in 2011 with the unusual focus of implementing the EU Agenda for Action on Democracy Support, hopes were raised within the democracy support community. For EPD, this call represented indeed a unique opportunity to propose concrete ideas on how the EU could provide better democracy support to its partner countries, based on the practical experiences and good practices identified by the community of practitioners that constitute its network. Making sure that the Council Conclusions and Agenda for Action would go beyond a mere elaborate declaration of principles but that they would actually lead to better EU democracy support on the ground was the top priority for the organisation, which was

created in 2008 precisely with the purpose of advocating for better EU policies in support of democratic change.

Together with seven partner organisations, EPD set out on a two-year long journey that would eventually result in the publication of this Handbook. This journey was made possible by the European Commission, which awarded EPD a grant to run the Integrated Support Programme for Inclusive Reform and Democratic Dialogue (INSPIRED), investing in an innovative approach that could generate important lessons for the practice of democracy support. The programme's name, INSPIRED, reflects its focus on reform-orientated dialogue, with the aim to make this process more inclusive and participatory.

Working as a Community of Practice

Mobilising the knowledge and experience of two members of its network – the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and Club de Madrid (CdM) – and building on the capacities and insights of organisations based in five different countries (Ghana, Kyrgyzstan Moldova, Morocco and Tunisia), INSPIRED embodies the *raison d'être* of the Community of Practice. Implemented simultaneously at local and international level, the programme enabled EPD to explore how the high-level principles contained in the EU Agenda for Action on Democracy Support could be translated into practice (or in other words, how they could be 'operationalised'). More importantly, INSPIRED allowed EPD and its partners to draw lessons from the field that became the basis for the development of the Operating Model, which is presented in Chapters II and III of this Handbook.

NIMD and CdM provided guidance and advice on engaging two crucial sets of stakeholders in the dialogue process: political parties and high-level decision-makers. Both organisations are highly experienced in working within an environment where trust between political and societal forces is absent, conditions which therefore make it very challenging to strike agreements among stakeholders on pragmatic solutions for the problems that their constituencies face on a daily basis. NIMD and CdM's main role in INSPIRED was therefore to advise the local partners, in charge of organising and managing the dialogue processes, on how to apply to the field of multi-stakeholder dialogue the sort of "politically smart methods" (Carothers and De Gramont 2013) that take into account and build on the political realities on the ground.

From its part, NIMD brought to the programme a wealth of knowledge and techniques on how to involve political parties in dialogue settings, a feat that proved invaluable to the programme's local partners.

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> **Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)**
>
> NIMD is one of the most experienced organisations working in political party support. Its approach towards inter-party cooperation stands in contrast with traditional political foundations, which give bilateral organisational support to their ideological peers. As such, NIMD works through a combination of capacity-strengthening activities and platforms for inter-party dialogue. Its main goal is to improve the political party landscape and democratic system of partner countries as a whole by ensuring that its support goes beyond the institutional benefit of the political parties as individual organisations. NIMD has developed extensive experience and good practices with regards to interpersonal exchange among high-level personalities in society, trust-building between political parties, and balancing the need for transparency (for the sake of public accountability) with the need for confidentiality (for the sake of trust- building).

NIMD's main mission is to convince political parties of the need for them to be rooted in society and to aggregate citizens' interests. To this effect, one of its key objectives is to foster more structural relationships between civil and political society. This has also been one of the cornerstones of NIMD's contribution to INSPIRED, which was designed as a multi-stakeholder dialogue programme, including public officials, civil society organisations and political parties as key players in the democratic decision-making process.

In this vein, NIMD advised the local INSPIRED partners in Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco and Tunisia on how to involve political party representatives in a dialogue by catering to their specific needs and interests. Indeed, political parties are used to operating from a particular perspective of the public good, while also engaging in opportunistic deal-making (in contrast to many civil society organisations with a clear-cut constituency demand). As a result, distrust between different stakeholder groups (civil society, political parties and government) as a consequence of unfamiliarity in working with each other risks blocking the dialogue process.

NIMD furthermore advised the local partners on how to wisely balance bilateral and/or confidential meetings with multiple stakeholders and/or public settings. In this context, NIMD's experience in choosing the right wording in messaging proved helpful to the local partners, who had the difficult task of bringing around to the same table a wide range of political and social actors. Finally, NIMD helped the local partners develop realistic ambitions that helped them facilitate agreements among the stakeholders at an appropriate political and policy level.

Complementing the work of NIMD, the Club de Madrid supported the local partners in securing a political buy-in at the highest political level. This was done through regular advice given to the local partners as well as several high-level missions by its 'members'; i.e. former Presidents and Prime Ministers.

The Club de Madrid (CdM)

CdM is the world´s largest independent group of democratic political leaders, committed to addressing the challenges of democratic transition and consolidation where they can make a difference. Its almost 100 Members from more than 60 countries share their diverse expertise, knowledge, experience and networks in support of democratic values and leadership worldwide. As former Presidents and Prime Ministers no longer in public office, CdM members are not politically constrained and thus freer to share their experience

and offer strategic advice and counsel to other political leaders, governments, and civil society.

Its practical and results-oriented approach, based on direct and concrete exchanges between the members and current leaders grants interaction at the highest political levels.

Based on the premise that democratic values cannot be imposed from the outside but rather must be nurtured to grow from within, CdM works hand-in-hand with national and local leaders, from governments, inter-governmental and civil society organisations, as well as with academia and the business sector, in the identification of politically sustainable solutions to the challenges they are facing. This is done through developing spaces for constructive dialogue, recommendations, action plans, implementation strategies as well as building bridges and fostering dialogue as essential prerequisites for sustainable social and political transformation.

Drawing on the members' experience, convening power and access, CdM works in two key areas: addressing global challenges from a democratic perspective and supporting democratic transition and consolidation processes.

Over the past 12 years, CdM has been engaged with numerous partners in thematic programmes or discussions on global challenges such as terrorism, global governance, climate change, social inclusion - including women's empowerment, the rights of ethnic or religious minorities, and the promotion of inclusive societies.

The organisation, along with its members, support country and region-specific democratic transition and reform processes through projects in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as in Bolivia, Ecuador, Timor Leste, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, and Haiti, amongst others. These projects have focused on promoting consensus among key political and social stakeholders around processes of democratic transition and/or reform. The organisation fosters and supports regional capacities to prevent conflicts and within countries, resolve conflicts, and helps reconcile opposing positions.

Throughout the development and implementation of INSPIRED, CdM worked closely with the different partners to secure a buy-in by policy makers at the highest political levels and to promote policy change through dialogue processes. On the local level, CdM advised the partners on policy processes, facilitated a variety of trust-building interventions, engaged in strategic dialogue with different interlocutors, provided visibility to the work of the local partners and access to high-level strategic leaders and government, while sharing specific experiences and knowledge on the relevant country themes.

About INSPIRED

Launched on 17 September 2012, INSPIRED was an ambitious programme from the start, as it was to operate in five different countries in parallel, while collecting lessons learned and best practices throughout implementation. The ultimate goal was to demonstrate that the new principles of the 'Agenda for Action on EU Democracy Support' could indeed be put into practice in very diverse contexts; whether in the European neighbourhood, Africa, Asia or elsewhere in the world.

In this regard, it would not have made any sense to stay rooted on the theoretical or abstract level, as the aim was to propose a new approach that could be replicated on the ground and in different contexts. On the contrary, the INSPIRED partners had to create the conditions in which they could observe whether things worked out as planned. In other words, the Operating Model could not be drawn out of abstract notions and academic knowledge alone, but had to be developed and duly tested in the field, so that knowledge could be generated from the bottom-up; thus the importance of the pilot projects.

The pilot projects

In **Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco and Tunisia**, INSPIRED aimed to promote a culture of dialogue and trust by facilitating dialogue between key stakeholders on one collectively identified policy issue per country. All five target countries had recently been identified by the EU as priority countries for democracy support following the adoption of the EU Agenda for Action, for a number of reasons[6]: Notably, all five where going through processes of profound political transformation; and thus every case could provide an example to follow or avoid.

Despite these broad similarities, each of the pilot countries presented a distinct set of challenges that required tailor-made solutions for engaging stakeholders in inclusive and participatory dialogue. As a result, the dialogue process focused on different topics and involved different sets of stakeholder groups in each of the countries. It was precisely this diversity that made the whole endeavour so interesting, because it helped EPD and its partners to better understand how and under which conditions external actors can successfully promote principles such as inclusiveness and participation in policy dialogue settings.

However, it was also clear from the very beginning that the programme could not create 'laboratory-like' conditions to ensure absolute methodological soundness and that there was no way to 'prove' that the Operating Model resulting from INSPIRED could work in any other context. Despite this, the programme could provide some invaluable information and observations on how the partner organisations in Tunisia, Moldova, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan and Morocco put key assumptions, principles and tools into practice. The diversity of policy areas and constellations of stakeholders was crucial, as it provided

[6] Council conclusions on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations - 2010 Progress Report and list of proposed pilot countries. 3058th Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 13 December 2010.

a broad basis for comparative analysis and the identification of lessons and good practices.

In order to implement INSPIRED along these lines, **EPD needed to find reliable local partners** with a sound track record in their respective countries and a reputation for being impartial. This is a characteristic that is hard to achieve in transitional contexts that are often marked by high levels of polarisation. Impartiality was key, as the local partners were to act as 'honest brokers', hosting the dialogue process and ensuring that the core values of the approach – inclusiveness and participation – were to be respected and actively promoted.

EPD focused on testing certain assumptions and observing how things worked out in the different countries. To ensure that the dialogue processes and their results could be assessed and compared, the local partners were asked to follow specially developed programme guidelines that outlined a set of common methodological requirements. Those included sections about the guiding principles of the dialogue processes (inclusiveness and participation) as well as concrete advice on how to facilitate the process in a way that would ensure that those principles (or values) are respected.

In each of the five countries, the local partners invited relevant stakeholders to take part in that process based on their influence on policy change and on the degree to which they would be affected by any change in the targeted policy area. Based on a collective analysis of the problems at hand and supplied by specially commissioned research, the stakeholders discussed potential solutions for those problems. In four of the five countries, the dialogue process led to a consensus among the participating stakeholders on more or less concrete reform priorities, reflected in Roadmaps and Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform. Finally, INSPIRED promoted those documents vis-à-vis the government and donors present in the countries as a fertile ground upon which further action should be taken.

In parallel to running the pilot projects, **EPD and its partners were drawing lessons from the different policy dialogue processes** with a view to developing an Operating Model for the facilitation of inclusive and participatory policy dialogue that could show the way towards a more integrated approach to democracy support and institution-building. This Operating Model should provide the EU – and any other donor interested in multi-stakeholder policy dialogue – with a practical framework and guidance for translating the six principles of the Council Conclusions into concrete actions. Two of those principles – country-specific approach, and dialogue and partnership – were addressed directly in the five pilot projects.

Each of the INSPIRED pilot projects focused on dialogue and the particular reform needs of each specific country. As a first step, when choosing which issue to address, EPD, NIMD and CdM relied on the knowledge and experience of partner organisations based in these countries. Moreover, the scope and focus of the dialogue was adapted according to the respective local context, ranging from very wide and general in Tunisia to very specific and technical in Moldova.

Second, the pilot projects centred on a series of dialogue events involving local stakeholders of relevance in the selected policy areas. The goal was to demonstrate that it is possible to work in a constructive way with different kinds of public institutions, interest groups and civil society organisations towards achieving policy change. In doing so, INSPIRED helped domestic stakeholders to plant the seed that donors can then water by providing further assistance for institution and capacity building.

Third, the Roadmaps resulting from the dialogue processes provided the EU, its Member States and other donors with a domestically owned agenda for reform upon which they can build further actions of support and which can help them better coordinate their respective programming mechanisms. In this regard, the **Integrated Support Framework** that the Operating Model puts forth (presented in Chapter III) offers donors a user-friendly tool for navigating and understanding the relations and balance of power underlying policy reform.

The other three principles – mainstreaming, international cooperation and visibility – were much harder to address through an intervention like INSPIRED, as their realisation relies heavily on the way the EU acts in its partner countries and in international forums. Nevertheless, the Operating Model addresses all six principles in an effort to make democracy support and governance reform more comprehensive and effective.

Unfortunately, the INSPIRED approach to policy dialogue didn't work in Morocco for a number of reasons. Most importantly, the initial impetus following the recent events linked to the Arab Spring was not followed up with a real opening of the institutional mechanisms, which would allow meaningful participation of civil society in the political process. Despite the efforts of EPD and its partners, the project entered into a vicious cycle of continuous redefinition of its scope and priorities, which ended up blocking the whole dialogue endeavour and eventually resulted in the cancellation of the Moroccan component of the programme.

The experiences of the remaining four INSPIRED partners in organising the policy dialogue have been included as case studies in this handbook (see Annex). The lessons learnt from the dialogue processes in Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tunisia are indeed the main basis for the Operating Model presented in Chapters II and III of this Handbook. In addition, the Operating Model also benefited from input and good practices shared by practitioners working in fields that are closely related to inclusive and participatory policy dialogue and donor alignment with domestically identified reform priorities.

Integrating the voices of practitioners

Coming towards the end of the pilot projects, EPD decided to ask practitioners and experts from around the world to assess the findings and lessons identified throughout the implementation of INSPIRED and share their own experiences. Three fields of work or sub-sectors in the broader sector of democracy support were of particular interest, as they are closely related to the Operating Model; i) policy dialogue, ii) mediation and peace-building, and iii) technical assistance.

A website was created where users could share information on projects and initiatives, highlighting interesting insights on a number of questions of key importance for the Operating Model, such as the following:

- How to ensure sustainability of multi-stakeholder policy dialogue through inclusiveness and participation?

- How to match needs and opportunities?

- How to build multi-stakeholder policy dialogue based on evidence?

- How to analyse, promote and preserve trust dynamics in policy dialogue processes?

- How to work with elites without neglecting accountability?

- How to orient dialogue towards results?

- How to make evidence-based advocacy work in practice?

- How to ensure accountability of dialogue participants?

- How to bridge inclusive dialogue on policy reform and the programming of aid/technical assistance?

Practitioners working for donors such as UNDP, the African Development Bank, the Spanish MFA and the European Union as well as NGOs and private sector organisations such as Interpeace, Platform for Dialogue and Peace, the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), In Transformation Initiative, Collective Leadership Institute, Toledo Centre for Peace, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Demo Finland, CIVIO, ADELANTE, amongst others, took part in this experience sharing exercise. Some of their insights and key remarks have inspired the approach of the Operating Model and are presented as quotations in Chapter II.

Apart from sharing their best practices on the INSPIRED website, **over 30 practitioners and academics took part in a workshop in Madrid**, organised by CdM in July 2014. The discussions evolved around techniques for facilitating dialogue, building trust and consensus, monitoring policy implementation and aligning democracy aid with domestic reform priorities, among many other issues.

Most interestingly, the majority of comments and contributions by the participants boiled down to one key message for the international donor community: if you want to provide support to local stakeholders in finding

sustainable solutions for development obstacles, you must fundamentally change the ways in which you deliver democracy support.

In particular, the participants stressed the need to engage in dialogue and reform processes with a much wider range of domestic stakeholders, going beyond donor-to-government programming of aid and donor-to-CSO consultations. Moreover, they spoke out in favour of new approaches for donor-implementation agent relations that are built on a real partnership, helping donors to better understand the political realities in target countries, while allowing those responsible for implementation to innovate in the delivery of support. It was this singular call for a more strategic engagement of donors that confirmed the decision of the INSPIRED partners to design the Operating Model for a wide range of practitioners, those working in non-state organisations and those working for donors.

The following conclusions and recommendations resulted from the knowledge-sharing process. They are listed here because they confirm the main findings of the INSPIRED pilot projects.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Providing support to democracy and good governance requires the understanding of the political dimension of change, which means conflicting positions, vested interests, etc. Donors need to develop methods and tools that take into account the political realities underlying political and developmental change.

- Considering that democracy needs to come from within societies, donors can only act as catalysts of transformation processes. However, taking into account the fact that real democratic ownership must be based on the widest consensus possible, donors should 'secure their investments' by ensuring that positions advanced by recipient governments really represent the needs and demands of their societies.

- Sector reform and public policies offer fruitful ground for conducting effective dialogue, as they are halfway between the political and the technical spheres and thus enable the kind of constructive and evidence-based debate that can nurture trust and mutual understanding amongst confronted actors in polarised societies. Donors should promote democratic dialogue, favouring a focus on concrete issues that can be addressed through public policies.

- Policy is about the attribution of values. Donors must remain impartial but can never be entirely neutral, as they obviously aim at promoting certain values. They should not be afraid to assert those values that lie at the very core of democracy; particularly inclusiveness and participation.

- Cooperation initiatives for institution building are likely to be more legitimate, sustainable and effective when they are based on domestically owned agendas for policy reform. Donors should make

the effort to align their assistance with those policies that domestic stakeholders (but not only governments) really want.

- Traditional accountability mechanisms within donor bureaucracies tend to focus on planned outputs, predictable results and pre-determined levels of expenditure, which do not correspond to the reality of political change and policy reform. Donors need to adapt their rules and procedures to allow for new modalities of supporting democratic processes; more specifically concentrating on flexibility, responsiveness and an eye for the politics of developmental change.

- Failure is an inevitable and crucial element in any learning process. Donors and practitioners should embrace the concept of failure and together overcome their defensive attitude towards it. Instead they should turn those experiences into positive lessons that can help them design better – and more importantly – more realistic support strategies and actions.

- Democracy is the sum of many overlapping processes. Rigid frameworks (like log-frames) often prevent donors and practitioners alike from capturing unintended positive results. Donors should consider alternative frameworks and tools for monitoring and evaluating democracy support projects, including projects focused on policy dialogue.

INSPIRING DEMOCRACY

OPERATING MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY POLICY DIALOGUE

INSPIRED

EIDHR

II. THE APPROACH

General considerations

The approach proposed in this Operating Model is twofold: it aims, on the one hand, to explore means of enhancing the culture of dialogue in transition contexts, which are often polarised and lack a political environment conducive to trust-building and mutual understanding between social and political stakeholders. On the other hand, it aims at providing the EU and other donors and practitioners with practical insight into what works and what doesn't when it comes to supporting locally-led processes of change.

The Model is built on the experiences from implementing the pilot projects, as described in the Annex of this Handbook. These pilot projects were designed and geared at promoting a culture of dialogue in their specific country contexts, through their specific focus on different policy issues relevant to the particularities and needs of each country. This task was linked to the second main objective of INSPIRED: 'operationalising' the Council Conclusions on Democracy Support in EU External Relations and its 'Agenda for Action'. To do so, abstract principles needed to be translated into concrete actions. To avoid being too prescriptive, EPD decided to design an 'Operating Model', which identifies the features, dynamics and driving forces that donors need to address if they want to support inclusive and participatory policy dialogue processes.

The authors believe that posing the right questions can be more enlightening and constructive than proposing all-encompassing answers that in reality do not fit the multifaceted challenges and diverse circumstances faced in the field. Thus, while presenting practical guidance to donors that want to support 'INSPIRED-like' processes, the Operating Model also leaves enough room for tailoring assistance to the requirements and needs of local beneficiaries. As was mentioned earlier, it is not meant to reinvent the wheel. On the contrary, the Model draws extensively from existing methods, mechanisms and experience, gathered through extensive research and consultations of a wide number of practitioners, in addition to the lessons learnt from the pilot projects.

Still, there is no magic formula for fostering a culture of dialogue and trust, and many factors – including social, economic, cultural and obviously political – are at play in contexts of democratic transition. All that practitioners and donors can do in such circumstances is to identify dynamics and power relations among domestic stakeholders and try to facilitate or 'nurture' dialogue to enhance mutual understanding. This requires, first and foremost, the nurturing of trust among public authorities and civil and political society stakeholders, which will enable them to reach a consensus on necessary policy reforms that will benefit their entire societies. The Operating Model is based on the assumption that **Policy Dialogue** represents one of the most pragmatic approaches to 'move around' entrenched positions in polarised societies,

as it allows domestic actors to adopt a constructive attitude towards each other by focusing on shared problems.

Luckily, there is no need to start from scratch. All the main donors have been supporting multi-stakeholder consultation mechanisms for many years, while at the same time carrying out policy dialogue, albeit in a way that has involved almost exclusively the recipient governments. As such, the EU admits in its Communication on 'EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies' that *"...[The EU] has conducted policy dialogues primarily with government partners in the past. That said, it has also acquired some positive experiences of multi-stakeholder dialogues."* The Communication further states, that *"the EU should actively promote more inclusive policy dialogues and support the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in reform processes."*[7]

Opening up the existing policy dialogue mechanisms to other domestic stakeholders seems a pragmatic and cost-effective option. What the Operating Model proposes is to shift the axis from vertical to horizontal, and the scope from bilateral to multilateral (or multi-stakeholder); a simple shift with startling consequences: by enhancing the inclusiveness of policy dialogue, donors would be able to promote the active participation of those groups and institutions that would be affected by policy reform, thus 'elegantly' applying pressure on partner governments to:

I.   put their words into practice and **show their real commitment towards the principle of accountability**;

II.   **acknowledge the existence of interest groups**, bringing to the surface the pressures they receive which influences their behaviour, and therefore helping to identify the vested interests that underpin and influence the policy in question; and

III.   to **search for a common ground** that satisfies the greatest number of stakeholders, and thus avoiding the potentially exclusive rule of a majority.

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[7] EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, JOIN(2012) 27 final.

> "Ensuring the sustainability of international interventions requires a more comprehensive approach than just working with the government, as you never know when the opposition can come to power. But you do know that if they haven't been previously consulted, the intervention might be in jeopardy as you risk that the reform is rejected and the new government may want to start everything again from scratch."
>
> **José Carlos Ferrer**
> *Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor*
> *MDG-F Secretariat, United Nations*
> *Development Programme*
> *Spain*

Moreover, a basic consensus among the main stakeholders also increases the chances for devising sustainable solutions, as drastic changes in the proposed policy would be less likely in the event of a change in government leadership. This would enhance the effectiveness of domestic policies and increase the sustainability of reforms as well as donor initiatives that aim to support them. As the European Commission acknowledges in another recent Communication entitled 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development', "*Civil society participation in public policy processes and in policy dialogue leads to inclusive and effective policies, if conjugated with adequate allocation of resources and sound management.*"[8]

So in the current state of the affairs, inclusive policy dialogue seems to be one of the most suitable tools available to promote, consolidate and maintain a democratic culture. Indeed, it allows the international community to sidestep the frequently invoked principle of sovereignty, which more often than not, seeks to protect vested interests and ultimately hinders any attempt of addressing the political factors which handicap development. Instead, if well articulated with measures of conditionality in line with the so called "more for more" principle[9], it forces the government and the traditional stakeholders to open access to their game and accept other actors as also having a stake, and therefore a right to input and influence the policy process.

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[8] The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations, COM (2012) 492 final.

[9] Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean Brussels, 8.3.2011, COM(2011) 200 final.

"What is critical for building trust is the legitimacy and credibility of the organisation that is leading the initiative. To build trust doesn't only require a lot of time, it also implies engaging on advocacy activities so as to reinforce this trust by projecting it towards the outside."

Habib Attia
Donor Relationship Officer
Making Finance Work for Africa
African Development Bank
Tunisia

To put it in economic terms, by implementing INSPIRED-like dialogue processes, donors could help to suppress or lower the barriers of entry to the 'market' of policy-making. This would indeed be a strategic move forward considering the importance that the EU places on involving all relevant stakeholders in development and democracy-related discussions, while acknowledging their important role in domestic reforms and their capacity to highlight shortcomings, suggest solutions and monitor the commitment of public authorities towards the transition process.

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This approach, accordingly, reflects the EU's own intention to *"...invest more in promoting, supporting and monitoring effective mechanisms for result-oriented dialogues, emphasising their multi-stakeholder dimension. National or sectoral policy dialogues should include all concerned actors, such as CSOs and the private sector where relevant, and partner governments, local authorities, parliaments and other national institutions."* [10]

Nevertheless, the Operating Model aims to make a contribution that goes beyond advice on how to plan and organise multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. Its main added value is that it steers inclusive and participatory processes towards concrete results that can inform the planning of technical assistance, capacity-building, sector reform and other governance programmes. The Model therefore includes a tool that has been specifically designed to provide donors with a comprehensive overview of the challenges and needs that they can address through international cooperation, without neglecting the political consequences of their interventions: the '**Integrated Support Framework'** (presented in Chapter II).

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[10] The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations, COM (2012) 492 final.

Where to start when lacking a theory of change

One of the most surprising aspects of democracy support and governance reform – and development aid in general – is the lack of clear models providing a path to success.[11] This poses a serious dilemma with regards to the role that external agents (such as donors, international NGOs and individual practitioners) can or should play in supporting other countries in their transitions to democracy and/or its consolidation.

Common wisdom holds that democratic change can only happen from within. Therefore it must be domestically driven; context specific and involve a number of political factors and overlapping processes that cannot be replicated in the exact same way in other contexts; and have a considerable amount of time, as it requires a change of mind-set, attitudes and political culture. Lastly, democratic change is strongly sensitive to external influence, which can easily produce unintended consequences, both positive and negative.

There is an array of academic literature analysing successful transition processes and drawing important lessons from them, but these kinds of comprehensive analyses are always done *ex-post*. It can hardly be otherwise and, in any case, it has not proved very fruitful for practitioners to try to have an *ex-ante* appraisal of the factors operating in a given context.

> "There is no silver bullet that can be applied to every problem. For certain areas in social sciences we have a very strong theory –we know that if we do this, then we'll get that outcome–, but if the project is about promoting a dialogue that will identify some priorities that are common to domestic stakeholders, then we have a very weak theory on how to achieve that. Some donors, such as SIDA, can use a log-frame, but thinking of it as a hypothesis; then you go into the field to learn that A led to B but B didn't led to C because in order to get that effect we need to go another way. In other words: you revise your theory or hypothesis. That is failure, OK, but failure is an opportunity for learning. So there is nothing wrong with a log-frame of a roadmap as long as you're allowed to revise it."
>
> **Staffan Ingemar Lindberg**
> *Principal Investigator*
> *V-Dem, Varieties of Democracy*
> *Sweden*

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[11] Over a decade ago, Carothers (2003) was already pointing out the flaws of an approach that somewhat surprisingly seems to still have many advocates. *"The basic idea is that if the institutions can be changed to fit the models, the rule of law will emerge. This breathtakingly mechanistic approach to rule-of-law development—a country achieves the rule of law by reshaping its key institutions to match those of countries that are considered to have the rule of law—quickly ran into deeply embedded resistance to change in many countries."*

On the contrary, thinking in too big terms and trying to encompass all the aspects that play a determinant role can easily lead to paralysis. Indeed, Foresti calls for a lowering of expectations and a more realistic assessment of external actors' capabilities in assisting democratic change. "*In response to this challenge and to the increasingly recognised complexity of democracy support, donors have begun to learn some important lessons and to reassess the impact and sustainability of external interventions. Above all, there is a growing acceptance of the need to be realistic about what external actors can achieve*" (Foresti 2011).

The authors of this Handbook therefore, believe that donors and practitioners need to be humble enough to admit that, at least for the time being, they are lacking a consistent theory of change, and that no theoretical framework can fully grasp the complexities of real-life politics and democratic change.

This should, however, not be interpreted as a surrender. On the contrary, it allows practitioners to remain flexible and therefore context-specific enough by focusing on the actual driving forces that are susceptible to producing meaningful change in a given country. Nonetheless, this adaptability needs to be informed by a set of principles or core values that should act as 'red lines' for both donors and practitioners, not to be trespassed if the partner government wants to pursue cooperation. Instead of putting too much effort into conceiving 'theories of change', external supporters should focus more on identifying on-going or nascent processes of change that can have a positive influence on the democratic culture, and support those processes, while ensuring that certain rules of the game are being respected.

Taking politics into account

In its Joint Communication on 'EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies'[12] the European Commission acknowledges the central role that inclusive political processes and governance play in consolidating democracy. Not incidentally, the Democracy Profiles currently being developed by EU Delegations focus on analysing the state of democracy and point out problems with institutions or processes in 12 priority countries, ensuring better linkages between political dialogue and programming of concrete assistance projects. This effort to appraise the specificities of each of the 12 local contexts and to identify the obstacles that may hinder reform is part of the comprehensive approach that the EU is currently trying to put in place, in spite of the difficulties that plunging into the political dynamics of the partner countries might entail.

As a matter of fact not only the EU, but every international donor that tries to dig down to the level of politics, with its vested interests and fights for power, will almost inevitably end up facing the resistance of partner governments, which will naturally interpret this line of work as an intrusion into their domestic affairs. The fact is that since the Declaration of Paris, many aid recipient governments have made use of the principle of national ownership as a sort

[12] Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies, SWD(2012) 282 final.

of shield against foreign scrutiny of their democracy and human rights performance records.

> "It is clear that policy reform is not neutral. Very often you have a policy reform in a given sector where the assessment is being carried out by a given institution that can be perceived in developing countries as having its own perspective. When reform is implemented based on this perspective, a number of civil society organizations can object to it and refuse it. They may feel that the data presented as evidence and the new policy framework only aim at supporting that perspective."
>
> **Ibrahim Awad**
> *Professor of Practice at the Public Policy and Administration Department, The American University in Cairo Egypt*

On the other hand, if partner governments are supposed to have stronger control over the aid that they are receiving, it is only logical that donors want to ensure that those funds are spent in a way and for purposes that meet the basic standards of good governance. Far from contributing to enhancing the of aid, the circle of mutual dependency between donors and partner governments is turning vicious in nature instead of going virtuous, hindering therefore the establishment of true and open partnerships.[13]

All in all, the principle of country ownership has been interpreted in a very restrictive manner, as if the partner governments were the only actors in charge of promoting development within their societies. This interpretation does not bode well for the widely accepted principles of inclusiveness, participation, transparency or accountability.

There is no doubt that governments are the depositaries of national sovereignty, and so, in charge of managing the aid flowing into their countries. But one could also argue that those same governments should be required to adhere to a set of principles or **core values** agreed with the donors if they want to continue receiving aid on behalf of their citizens. And donors – it could further be argued – should refrain from taking sides in domestic affairs or adopting positions that could be considered as partisan.

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[13] In the recent book by International IDEA, Lekvall (2013) remembers what Krzysztof Stanowski, Under-Secretary of State for Development Cooperation in Poland, said at the aid forum in Busan in 2011: "ownership has to be more than the president, his wife and his cousins". She follows on by giving some hints about the reasons why the principle of ownership risks becoming an obstacle to democratisation: *"A key characteristic of aid relations is that they are built on state-to-state relations: multilateral and bilateral transfers of financial resources or knowledge from one or several governments to another. Agreeing and making deals with the executive arm of government was—and still is—self-evident in international relations. It is puzzling, however, that aid ministers who are under continual scrutiny through the democratic process at home still accept that citizens of partner countries can be denied a similar process to determine how aid money is spent. It is perhaps even more curious that they have wanted to portray their relationship with these governments as a close partnership."*

While donors will never be neutral for the simple reason that they also have interests at stake, they should do everything they can to be perceived as impartial in delivering assistance. Their mission should therefore consist of facilitating democratic dialogue and opening policy spaces, ensuring their inclusiveness and participation, what Floridi and Sanz-Corella call "un rôle d'observateur critique" (Floridi et al. 2009). By doing so, donors can be politically savvy without meddling into domestic affairs or advancing particular agendas.

> "The issue of 'ownership' is not only an issue between a donor and recipient government, it also applies when NIMD or its partners facilitate an interparty dialogue for political parties in a given country. Within these processes organisations like ours can also not claim to be a 'neutral' facilitator providing technical assistance and fully adhering to 'local demands'. We therefore prefer to underline that we are impartial and independent, as we have a set of clear principles we always adhere to. So nowadays we rather speak of 'joint ownership' between NIMD and its partners as facilitators on the one hand, and the collective interests as well as different opinions of all political parties as participants in the dialogue process on the other hand. By highlighting that we feel we do more justice to the specific role and position each of the actors has."
>
> **Pepijn Gerrits**
> *Director of Programmes*
> *Netherlands Institute for*
> *Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)*

Going beyond the technical

This role as a 'critical observer' represents a shift from the traditional attitude of donors who, for the sake of neutrality, usually present themselves as providers of 'technical' knowledge. This kind of expertise is not to be neglected; it can be a very useful when it comes to offering an array of choices to inform decision-making. Yet in reality, the reasons underpinning the final choice by the provider as well as the recipient of the assistance are seldom purely technical.[14] Even worse, technical assistance often doesn't fit into the institutional and administrative framework of the partner country, thus broadening existing capacity gaps and producing unintended negative impact.

What makes inclusive and participatory policy dialogue such a promising tool is that it is not just about know-how, evidence or technicalities, but also – one could even say mainly – about political values (AusAID 2011).

[14] "There is a growing recognition that actors' beliefs and values – ideas about how the world works and what should be valued – play a key part in shaping policy decision-making. Policies that fit with the values of key actors may be taken up even if they appear to go against their self-interest, while actors may refuse to accept arguments that run counter to ideologies and beliefs, even in the face of strong evidence" (Jones 2013).

Thus if donors, aid recipients and practitioners want to make the most of it, a change of mind-set is needed. Other instruments used according to the same spirit, such as high-level technical advice or exchanges of experiences between policy-makers are interesting, but they fall short of grasping the political reality and promoting actual change. In other words, no recipe works without the right mix of local ingredients.

> "What is most difficult is to align the local and the international point of views around a given policy issue and its possible solutions. Instead of drafting everything from the standpoint of an expert, we need to encourage dialogue and exchange that can help to achieve a shared vision on the problems that are to be tackled, and to build domestic ownership on the potential solutions."
>
> **Jorge Vázquez Costa**
> *Assistant Deputy Director for Foreign Policy*
> *Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
> *Spain*

The time has come to shift from standardised best practices to a tailor-made and country-specific approach. In order to find the most appropriate method, donors need to first gain a better understanding of the politics in the countries they want to support. Every reform entails, by definition, a change in the balance of power among the different societal forces, which means that politics has always been – and will remain – a key variable of the equation.

It is about time that this fact is acknowledged and that practitioners act accordingly.[15] Obvious as it may seem, understanding policy requires taking into consideration the broad set of factors in play behind what is usually called 'political will'. In other words, it implies dealing with the domestic system of values, interests and beliefs.

Scientific terms such as 'evidence' or 'expert' have often been used to highlight the presumed neutrality of external donors, so as not to bring about questions concerning the legitimacy of those interventions (Jones et al. 2012). This double discourse has often led to mistrust and mutual disappointment. It is important to recognise that any kind of support is driven by values, especially when working on democratisation or good governance.

It is equally crucial to admit and state the values that condition donor support. Furthermore, donors need to also anchor those values in their operations in order to be credible. In this regard, 'less is more': if donors put forth fewer values but stick to them they will be perceived as being more credible and

[15] "What, then, can donors do to maximise the likelihood of making a positive contribution to democratic development? A first key step is the realisation that democracy assistance is fundamentally a political activity, requiring engagement with a variety of actors, including those outside donors' comfort zones, and that donors themselves are political actors" (Foresti and Harris 2011).

reliable by their partners than if they insist on promoting a wide range of values and principles without translating them into concrete policies and actions.

This premise can help donors enforce another type of conditionality: if the government wants to proceed with more ambitious programmes for sector reform, they will have to make sure that the priorities have been agreed according to an open dialogue process that respects the two core values of inclusiveness and participation, as outlined in the next section.

Two core values

Inclusiveness and participation, the two core values upon which the Operating Model is built, are simultaneously intrinsic and instrumental. They represent ends in themselves, especially when promoting democratic governance. At the same time, they also enhance the legitimacy of the dialogue process and reinforce the sustainability of the reform agenda set by the dialogue participants.

> "The institutions are accountable for those things that citizens or stakeholders are asking them to be accountable for. If you look at the last annual reports from DEVCO for the last 5 or 10 years you only have figures for commitments and disbursements, with nice pictures and graphics. They are mostly beautiful communication tools, with some general information on how much was spent. Yet, you don't have an idea of what they have done. Obviously they are accountable for expenditure and that is what comes out; if you ask them to be more accountable on dialogue, on processes, on the human dimension, then maybe you would see these as results."
>
> **Geraldo Carreiro**
> *Adelante Knowledge and Development Portugal*

Therefore, these two values should be equally measured against two backgrounds: the policy in question and the dialogue process itself. Each of the four completed INSPIRED pilot projects (Morocco having been cancelled early on due to lack of progress) promoted inclusiveness and participation at two levels: first as key values informing the objectives of the policy reform at stake, and second by informing the ways in which the dialogue process about those reforms was being conducted.

In INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan, for instance, not only was the dialogue process inclusive; it also aimed at making a public policy – on broadcasting - more inclusive, thus promoting more tolerant and pluralistic views of the multi-ethnic Kyrgyz society.

Both values, inclusiveness and participation, lay at the heart of the media reforms that were being promoted, enabling the inclusion of minorities and their participation in public life by granting them access to information in their own languages.

However, this goal could only be achieved by ensuring that the minorities themselves were represented and participated throughout the dialogue process. In the same vein, advocating for a greater political participation of women in Ghana was done through a platform composed mainly of women coming from all parts of the country. The same goes for the participatory dimension of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Action Plan in Moldova or the efforts to promote social justice in Tunisia.

Using values to guide actions turned out to be a challenging experience in practice. In particular, the following difficulties and lessons were identified:

- Being intangible by nature, **values are not easy to measure**. The following sections offer guidance on the type of indicators that may be helpful in this respect, although in order to be effective, indicators need to be developed at project level and on a case-by-case basis.

- **Values are not monolithic**. They take different shapes depending on the country context. In other words, they do not stand alone in society, but are influenced by other cultural norms that external actors can only understand through the eyes of local actors. This is why it is so important to adopt and follow a truly country-specific approach in the measurement of how these values are applied.

- Finally, **values are easily turned down for the sake of pragmatic measures** allowing donors and local implementing agents to reach short-term results. The problem with this 'short-sightedness' is that it comes at the expense of sustainability, which can only be attained if all the stakeholders (donors included) stay committed to shared values.

In summary, values can provide useful guidance to donors if they are defined in a simple, straightforward way, which allows for adaptation to the specific context in partner countries. Given the central role of the core values of inclusiveness and participation for the Operating Model, they will be discussed in some detail below.

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Inclusiveness

In recent years inclusiveness has become a fashionable attribute, the kind of notion that almost every organisation wanting to appear politically correct will highlight as being an integral part of its philosophy and *modus operandi*. The capacity to include others is perceived as the result of a positive openness of mind, the acceptance of different attitudes and opinions.

At the same time the concept implies a sort of hierarchical relation between the one that includes and the one that is being included. Indeed, such power relations and asymmetries must not be neglected but addressed in a constructive way throughout the dialogue. Trust and consensus-building efforts need to take those power asymmetries into account, as happened with INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan, where representatives from the Uzbek minority taking part in the dialogue process remained silent during the first and second round of meetings, before they finally overcame their initial distrust and fear of being co-opted for political reasons.

> "Successful projects on democracy support are those in which the implementer is given enough freedom so as to adjust to the context, either by establishing a simple hierarchy of goals or by involving the donor as part of the learning process resulting from the intervention."
>
> **Ivor Jenkins**
> *In Transformation Initiative*
> *South Africa*

This shows to what extent the notion of inclusiveness is twofold: it has an objective and a subjective dimension. The objective dimension refers to the mechanisms and practices for engaging and integrating those who are excluded, whereas the subjective dimension is related to a feeling of belonging, the recognition of one's personal value as part of a group (Ottone and Sojo 2007).

It is precisely the group or collective entity (society) that determines the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion, which are inextricably intertwined and constitute the main means by which the nation state deals with diversity. The more structural these dynamics are, the less they are called into question.[16]

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[16] In its Shared Societies Project (SSP) the Club de Madrid works globally with governments, institutions and leaders, advising them on the best approaches to build a shared society, i.e.: one in which all individuals and constituent groups hold status as equally contributing participants, free to express their differences while integrating their voices within the broader population. The project works at international, regional, national and local level with the firm believe that a shared society is constructed and nurtured through strong political leadership and that building shared societies is a multifaceted task; no single policy or practice can overcome division or distrust. More concretely, at national level, the Club de Madrid has been working in different countries such as South Africa, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal or Georgia on different specific themes, but always working on inclusiveness and how a Shared Society could be an advantage in a country, region or city. More information at: http://www.clubmadrid.org/img/secciones/SSP_Commitments_and_Approaches_for_Shared_Societies_260609.pdf

The first CdM mission to Kyrgyzstan was very revealing in this respect. During her visit, Former Canadian Prime Minister, Ms Kim Campbell met a series of key state, parliamentary, civil society and media stakeholders, including a group of parliamentarians from the Committee in charge of elaborating the country policy for moving towards digital broadcasting.[17]

By sharing the Canadian experience of how the country incorporated ethnic minority groups through media programmes and their role in national politics, Ms Campbell also highlighted the crucial role of parliament in the formulation of state media policy and in ensuring inclusiveness for achieving inter-ethnic consolidation in Kyrgyzstan.

The parliamentarians understood that the reason why minorities were struggling to become more assertive had to do with the tacit resistance of the Kyrgyz majority to acknowledging their basic cultural and linguistic rights. In their interventions, some MPs admitted never having approached the problem from this perspective or even having given a thought to it. Needless to say, the impact of Prime Minister Campbell's words wouldn't have been this strong if she hadn't had the political experience to address this kind of audience; which shows that exchanges of experience can have a real impact if they are tailored to the context and take place at the most relevant level. At their best, they can help to unlock positions and pave the way for consensus.

But even in the case of INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan, the stakeholders didn't recognise each other as valid interlocutors out of a sudden revelation. It would be rather naive to believe that Ms Campbell's words cast a spell on the Kyrgyz representatives. By looking at the wider context one can see the other forces that were in play: the transition to digital broadcasting and the resulting possibilities for multiplication of TV and radio programmes could place the Kyrgyz government in a difficult situation towards Russian, Uzbek and Kazakh broadcasting companies, which could easily acquire a dominant position in the new market, thus menacing the Kyrgyz government's cultural hegemony over its own territory.

This feeling of having the 'enemy at the gates', together with the strict timeframes in which the switch to digital broadcasting had to be made, pushed the Kyrgyz majority to adopt a more inclusive approach towards ethnic minorities and to perceive them as producers of TV and radio content that could counterbalance Russian influence.

Tricky as it may seem, the concept of inclusiveness – in its more evolved or so to say 2.0 version: social cohesion – has been largely discussed in Latin America, especially by the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in a quest for a remedy to a series of well-known social symptoms: high levels of violence, widespread corruption, pronounced individualism, political apathy, etc. (Prats 2009).

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[17] Specifically, Ms Campbell met with the Kyrgyz Republic's State Agency Director for Local Self-Government and Inter-Ethnic relations, project experts, the Vice Prime Minister, the Vice Speaker of the Parliament, civil society and media representatives, and the Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism, among others.

In this vein, a growing number of economists argue that **inclusiveness is not just a matter of ethics but also of outright efficiency**: while inclusive economic and political institutions boost growth, 'extractive' modes of government prevent societies from innovating. This is attributed to fear, as growth is based on what Schumpeter called 'creative destruction', a process that entails unpredictability and continuous reshuffling within the productive forces (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). From this standpoint, the socio-economic consequences of inclusion would even outweigh its political or ethical dimension, justifying even further a stronger stance by donors on promoting inclusiveness when negotiating assistance with partner governments.

There is ample evidence which highlights that inclusiveness is not only a key tenet of viable democracies (in terms of including people in political decision-making) but also for sustainable development. What has remained much less clear, however, is how inclusiveness can be reached concretely in different contexts.

As a first step towards making policies and societies at large more inclusive, donors need to understand who must be included and what are the challenges in opening the decision-making sphere to those that are currently excluded. Donors and practitioners have taken some noteworthy steps in that direction by introducing and refining methods and tools for Political Economy Analysis, which can help 'outsiders' draw a picture of the factors, institutions, actors, processes and implications for assistance providers (Carothers and De Gramont 2013).

Yet this kind of analysis fails to grasp the role that formal and informal institutions and power relations play in perpetuating inequalities, as it is conducted from a detached standpoint (Hudson and Leftwich 2013). Such a deeper, political understanding cannot be achieved by simply involving 'local expertise' in assessing the country context. Instead, donors and practitioners must engage in a much more complex effort, one of a deliberative nature in which domestic stakeholders can share and shape their perceptions of each other.

Consequently, the Operating Model foresees a 'collective assessment', whose aim is to help local stakeholders lay the groundwork on which the dialogue process will unfold; which explains the importance of participation as a second core value or guiding principle of the whole process.

Participation

The recent emphasis put by the European Union on the notion of 'deep democracy' brings to the fore the importance of going beyond a formalistic approach towards democracy that has allowed many rulers in EU partner countries to hide behind a façade of supposedly fair elections.

In many ways, participation is intrinsic to our understanding of democracy, either in the form of direct participation in decision-making or in the form of

indirect participation through the selection of representatives that make decisions on our behalf. However, there are different views among scholars and practitioners concerning this link between democracy and participation. Specifically, opinions range from an electoral conception centred on the idea that constituents validate the mandate of their representatives periodically, to a deliberative conception, which stresses the active participation of citizens in public affairs more generally.[18]

Yet for a long time (and still today) donors have been focusing most of their democracy support on electoral monitoring and observation, neglecting the **deliberative dimension of democracy** and of democratisation processes. Notwithstanding the importance of free and fair elections for laying the basis for further processes of democratic transformation, it is time for donors to move beyond that minimalistic understanding.

Paradoxically, it is becoming more and more difficult for donors to give prominence to a one-sided electoral vision of democracy in their assistance strategies, because this vision seems to be eroding inside their own societies. In almost all countries of the 'West', participation in elections has gone down over recent years. Voter turnout at the last elections to the European Parliament was the lowest ever in the EU's history.

With 42.54% participation that confirms a clear trend of decline in voter engagement since 1979, this domestic reality affects the way in which the EU is perceived outside its borders. As Youngs and Pishchikova put it: "...*[the] Eurozone crisis, which has shaken the foundations of the European system, makes it even more difficult to export technocratically oriented EU rules. Disseminating specificities of the EU model is less straightforward now, as the crisis has raised doubts about Europe's own democratic vitality*" (Youngs and Pishchikova 2013).

If feelings of apathy, contentment or alienation present a problem in longstanding democracies, their effects in transition contexts can be outright destructive, jeopardising the success of the whole democratisation endeavour. Donors should therefore openly and firmly **promote forms and channels of participation that go beyond voting**, building on the experience and good practices accumulated in this regard during the past last decades.

The truth is that participation has become another buzzword in the international development jargon, one of those terms that incorporate an almost exclusively positive connotation. Already considered a development goal since the late 1960s, participatory approaches gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, when aid agencies and governments started to integrate 'user groups' into development programmes in sectors such as rural development, health or education.

This client-oriented approach evolved into establishing or working through CSOs and grass-root organisations as more or less regular channels of citizen participation – leading, it was hoped, to better articulation of citizen's interests

[18] www.v-dem.net

through a broader and more sustained implication in the policy debate – as well as in the design of assistance programmes. Little by little, the donor community switched its initial focus of empowerment towards efficiency and, more recently, merged both of them into the notion of ownership or 'national' ownership.

> "Transparency doesn't mean much if citizens don't know what it means; so we do not only need laws granting access to information, but citizens to know that those laws are there and how to make use of them. Getting citizens engaged requires developing tools to educate, campaign, advocate and monitor what is happening in public life, because if we really want to improve the level of discourse, any debate needs to be based on actual data and information so as to avoid confusion or even manipulation from the media or politicians."
>
> **David Cabo**
> *Director, Fundación Ciudadana Civio*
> *Spain*

The renewed attention of donors to more participatory approaches towards development planning was expected to give voice to the least favoured, offering a platform for the poor to express their needs, and influence the type and focus of donor support actions.[19] These participatory needs assessments sometimes even evolved into fully-fledged planning documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (sponsored by the World Bank and the IMF), reaching a national scope or covering whole sectors, thereby opening policy dialogue to previously neglected actors. Nevertheless, these efforts were not sensitive enough towards the political reality underpinning the lack of representation in developing countries.

As such, it was very often left to the partner government to decide which actors were to be invited to take part in dialogues or consultation processes, to the effect that decision-making remained in most cases an exclusive affair of those on the inside or with close links to political power-holders. This shows that mere existence of mechanisms for consultation does not suffice to achieve meaningful participation by all relevant stakeholders.

Real participation requires at least the possibility to exert some influence on the decisions at stake, which is not necessarily the case when stakeholders are merely 'consulted'. This is especially important when it comes to civil society. Local CSOs and grass-root movements are only too frequently manipulated to rubber stamp decisions that have actually already been made by other, more influential stakeholders.

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[19] "Voices of the Poor", a comprehensive study lunched by the World Bank at the turn of the millennium to inform the World Development Report 2000/1 on Poverty and Development is seen as a landmark in this regard, as it represents the first large scale comparative research effort using participatory methods, as well as the first time in which the World Development Report drew on participatory research in a systematic fashion (Narayan et al. 1999).

In this respect, different 'Ladders of Participation' measuring the different levels of citizen engagement have been published since the late 1960's (Arnstein 1969). This 'grading' of participatory practice seems quite relevant, as it makes clear that different levels and forms of participation can convey different degrees of legitimacy to the outcomes of citizen engagement. After all, it is easy to see that there is a huge difference between being consulted on an issue and actively cooperating on addressing it.

Higher degrees of participation allow citizens to better understand the issue at hand, providing them with more opportunities to influence decision-making. However, there are also clear benefits for the government, as broad-based involvement in policy making allows officials to incorporate a diversity of opinions, values and ideas in their decisions, thereby minimising the risk of conflict or opposition to reforms at a later stage. This is particularly true with regards to those stakeholders that can reverse political decisions such as political parties, but also those that can block policy implementation; for instance trade unions.

For stakeholders to be in a position to participate in policy dialogue in a meaningful and constructive way, they need to have access to information relating to the decision-making process they seek to influence. A wide range of initiatives has been launched in recent years to promote transparency and accountability, which are actually two sides of the same coin. These two criteria, which are crucial prerequisites for a successful dialogue, will be explained in more detail in the framework of the dialogue process itself (see Chapter IV - The process).

Building actions upon values

The Operating Model aims at opening new 'policy spaces', offering opportunities to express themselves to those actors whose voices are rarely heard in classical donor or government-led consultations. In doing so, it contributes to reconfiguring the relationships between stakeholders, who are required to recognise each other as valid interlocutors and – through open dialogue – understand each other's interests and incentives for change.

The basic assumption of the Model is that those groups that are affected by policy reform should have a say in it and therefore be considered as 'key' stakeholders, even if they don't have any leverage or influence on actual decision-making. In other words, **for policy dialogue to be meaningful and effective, it needs to be inclusive and allow for real participation**.

This in turn enhances the chances that the participating stakeholders adopt a more pluralistic outlook on their society. By working together, they are compelled to recognise the existence of a diversity of interests and beliefs, which naturally leads to different positions towards political choices. The acceptance of 'plurality' by the key social and political stakeholders can in turn function as a safeguard against an excessive accumulation of power by any single actor.

"We have discussed about engaging different actors, about trust-building techniques, about the use of different tools, but we have not been speaking about the elephant in the room, which is rising fundamentalism. How do you bring those forces within the discourse? Islamic fundamentalism is one of the major causes of many of the conflicts in our region. So if we don't address the situation leading to it, we will not be able to resolve the root causes, however hard we try."

Mustafizur Rahman
Executive Director
Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)
Bangladesh

This is crucial, particularly in contexts of democratic transition, so as to prevent winner-take-all attitudes by the most powerful stakeholders. In Tunisia, for instance, the need for social justice is shared by the whole political spectrum, and it is widely assumed that it was precisely the inequality in society that triggered the Jasmine Revolution in December 2010. Nevertheless, differences arise when the debate turns to the means of addressing this problem: should social justice be achieved through fiscal measures oriented to the redistribution of wealth or, on the contrary, by reducing the fiscal burden to promote economic growth that will eventually result in an increase of income? Obviously, there are liberal, social-democratic and even religious approaches towards the problem at hand.

Acknowledging this diversity of views and treating it as an asset instead of an obstacle, or in other words, adopting a pluralist approach, was one of the first important steps taken by INSPIRED Tunisia towards a more constructive debate about the policies that can contribute to achieving social justice.

The two core values of inclusiveness and participation are streamlined through the whole Operating Model, which was designed to ensure that multi-stakeholder dialogue can be successful at three different levels or 'dimensions'. As such, it is simultaneously:

- *Policy oriented* (i.e. linked to a concrete policy reform effort);

- *Process oriented* (i.e. conceived as dynamic and flexible processes), and;

- *Results oriented* (i.e. designed to achieve impact in terms of policy influence).

These three dimensions should be seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing. The main innovation of the Operating Model is that it addresses these dimensions in one single integrated approach that combines existing methods and instruments in a new and comprehensive way.

Three dimensions

Policy oriented

The Operating Model is policy oriented because by focusing on a specific policy issue it offers a solid framework for pursuing concrete goals and for enhancing mutual understanding among different kinds of stakeholders. Indeed, dialogue tends to be more constructive when discussions are articulated around facts. In this regard, orienting the exchange and deliberations towards concrete problems and inciting the stakeholders to justify their views by referring to data instead of just stating principles, interests or values is key to divert their attention from existing conflicts and to overcome entrenched positions and views.

To this end, the promotion of an **evidence-based policy-making culture**[20] among the largest possible number of stakeholders is crucial for the success of the dialogue process, as it represents a first step towards setting up proper mechanisms of accountability. Moreover, basing discussions on knowledge and reliable data is the best way to ensure that the impact of the reform initiatives resulting from the dialogue process can be measured adequately, considering that those results will have to be measured in terms of 'policy influence'. This can be done by answering the following question; to what extent has the current dialogue initiative contributed to making the targeted policy more inclusive and participatory?

Although there is some confusion and even misuse of the term 'policy', there is no need to enter into academic disputes by endorsing a concrete definition or, even riskier, proposing a new one. Instead, the Operating Model retains what makes public policy so interesting when it comes to promoting the culture of dialogue; i.e. its dynamic nature. Whether it is seen as a "course of action" (Kingdon 1995), as a "set of related decisions" (Jones et al 2012) or even as "a chaos of purposes and accidents" (Clay and Schaffer 1984), the fact is that policy is always 'on the move'. It evolves according to the political context and changing societal needs, trying to provide an answer to 'public' problems.

The capacity of a government to identify and respond to those problems is what determines the effectiveness of its mandate. And, more importantly, it is of key importance for creating conditions that are conducive to development. However, that task does not need to fall exclusively on the shoulders of the government and other state institutions. On the contrary, decisions about public policies should be pushed and animated by the widest possible variety of domestic actors in order to ensure that all the interests and visions in society are taken into consideration.

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[20] The term 'evidence' is used with caution, as it has many different connotations (Jones et al. 2012). But we consider that in polarised contexts it is important to ensure that dialogue is informed by widely accepted forms of knowledge that make possible accountability and transparency on the side of the government.

> "To promote domestic policies and domestic accountability we need to make sure that domestic stakeholders who should be on board are actually on board, that policies are responsive to these stakeholders, and our work (as donors and practitioners) is about accompanying those processes: mediating, facilitating, bringing experience and information."
>
> **Jerôme Dendura**
> *Adelante Knowledge and Development*
> *France*

There are a number of theories of change that aim at explaining the different factors that affect policy change, from the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory to the Advocacy Coalition Framework or the Power Elites theory (Stachowiak 2013). It doesn't seem necessary to make a choice amongst them. On the contrary, all of these theories – and the different approaches of influencing policy change they imply – are strongly complementary and help to shed light on different aspects of a very complex phenomenon: one by which modern societies allocate resources and values (McCullough et al. 2011).

The Policy Windows – or Kingdon's – model, for instance, is widely used for explaining how issues get on the political agenda, making it very useful for donors who want to assess the feasibility of a reform proposed by a partner government (and for which that government seeks external assistance). The convergence of what Kingdon calls the three streams (policy, problem and political) into a 'window of opportunity' (a favourable time to solve the issue at stake), determines the kind of alternatives that policy makers will be willing to take into consideration.

But changes can also happen suddenly, when a social paradigm is brought into question or a certain issue catches broad public attention, setting the conditions for a 'large leap' forward instead of small incremental changes happening over longer periods of time. Other theories of change will put the accent on agency[21], either through the power of stakeholders (who can build coalitions to address shared concerns through coordinated action) or political elites (who use their dominant position to determine which issues should or should not be tackled).

All in all, one can hardly endorse just one of these theories at the expense of the others, because all of them point to crucial elements that come into play at different moments in a policy's life span.

With regards to the specific purpose of the Operating Model (promoting a culture of dialogue that is based on inclusiveness and participation), it is helpful

[21] "Agency focuses on how policy processes are shaped by the decisions, actions and interactions of the actors involved. To understand cause and effect we need to look at how individuals, groups, organisations and networks set about achieving their goals and go about performing certain functions" (Jones 2011a).

to conceptualise policy as a process, which can be subdivided into the following sequence:

- ***Problem definition or agenda setting:*** raising awareness about a public problem and giving it enough priority so that it enters the public agenda.

- ***Policy formulation:*** different options are constructed, alternatives are studied and strategies to advance interests are defined and pursued. Policy formulation, Policy adoption and Policy design are usually presented as different stages but, for the sake of simplicity, they can be merged into one single phase.

- ***Policy implementation (and monitoring):*** the different ways in which activities are arranged to produce the effects foreseen in the policy.

- ***Policy evaluation:*** assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the policy and elaboration of recommendations for improvement or reversal.

In reality, due to political factors and depending on the stability of the political context in which policies are being elaborated, these phases often overlap. Sometimes one phase is not even completed before another initiative targeting the same policy issue is launched. Nonetheless, this depiction is useful for demonstrating that stakeholders have an opportunity to influence the process at different moments throughout the life cycle of public policy.

In other words, the **policy cycle** provides a useful tool that can help civil and political society actors to better understand at which moments they should advance their interests. In this respect, shifts between different stages of the policy cycle can be seen as specific entry points for multi-stakeholder dialogue. Each entry point implies a different focus as well as a specific set of activities, as outlined below.

- ***Deliberation.*** If a public problem is recognised as such and has entered the political agenda, the dialogue should focus on determining the objectives of the related policy and analysing alternative options for policy design.

- ***Policy adoption.*** Once there are several policy alternatives under discussion in the political arena, the final choice can be influenced through 'outside track' advocacy or by collaborating in coalitions of stakeholders – including policy makers - with a common interest in a given alternative.

- ***Monitoring.*** During the implementation phase, stakeholders can assess the efficiency (connection between inputs and outputs) and effectiveness (link between the outcomes and the final impact on the beneficiaries) of the policy.

- ***Advocacy.*** Based on the evaluation of the policy's implementation, stakeholders can push for related problems to be included on the political agenda, which can lead to the launching of a whole new policy cycle or the introduction of corrective measures targeting the initialpolicy.

Entry points for policy dialogue

To sum up, the content and potential results of a multi-stakeholder dialogue depend heavily on the stage of the policy cycle in which this process takes place. Likewise, the logic of intervention changes from one phase to another, although some aspects may crosscut all the stages, from agenda-setting to decision-making, implementation and evaluation.

> "Trust is crucial when you target political decision-makers. If you haven't been able to create meaningful relationships between civil society and key decision makers within the (dialogue) process you will hardly get any results at advocacy level. This sort of work has to start from the very beginning, already when planning the dialogue process, in order to include the concerns and priorities of the political decision-makers in a given context."
>
> **Ruben Campos**
> *Programs Coordinator*
> *Club de Madrid*

Stakeholders engaged in policy dialogue must be aware of this so that they can seize the opportunities that may arise at different moments throughout the policy cycle. To achieve this, practitioners need to carry out a continuous

analysis, not only of the political context in which issues get on the agenda, but also of the political context in which the resulting policies will be put into effect (Sutcliffe and Court 2006).

It is extremely difficult to analytically structure the contextual environment in which the whole process of policy-making is embedded, given the complexity of modern societies and the lack of available information (on power relations, hidden agendas, etc.). Luckily, important work has been done to shed light on this 'black box'. For the past decade, think tanks such as ODI have been working on a number of tools that allow users to navigate through the complexities of policy in development, the most recent being the Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach (ROMA); an online application and a book that reflect the current state of affairs in this field (Young et al. 2014).

Process oriented

The transition to democracy can be seen as a series of overlapping processes that run at different paces and gradually shape the institutions which are expected to embody the will of the people. When some of these processes are blocked and the institutions fail to represent the general interest, the whole democratic endeavour is at risk of getting stuck in one of those "grey zones" that Thomas Carothers describes in his 2002 paper titled 'The End of the Transition Paradigm'.

> "In external affairs, where keeping good relations with the partner government is the number one priority, the dilemma between interests and values always comes up. Maybe the only way to overcome it is by focusing on processes instead of just projects, a shift of perspective that will enhance the coherence between our political dialogue and development assistance so as to have better impact in the ground."
>
> **Sylwia Domisiewicz**
> *Policy Officer Democracy and*
> *Electoral Observation Division*
> *European External Action Service*
> *Poland*

It is extremely hard for donors to grasp any democratisation process as a whole, and efforts to influence it prove even harder. The majority of democracy scholars and practitioners agree that the furthest the international community can go in its efforts to support democracy is to 'hop on' domestically-owned agendas for reform, using this potential for change to help governments and other domestic stakeholders consolidate certain aspects of the democratic system and culture that are especially relevant for the country in question (Foresti and Harris 2011).

Democracy will still keep evolving and unfolding in its haphazard and unpredictable way, but at least donors can be sure that they are adapting their support to those locally-led processes that are aligned with their own core values. By inserting themselves into the local dynamics of a country, donors will also better understand the different factors at play and the way in which the different processes triggering democratic change (or stagnation) interact.

Processes cannot be tackled from a static, two-dimensional approach. Any initiative aiming at influencing the process of democratisation therefore needs to be process-oriented and, as a consequence, allow for a high degree of flexibility and dynamism so that it can follow and react to this continuously evolving process. This is what makes policy dialogue such a suitable tool for promoting democratic governance: both policy-making and dialogue are *processes in themselves*; both are fundamental elements of democracy.

The notion of 'process' is indeed intrinsic to dialogue, as illustrated in one of the most widespread handbooks for practitioners on the issue, sponsored by UNDP, CIDA, International IDEA and OAS, in which dialogue is defined as "*the process of people coming together to build mutual understanding and trust across their differences, and to create positive outcomes through conversation*" (Pruitt and Thomas 2007). Being process-oriented and aiming to promote something as complex and delicate as a 'culture of dialogue', the Operating Model places as much importance to the process – with all its turns and moves back and forth – as it does to its outputs.

The need to follow a process-oriented approach to deal with complexity, to enable fruitful deliberation and to produce sustainable results is widely accepted by the international community. But it often enters into conflict with another requirement: donors want to produce clear and predictable outputs for each euro or dollar they spend. The Operating Model tackles this apparent contradiction by anchoring the dialogue (a process) in a concrete policy problem (whose solution produces concrete outputs). In this sense, **policy acts as a sort of backbone that allows to 'vertebrate' the discussion** so that participants are aided in structuring their different interests and beliefs around the issue at stake.

"In the business of dialogue you're not an expert, the most that you can be is a facilitator and enabler: your attitude, understanding and readiness to adapt is what will allow the process to evolve and what will enable you to even bring on board those concerned spoilers. You need to go beyond any prescriptive categories that you may have in mind, understanding that a very adaptable plan will enable you to have better impact, and then perhaps your indicators will also be informed by the ways in which you relate to people along the process. This is why we often speak of 'blank sheet' when holding consultations"

Jimmy Silhue
Executive Director
Platform for Dialogue and Peace
Liberia

To some extent one could say that embedding the dialogue process within the policy cycle – a parallel process – is a way of narrowing down its scope.[22] Discussions and deliberations in such a setting hold the potential of focusing on concrete, everyday life problems, which will help the stakeholders to overcome polarisation, as they are incited to abandon any 'irrational insistence on non-negotiable positions. It is hard to justify categorical opposition to reforming a sector policy that can bring concrete benefits to the majority of people in a society, simply because one 'believes' in certain things or holds certain values.

Grounding the dialogue on concrete policy issues can facilitate an understanding by the participating stakeholders that there might be room to find widely acceptable solutions, despite entrenched views based on ideology or religion. In any case, political, social and economic problems are seldom static and, sooner or later, the positions of the different stakeholders towards a given policy issue will change. Engaging those stakeholders in a dialogue may thus accelerate a healthy revaluation of what is seen as acceptable or desirable policy options.

Even minor re-positioning can trigger new processes, produce a slight shift in the balance of power, or make possible new linkages between representatives of opposed political camps. In turn, this can pave the way towards pragmatic trade-offs that eventually result in more long-standing commitments.

In this regard, **the key factor and driving force that makes dialogue possible in the first place is trust**. Indeed, a minimum level of trust is the precondition

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[22] In this regard, Pruitt and Thomas make an interesting distinction between dialogue and deliberation (which is what usually takes place in policy decision-making): *"In contrast to the opening, exploring, visionary character of dialogue, deliberation is a process of narrowing. Like dialogue, however, it is a process of joint inquiry and respectful listening to diverse views. (…) The differences between dialogue and deliberation may be subtle in practice, but distinguishing between them is useful because it sharpens the focus on outcomes"* (Pruitt and Thomas 2007).

for stakeholders to take part in dialogue and start to negotiate the rules of the game that will govern their exchanges and collaboration. And once again the notion of process is key, because trust is built through different stages; such as mutual recognition, respect, empathy, understanding, etc.

> "Trust has to be built and continuously nurtured, as in any relationship, and it is actions that show whether you can trust someone or not; it is about how your process creates credibility and predictability through concrete actions."
>
> **Adele Wildschut**
> *Regional Director Southern Africa,*
> *Collective Leadership Institute*
> *South Africa*

Once again, embedding the dialogue process within the policy cycle/process permits the building of trust among confronting stakeholders by offering them the opportunity to progressively build a shared vision and agenda around a given public issue. Instead of hiding behind ideological positions, the participants are forced to deal with practicalities and to assess together the consequences, advantages and disadvantages of the different choices at hand.

This is what happened in INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan, where the dialogue process led some key stakeholders not only to overcome their initial mistrust vis-à-vis the country's main ethnic minority groups, but also enabled them to realise that the on-going transition to digital broadcasting presented a unique opportunity for inclusion. Indeed, it became clear that the transition provided a fertile context within which ethnic and linguistic diversity could be framed in more positive terms, which could in turn become a cornerstone of the future policy framework.

Reaching a point where the existence of minority languages is perceived as an asset for the country as a whole – and not just for the Uzbeks, Tadjiks, Dungans, etc. – represents in itself a change in the political mind-set; the sort of intangible but strongly political outcome that holds the potential to produce positive spill-over effects. The most interesting thing about focusing on processes is that they are seldom isolated, but tend to 'pollinate' or even unleash other processes, for better or worse.

For donors, switching focus onto something that is, by definition, hardly predictable, is not an easy thing to do. It is not something with which they have much experience of, simply because processes don't fit comfortably into a logical framework or similar frameworks used for monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, opening policy dialogue to a broader range of stakeholders entails a higher risk of conflict than keeping assistance 'bilateral', between donors and governments.

"There is a problem with timeframes. It takes a long time to build up trust, but it takes a second to destroy it. Developing projects through a multi-stakeholder approach implies dealing with different timeframes that depend on the reality in the field and don't necessarily fit into the internal procedures of the donors."

Marco Boaria
Head of Resources and Development Unit
ALDA - The European Association for Local
Democracy
Italy

Nevertheless, the inherent risks in working through inclusive and participatory policy dialogue can be minimised and managed. There is a wide array of techniques that can help facilitators build sufficient trust among the participants so that some kind of consensus is achieved. Trust-building techniques are extensively used in the realm of conflict transformation and many of them can be useful in the context of inclusive policy dialogue processes as well, albeit in a way that responds to its particular needs and specificities.

It is obviously not the same to negotiate a ceasefire or a peace agreement as it is to reach a national pact on education; different levels of confrontation and distrust need to be tackled proportionally, sidestepping ideological differences by choosing the most appropriate tools to find a common ground. By facilitating a process and borrowing from existing methods and good practices to do so, the Operating Model provides for a high degree of flexibility and adaptability to the local context. However, this openness to unforeseen events, unexpected reactions or last minute bargains does not prevent the Model from being strongly results-oriented at the same time.

Results oriented

Traditionally, most donors have supported development and democratisation by awarding grants to organisations or consortia of organisations based on project proposals. The advantage of this kind of project-based funding is that it allows them to monitor project implementation by using a logical framework or similar tool that spells out a theory of change: in order to achieve objectives A and B, the organisation proposes to conduct activities 1, 2 and 3 leading to results X and Y.

In this logic, success is defined as achieving expected results against a set of pre-set indicators. Project budgets can be linked to the proposed activities, allowing for very detailed projections on spending. As a consequence, donors and project managers can follow every step of the project implementation very closely and intervene when they detect risks.

There are at least two problems with this approach. First, although following predetermined activities to reach set objectives might appear to reduce

uncertainty, this linear approach to promoting development and democratic change comes at a high price; when measuring results against objectives, there is no guarantee that the project has achieved real impact. More importantly, sticking to the logic of the log-frame diverts the attention from potential positive or negative outcomes that were not foreseen as such.

The second problem with using log-frames and similar tools has to do with the unspoken assumption that they can be used to predict *how* projects can reach pre-set objectives. However, in the context of multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, trying to predict how 20 or more actors will behave is simply impossible.

> "There is no way that you can plan ahead everything that is going to happen. Of course you have to have a clear objective –when you're in a negotiation process you want to reach to an agreement – but you cannot predetermine all steps because we are talking about human interaction, strong political agendas, group behaviour, etc."
>
> **Enrique Sánchez**
> *Head of Learning and Policy*
> *Interpeace*
> *Guatemala*

All that can be done is to make assumptions about the possible outcomes of the process, based on a sound assessment of the policy landscape and the interests and incentives of the stakeholders involved. Accepting these limitations will help practitioners develop tools that are better suited for monitoring and evaluating inclusive and participatory policy dialogue processes. Such tools must help donors and facilitators to assess:

I.   the **relevance** of the policy reform process;

II.   the **inclusiveness and participative dimension** of this process, and;

III. its impact in terms of **actual policy reform**.

The choice of these techniques needs to be made at local level, taking into account the specificities of the political context and the policy landscape (see Chapter IV). A recent working paper by ODI offers useful guidance in this regard, presenting a set of frameworks for understanding policy influence as well as options and considerations for monitoring and evaluating advocacy aimed at producing policy change.

Inclusive policy dialogue processes can indeed produce a wide range of results, although some of them are subject to the well-known problems of measurement and attribution.

Following the causal chain all the way up to the 'culture of dialogue' is a futile effort, almost chimerical, as no single intervention can produce by itself such

a deep impact.[23] A way to address this challenge is by putting the emphasis on values such as inclusiveness and participation, which not only guide the whole process, but also act as instrumental objectives for the policies at stake.

As a matter of fact, policies that have been adopted, monitored or evaluated through multi-stakeholder processes stand a better chance to be more inclusive and participatory content-wise, for the simple reason that decision-makers will be accountable to those stakeholders that have taken part in the dialogue.

The importance attributed to the process means that its evolution *as a process* needs to be measured somehow, a delicate matter that the Operating Model addresses by **applying a mix of indicators (for the policy, for the process and for policy influence) and corresponding measurement techniques**. Its three phases (collective assessment, consensus building and monitoring and donor alignment) are clearly interwoven: each of them builds upon the outputs of the previous one. Furthermore, the process is designed to have an impact at different levels (on the culture of dialogue, the policy at stake and the programming of international assistance) through the combination of short-term results and long-term commitments that are to be reflected in the so-called 'Roadmaps for Reform'.

> "My experience is that this obsession with indicators and creating highly structured processes actually ties yourself to a methodology that sometimes doesn't allow you to be organic enough to adapt to the changing realities on the ground. So you need to find a balance between being organic and yet accountable – through concrete results – a dilemma that is at the very heart of what we do and how we do it."
>
> **Gabriel Reyes**
> *Director of Project Development*
> *Toledo International Centre for Peace (CITpax)*
> *Spain*

The kinds of dialogue processes foreseen by the Operating Model are not only expected to affect the contents of the policy at stake, but also the ways in which that policy is being designed, formulated or implemented. The results and level of impact that can be achieved will depend, among other things, on the stage of the policy cycle that the dialogue process is trying to influence. It is not the same to tackle the agenda-setting phase (in which the expected result should entail the forging of a somewhat basic agreement on the changes that are desirable) than to address the formulation phase (in which results should take the form of collectively agreed policy options).

[23] "One reason for the dearth of accessible knowledge is the numerous challenges involved in evaluating democracy promotion. In particular, it is difficult to attribute success or failure to a particular democracy promotion effort, given that (i) the general impact of these programmes depends on a host of other internal and external influences, as well as wider democracy promotion and, more generally, good governance initiatives; (ii) the effects of democracy programmes may not be fully apparent for years; (iii) democratic processes are interlinked with other social, economic, political and historical processes and conditions; and (iv) quantitative indicators can only capture this reality to a limited extent" (Rakner et al. 2007).

This means that the impact of inclusive and participatory policy processes is to be evaluated predominantly in terms of policy influence (Jones 2011b). Consequently, **impact indicators** should measure the influence of the dialogue process on actual policy-making and not the impact of the new or changed policy on the final beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, the credibility of that process relies on the availability of sound policy indicators that can build a strong evidence base. These **policy indicators** are crucial to navigate the dialogue, acting as a sort of compass that orients the collective deliberation and decision-making. They should be made available to all the stakeholders from the beginning of the process and, whenever they don't exist, their inception will be the first task to be collectively carried out by the stakeholders. The joint approval of a set of policy indicators would, in this case, become an important first result in itself.

Moreover, considering the importance of trust in the culture of dialogue, another set of indicators is needed to assess the evolution of the interests and incentives of the stakeholders, as well as their engagement towards the process. Measuring progress in this area has to be done throughout the process, as it will allow the dialogue's host or facilitator to introduce corrective measures, as well as to steer the meetings and debates according to the predisposition of the participants. Similar to the policy indicators, the joint definition by the stakeholders of certain **indicators for measuring the inclusiveness and participation of the process** can be seen as a distinct result.

> "One of the approaches that we are using in conflict transformation and peace education consists of basing the process on two pillars: objectives and relationships. And when it comes to relationships and their quality, you just cannot measure them with indicators, but you can see actual progress throughout all the years that you're involved in the process."
>
> **Justine Abi Saad**
> *GIZ*
> *Lebanon*

However, attitudes and positions are not easy to measure, and trying to do so in an overly detailed way may even enter into conflict with the transparency that should reign over the whole process, which is a precondition for genuine trust. It would surely be interesting to keep track of the evolution of incentives and the commitment of the participants in the process, but some of the reasons for their lack of interest or unwillingness to compromise can simply be too sensitive to be expressed openly in public documents.

Any given stakeholder might think that his/her goals can be achieved without taking part in the process, or might want to spoil it from within, or could even be willing to cooperate but cannot afford the impact that his/her participation could have on the reputation or credibility towards his/her constituency.

In other words, the array of possibilities of explaining participation, non-participation or 'spoiling' behaviour is too wide and detailed to carry out a systematic assessment just for the sake of adequate measurement and reporting.

Alternatively, the use of facilitation tools and techniques such as role-reversal interviews, storytelling or questionnaires can provide an interesting means of measuring 'feelings' without appearing judgemental or putting in danger the perception of the Hosting Structure as an impartial facilitator (see Chapter III).

Knowledge in dialogue processes

In a way, policy is all about ideas. It could even be described as a way of putting ideas into motion by translating them into concrete actions. But of course, ideas can take many different forms. For years, policy dialogue has centred around the notion of 'evidence-based policy making'. For donors driving these processes, this was a way of imposing their own methods of assessing a given reality by establishing the parameters against which public problems had to be appraised.

More recently, the technical approach underlying evidence-based policy making has given way to **a new understanding of knowledge**, which recognises its close relation to power; i.e. its political dimension. This broader conceptualisation of knowledge is based on the critique that 'evidence' is a term far too assertive in nature, endowing numbers and figures with an aura of prestige and infallibility that preconditions the policy debate. The truth is that knowledge in policy-making is neither neutral nor objective, as it is embedded in a process driven by interests, values and normative views about how things should be.

"The reason why we want inclusive policy reform and dialogue is because it is transformative. It is then about applying some of the Participatory Action Research ideas to something like evidence and empowering citizens to understand that they can create evidence. So they need access to information, but they also need to realise that they are [also] 'sitting on' information. Some of the capacity building that is being done around policy dialogue and inclusive processes is shifting understandings of knowledge: which knowledge is powerful and which knowledge is not powerful. It is therefore important to remember that citizens can generate information, and that this information can turn into evidence for policy-making."

Karin Alexander
Independent Public Analyst
Zimbabwe

Nonetheless, there is still a tendency to discriminate between different forms of knowledge, so that expert or scientific knowledge is ranked higher than other types that may have a more significant role in shaping policy.

The problem is that these other forms of knowledge are still viewed with some suspicion by aid practitioners, as if they were lacking 'technical' rigour. However, citizens' perceptions of a problem might be just as relevant in finding good policy solutions as an expert's assessment.

Furthermore, different types of stakeholders will have different preferences with regards to the forms of knowledge that they would like to use as a basis for dialogue, reflecting their different viewpoints, first-hand life experiences and interests. The balance of power between those stakeholders might be significantly altered depending on the access to information and certain types of knowledge, or even the capacity to fund research that is steered towards endorsing their political views. It is therefore essential to remain open-minded towards other, unconventional forms of knowledge that complement – and condition – scientific or positivist knowledge.

Types of knowledge

There have been many attempts to categorise knowledge. Regarding multi-stakeholder dialogue, taxonomies focusing on agents as producers and/or brokers of knowledge seem to be the most interesting. Recent work by ODI researchers provides a clear framework that divides knowledge into the following three prototypes (Jones et al. 2012):

- ***Research-based knowledge*** is produced according to specialised/academic methods, by following the rules of scientific inquiry and argumentation. It is often used instrumentally, as a means to achieve the objectives of the stakeholder (public, private or non-for-profit) that has commissioned it or is carrying it out.

- ***Practice-informed knowledge*** derives from experience and project implementation, so it remains in many ways tacit, although some information is made explicit through the planning, monitoring and evaluation of activities, mainly in the form of reports. This type of knowledge is crucial when it comes to assessing the feasibility of a given initiative, although it often misses the transformative potential of unforeseen events or unexpected results. In some way it maintains its own inertia, which is very hard to break, probably because it has been locked into a 'causal chain' logic that leaves very limited room for learning from failure and unexpected results.

- ***Citizen knowledge*** is strongly based on life experience of ordinary citizens and can be individual or collective. It is mostly informal although it can be made formal (at the ballot box, for instance). Citizen knowledge channels opinions and values, which determine the acceptability of reforms in the eyes of their final beneficiaries. However at the same time, citizens are often constrained by their own experience, making it difficult for them to see the 'big picture' and assess the wide array of constraints that policy-makers confront or the implications of certain choices in related policy areas.

Ideally, these different types of knowledge should be combined to provide a fair account of a given public problem and the available policy solutions. They can complement each other, by shedding light on a situation from different angles, bringing to the surface underlying assumptions, preconceptions and value judgements. At the end of the day, dialogue is precisely about remaining open to what the others have to say and learning why other relevant stakeholders favour certain outcomes; which will in turn make it easier to find common positions and widely accepted solutions.

But in many contexts, and particularly in highly polarised societies, much of the knowledge that informs people's positions remains tacit, giving rise to misunderstandings and mistrust; in these cases, one of the key functions of a dialogue process should be to make this underlying knowledge emerge and become explicit. To do so effectively, it must link the different types of available knowledge to the policy-making process, building on the different backgrounds and capacities (as well as the diversity) of the stakeholders.

Helping the stakeholders to broaden their views about the policy at stake can ensure that dialogue is perceived as an opportunity for collective learning, which can lead to unexpected positive results and a general predisposition to exchange viewpoints and ideas.

Building trust by generating knowledge jointly

There are many different methods for generating knowledge collectively. One interesting approach that has already been tested in multi-stakeholder settings in post-conflict situations is Participatory Action Research (PAR). As explained by Agneta M. Johannsen (2001), PAR aims at applying academic research to the needs of those that are being studied. The idea is that by participating directly in designing the research methodology and the desired outcome, stakeholders contribute actively in creating knowledge that can be used both for their own purposes and to help others (other domestic stakeholders, donors, etc.) to better understand their real needs.

> "Open government, participatory government should not be a little feel good project at the outskirts of our bureaucracies. It should be at the heart of policy making and implementation at all levels –and all parts - of government. Only in that way we can see a real, sincere change in how we 'do government' at the scale we need."
>
> **Paul Maassen**
> *Civil society coordinator*
> *Open Government Partnership*
> *The Netherlands*

In the framework of the War-Torn Societies Project, which was implemented in four different countries emerging from armed conflict, PAR was used successfully by conflict facilitators to achieve two main objectives.

First, it produced research publications that filled gaps in knowledge and understanding of the topics that were addressed in each of the countries. Second, it contributed to encouraging dialogue and building relationships among the key actors. In the words of M Johannsen, *"the processes of consultation and analysis, essentially political in nature (...) allowed conflicting approaches and views to be shared, discussed and moderated in a neural forum in which all the actors were regarded as equal and vested interest could be left at the door"* (Johansen 2001). Based on these open discussions, the participating actors managed to produce consensus recommendations for policy change.

Admittedly, the War-Torn Societies Project and similar follow-up projects implemented by Interpeace have been operating in post-conflict settings, which are different from the more stable contexts for which the Operating Model was designed. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to believe that those methods can also contribute to building trust and consensus among stakeholders participating in policy dialogue processes, enabling them to discuss policy reform on a more equal footing (at least in terms of available knowledge).

Three phases

Given the importance that the notion of process has for policy, dialogue and democracy as a whole, the Operating Model builds on a series of three interrelated phases: **Collective Assessment, Consensus Building, and Monitoring and Donor Alignment**. In an ideal world – at least from the point of view of a methodologist – these phases would form a clear sequence providing a direct path towards the success of an intervention.

But reality tends to be richer and more chaotic than what any framework can contain. So for any methodology or model to take full account of unforeseen events and initially hidden factors that will surely arise when working at policy level, it needs to remain flexible. Furthermore, a strictly sequential or chronological approach would also miss a key aspect of policy dialogue; i.e. its iterative nature.

In the Operating Model, therefore, no phase is completely closed at any moment of the process. The stakeholders can always 'take a step backwards' to review their initial assessment of the policy under discussion (building on new data collected at a later stage, for instance); they can seek to reinforce consensus or even withdraw from it, which would necessitate renewed consensus-building measures; they can develop an interest to broaden the scope of the dialogue and extend it to other topics that weren't initially covered; they might even realise towards the end of the dialogue that some key stakeholders are missing and invite them to come on board.

Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, the Operating Model is structured into three distinct phases with clearly defined steps. This basic structure has the advantage of giving orientation and providing a clear framework for cooperation for all the actors involved: donors, dialogue host and stakeholders.

There are many other examples of phase-based models for facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue, such as CIVICUS's New Social Contract Project, the Dialogic Change Model developed by the Collective Leadership Institute or Interpeace's approach towards conflict transformation. All of these models propose a sequence of steps that include, amongst others: i) analysing the context, ii) setting goals, iii) reaching agreements on actions to be taken, iv) monitoring the implementation of those agreements, and v) taking measures to ensure that dialogue outcomes are sustainable.

The Operating Model adds value to the existing panoply of approaches by drawing on the experience and techniques developed by practitioners in three different fields that, until now, have remained apart or were only weakly connected: policy analysis, peace-building and technical assistance. Such an interdisciplinary approach is needed to address the complexity of political change, especially in societies that are going through democratisation processes.

Building on the insights and accumulated knowledge of the aforementioned sectors, the Operating Model provides donors with the means to combine actions in two fields of work that have not yet been brought together in a systematic way:

I. **facilitating inclusive and participatory policy dialogue,** and;

II. **aligning donor agendas with locally-led processes of reform** that are probably the best foundation for successful institution building and sector reform.

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COLLECTIVE
ASSESSMENT

Policy indicators
(according to available
data and DCM)

COLLECTIVE
POLICY
ANALYSIS

CONSENSUS
BUILDING

Process indicators
(subjective & objective)

ROADMAP FOR
POLICY REFORM

MONITORING &
DONOR ALIGNMENT

Impact indicators
(in terms of policy influence)

The three phases of the Operating Model

INSPIRING DEMOCRACY

OPERATING MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY POLICY DIALOGUE

INSPIRED

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III. THE PROCESS

Preconditions

A new role for donors

The main innovation of the Operating Model lies in opening policy dialogue to a broader range of stakeholders while linking its results to the programming of assistance. Given the complexity of this endeavour, a crucial element for its success is the soundness of the structure that will be hosting the dialogue process and conducting the monitoring of its achievements. Obviously, this Hosting Structure has to be locally owned if the process is to be so.

In practice, there are several options allowing donors to remain strongly involved, while remaining at a 'safe distance' in order to avoid undermining local ownership. In any event, donors shouldn't limit themselves to simply offering a space for dialogue, but also commit to oversee the process so as to **ensure that the values of inclusiveness and participation are respected**. Otherwise, they risk giving support to the 'usual suspects', such as NGOs and CSOs that in exchange for not being too critical of the government are granted the doubtful 'privilege' of being 'consulted' on a more or less regular basis. Those may very well be the most visible stakeholders (next to the government), but that does not necessarily mean that they are also the most relevant actors with regard to any given policy issue.

Nevertheless, donors must not be seen as taking sides in the dialogue, which is why the Operating Model foresees that they do not host or even steer the process directly, but instead support a **Hosting Structure** in doing so. It is this structure that will take the lead in facilitating the dialogue through sharing trust-building techniques and providing technical input or back office support whenever this appears necessary. In return, this also means that donors have to be ready to step back and work behind the scenes while the local dialogue host takes the formal and operational lead.

The belief that external agents should not try to be the main driving force of policy dialogue and reform but rather support domestically owned processes, has become widely accepted in the development and democratisation community.

This position is reflected in the majority of development assistance and democracy support strategies adopted by donors over the past years. In a way, they have bought into the notion that their support efforts can only yield sustainable results if they are built on a true partnership with beneficiary countries, which can be seen in the widespread use of the term partner 'government'.

Yet even if most donors and practitioners acknowledge in principle the important role that non-state actors such as CSOs or Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) can play in development and democracy support, in practice the biggest part of their funds is still directed at governments and other public institutions controlled by ruling elites.

The problem with this precise focus on the state is that it contradicts the emerging consensus on the importance of civil society and the private sector, and even with the key role that a solid political society (i.e. political parties and foundations) must play in managing the demands of constituencies. What's more, it turns out that deciding on big assistance programmes with partner governments alone has yielded mixed results at best. In particular, in the field of technical assistance (for institution building, sector reform and other fields), donors rarely achieve the kind of long-term impact they are aiming for.[24]

It may seem counterintuitive to say that donors can achieve much more by doing considerably less. They should of course remain the masters of their own decisions, choosing where and on which issues they want to 'invest' in a partner country. Nevertheless, it seems equally logical and justifiable to argue that they can achieve better impact – and value for money – if they adapt their working modalities in a way that allows them to build partnerships with societies that go beyond the current dominant model of government-to-government relations. This section of the Handbook provides an outline of how this can be done in practice.

The Operating Model foresees an important role for donors before the launch of the policy dialogue process, namely one of charting out the public issues and policy areas where they see a need – and opportunities – for reform. For instance, they can identify gaps in the current legislative framework and opportunities for reform through studies, consultations with the government and civil society, and other means at their disposal.

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[24] "*Aid agencies' approaches tend to limit the outreach, quality and effectiveness of capacity development investments through their preference for short-term, supply-driven projects and programmes and an often over-emphasis on managing for results.*" (Datta et al. 2012) Or, in the same vein, "*Donors often struggle to reconcile their programming priorities and internationally-set budget cycles with local priorities and budget cycles, creating practical barriers to working through local institutions*" (Ibid).

This is already common practice for all major donors, who routinely analyse the situation in their countries of interest, using the resources they have at their disposal and/or relying on tools and assessments developed by others.[25]

The EU provides an interesting example in this regard, as it is currently piloting so-called Democracy Profiles and Action Plans in 21 target countries. EU Delegations have been tasked to analyse, together with EU Member States and other relevant stakeholders such as NGOs and CSOs, the state of democracy in their respective country, assessing the institutions as well as the outputs of the political system.

These democracy assessments should include the electoral system, constitutions, parliaments, political parties, the accountability of institutions and the division of power arrangements. Other institutions and stakeholders should also be included in the analysis, such as civil society, the media, the security forces, courts, etc. The Democracy Profiles will constitute the basis for the formulation of Democracy Action Plans, which will in turn enable the EU Delegations to identify the most important needs to be addressed in the democratisation process and will link these priorities with available tools (political dialogue, human rights dialogue, funding instruments, election observation missions, etc.). At the end of the day, this exercise is also meant to help the EU explore new 'working modalities' for planning and implementing assistance.[26]

The Operating Model is broadly in line with this new EU approach, acknowledging that it should be up to donors to make a sound initial assessment of the country context and identify policy areas that could be addressed through inclusive and participatory policy dialogue. However, the Model foresees a much less prominent role for donors *once they have made a decision* about the issues they want to address in a given country, letting the local stakeholders take the lead over their own reform processes.

In a way, the Operating Model suggests that donors should take their initial – and most probably and unavoidably incomplete – analysis to the next level by submitting it to the 'reality check' of a thorough multi-stakeholder assessment, which can provide the common ground for stakeholders to engage in discussions on how to address jointly identified challenges for reform. A better understanding of the local scene is fundamental if donors want to reduce the risk of failure.

Recent work by International IDEA flags up the unintended effects of good-intentioned interventions that fail to take into consideration all the interests

[25] Nevertheless, these efforts to grasp the local reality have also been subject to questioning, precisely because of the conflict between the donors' agendas and the specificities of the context in which they are to operate: *"Governance assessments approaches seem mostly to have been developed in response to narrower individual agency needs and concerns, not strongly related to partner-country governance processes and concerns. The assessments may seem more driven by policy agendas in individual donor countries and agencies than by an interest in learning about the links between governance factors and development outcomes in different country contexts"* (OECD DAC 2008).

[26] Implementation of the Agenda for Action on Democracy Support in the EU's External Relations, Joint Report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social committee and the Committee of the Regions, JOIN(2012) 28 final, Brussels, 11.10.2012.

at play in democratisation processes: *"International support in building more inclusive and representative decision-making institutions should be deeply rooted in an understanding of existing institutional and community structures and their values and norms. Indeed, there is ample evidence pointing to the difficulties encountered and often also the harm produced when external actors attempt to introduce models for democratic decision-making without sufficient understanding or sufficient space for local activists to set and implement the agenda and monitor its outcomes"* (Hedström and Smith 2013).

Rather than pushing for pre-determined reforms, donors should follow policy dialogue processes as observers and – if requested by the participants – as advisors, thereby gaining new knowledge and insight into domestic dynamics and power relations. The participation of a wide array of stakeholders will allow them to identify the interests and incentives underlying the policy in question and thus enable them to plan further assistance in the given sector in a more realistic way. By observing locally-owned reform processes, external actors can get a clearer idea of the forces at play and the political implications of the different choices at hand; an insight that will result in better programming – especially in terms of the 'do no harm' principle.[27]

Hosting the dialogue

If donors are to leave centre stage to domestic stakeholders, they cannot at the same time take on the role of impartial dialogue facilitators. Nevertheless, donors can remain in control of the process, as they 'open up spaces', i.e.: providing the stakeholders with a platform to host the dialogue. Being less visible in the process does not mean losing control over its key tenets. On the contrary, donors need to **ensure that the dialogue process is (a) inclusive and participatory, and (b) policy oriented, process oriented and results oriented**.

Since they cannot get directly involved in the dialogue – which should be 100% locally-owned or at least hold the potential to evolve in that direction – they need to work through a structure that can 'host' the dialogue on their behalf as well as on the behalf of the participating stakeholders. But what form should this Hosting Structure take? There are several choices that can be considered according to the local context in which the process is to take place. Circumstances may vary from one country to another, but it is essential to keep in mind one of the key prerequisites for success: the perception of impartiality upon which the Hosting Structure is to build its legitimacy as conveyor, facilitator and 'honest broker' of the dialogue.

Option 1: working through existing institutional structures

In some countries spaces for dialogue among government, civil society representatives and other stakeholders already exist. Economic and Social Councils, for instance, are widespread in Latin America and have received

27 Extensively applied in post-conflict contexts after the famous book by Mary B. Anderson, the "do no harm" principle was adopted by the UN's Secretary General's 2009 Guidance Note on Democracy and, ever since, it has proved to be increasingly relevant when planning actions on democracy support.

sustained support from the European Commission in its efforts to promote social cohesion. Take for instance EUROsociAL; an EU-funded regional programme specialised in facilitating the exchange of experiences among European and Latin American policy makers.

The programme has recently sponsored education reform in the Dominican Republic for the period 2014-2030 through direct support of the country's Economic and Social Council, which hosted the entire process of consultation and discussions, summoning representatives from business organisations, trade unions, universities and schools, as well as NGOs, professional associations, the media and the Catholic Church.

On the positive side, such institutions may offer a long-standing platform for dialogue and consultation that can ensure appropriate follow-up – and sometimes even the implementation – of the measures to be undertaken as a result of the process. Yet, the drawback of working through existing institutional structures is that they are normally government-driven and can easily be controlled by established groups of interest that can therefore prevent the process from being genuinely inclusive and participatory.

Once again, donors face an interesting dilemma: on the one hand, they should show consistency in their actions and avoid putting in place parallel structures that may weaken those same institutions that they are aiming to strengthen. On the other hand however, they cannot ignore the manoeuvres and capacity to influence that the government and other strong actors, such as dominant political parties, have over these institutionalised bodies.

Whatever the formula chosen for hosting a dialogue, one consideration is to be kept in mind throughout the process: involving the government, the parliament and all other relevant democratic institutions without allowing them to dominate or even co-opt the process. Additionally, perhaps a more difficult task is to keep them engaged even if the outcomes of the dialogue do not coincide entirely with their views and interests.

Option 2: working through a local CSO or CSO networks

Another way of approaching the problem of legitimacy is to work via an 'outside track' by relying on other types of existing structures, but this time belonging to civil society. This is the choice that was made by EPD when launching the INSPIRED pilot projects. While all but one of these projects achieved interesting results and some kind of impact (see Annex), it also became clear that working with a single NGO or CSO puts a lot of weight on its staff. The administrative burden of running a process that follows the approach of the Operating Model is quite high and requires a strong track record of dealing with donors, managing aid funds, building trust among stakeholders or working with the media, among others.

It is not easy to find a local organisation that has experience in all of these fields. Donors preferring this option might therefore have to invest in building the capacity of staff to ensure that they act according to the basic provisions of the Operating Model, since a bad start can (pre-) determine the attitudes of the stakeholders and put at risk the sustainability of the whole process.

Second, it is usually difficult to find existing local NGOs or CSOs that are perceived as being impartial by all key stakeholders. Civil society organisations are by definition involved in political life, with the advantages and disadvantages that this implies. In the case where they have a strong record in the policy sector at stake, this might mean that they already developed a specific agenda, so they can hardly play the role of an honest broker in a dialogue process.

This was the problem encountered by INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan, where the initially selected partner organisation already had its own ideas and plans for action regarding education and minority rights. Therefore, it preferred to conduct the dialogue at a technical level than risking a truly open and participatory exchange that could put its own interests at risk.

On the other hand, local organisations with a sound record in working on a specific policy such as Ghana's Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) – with regards to women's political participation – and Moldova's East Europe Foundation (EEF) – in creating participatory platforms – may enjoy the consideration of reference organisations in the field, which gives them strong convening power. While they might not be wholly impartial, their organisational values and working modalities (consultations, dialogue, evidence-based advocacy) are already aligned with the principles that the Operating Model seeks to promote.

A way of balancing the potential political inclinations of individual civil society hosting structures would be to rely on networks or platforms of CSOs that are representative of a wider ideological spectrum, although this may pose organisational and administrative challenges that can negatively affect the implementation of the dialogue process.

Option 3: creating a new structure

A third option would be to create a structure with the specific task of hosting the dialogue process, something that has been frequently done in peace-building efforts due to the extreme polarisation and distrust among domestic stakeholders. The EU has also recently put a similar approach in practice in another context and with slightly different purposes.

In the aftermath of the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, the relations between the country's civil society organisations and the public authorities were marked by outright distrust. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the former president, had been clever enough to present his regime as respectful of civil society, encouraging some CSO activities, but co-opting organisations when possible and putting them under close surveillance otherwise.

The resulting history of discredited state-society relations, together with the sudden mushrooming of CSOs following Ben Ali's ousting, hindered the efforts

of civil society to structure itself in a way that would allow it to take a more active and constructive part in policy-making. This obvious deficiency provided the background for the **Programme d'Appui à la Société Civile (PASC-Tunisie)**, an EU initiative that was originally conceived for strengthening the capacities of Tunisian CSOs but that has progressively evolved into country-wide space for dialogue between public actors and civil society.

Under EPD leadership since June 2013, PASC has been combining its capacity-building activities with a series of dialogue processes on key issues that are identified and regularly updated at local level, providing an open space for policy dialogue and collective learning at both local and national levels. Instead of working exclusively with local civil society, EPD created a consortium composed of two widely respected CSOs and two public bodies, one of them being the prestigious Ecole Nationale d'Administration, the institution in charge of training Tunisian high-level officials. Following the same approach, the EU established a steering committee for PASC composed of the line ministries and the main networks of civil society organisations covering the three priorities of European cooperation in the country: human rights, women empowerment and sustainable development.

All in all, the Hosting Structure consists of a broad coalition of public actors and civil society organisations that relies on a strong management unit including six regional offices. This arrangement allows the Hosting Structure to coordinate activities and ensure the consistency of the approach, while collecting feedback from the regions so as to steer the thematic dialogues following a bottom-up approach.

> **NIMD and inter-party dialogue**
>
> NIMD has four modalities for hosting inter-party dialogue which are presented as follows (with an implicit preferential order and always strongly guided by concerns of sustainability, local ownership, capacity and reputation):
>
> 1. If available, a sufficiently impartial and respected pre-existing local implementing organisation is partnered by NIMD in order to convene and facilitate the dialogue process.

2. In the frequent absence of an existing organisation with such a reputation, NIMD can create – together with the political parties – a structure in which the parties themselves are represented on the Board and thus own and govern the structure. These Centres for Multiparty Democracy (CMDs) can also be considered as 'associations of political parties' mandated to run self-owned democracy assistance and dialogue programmes. In such cases, NIMD then funds the secretariat costs and its annual operating budget in the same way that it would fund an independent partner. Next to achieving a very concrete and tangible result, creating a CMD is also a trust building strategy, as the parties have to regularly get together to perform their management tasks jointly. The creation of a CMD can thus be a milestone in itself for dialogue and trust-building processes.

3. In case of extreme polarisation, where it is not possible for parties to jointly manage an organisation, sometimes a hybrid form is chosen. For instance, in Uganda and Bolivia NIMD runs the programme with expatriates or trusted local consultants that set up a very basic country office, while at the same time supporting the creation of a more informal 'forum of political parties'. This might be preferable for political parties as they do not need to bother with management tasks but only convene for dialogue sessions on the agreed topics.

4. Finally, in some countries, NIMD has set up country offices. While this is simply the 'last resort' in some cases (whenever the options presented above aren't feasible), in other cases it is actually the preferred option. Stakeholders see NIMD as a foreign entity and external facilitator that has no direct stake in domestic politics – NIMD itself being a multi-party structure in which all ideologies are represented. This is the case in post-conflict Mozambique, where the parties are unlikely to accept a local entity, and they do not want to manage a structure together (Von Meijenfeldt 2013).

The example of PASC and the different *modi operandi* of NIMD show how donors can support locally-owned processes of dialogue and reform through existing organisations or mechanisms as well as through structures that are created *ad hoc*. Nevertheless, when going for the latter, donors must be careful not to replace existing platforms that could do the same job. Moreover, for the sake of impartiality, but also of sustainability, newly created hosting structures should have the backing of partner governments as well as other key stakeholders from civil society.

Criteria for choosing a Hosting Structure

Needless to say, **the hosting structure needs to be perceived as sufficiently impartial by the stakeholders**. So the problem in working with existing organisations that are already active in the targeted policy field is that they have probably already taken positions on certain issues. This means that, even if a well-established thematic CSO or coalition of CSOs can rapidly build a network out of its contacts (an asset that will certainly speed up the launching phase), this option has its drawbacks both in terms of legitimacy and impartiality, as perceptions and misperceptions by dialogue participants about the potential vested interests of the dialogue host might jeopardise the whole process.

However, setting up a new structure in the form of a dialogue secretariat requires more time and effort on the part of the donor, as it implies dealing with human resources by hiring staff or consultants before the actual dialogue initiative can begin. Furthermore, the new structure should not be just a technocratic instance, especially if it is expected to navigate the political differences among stakeholders (Jones 2011a).

Therefore at some point, preferably during the Collective Assessment phase (see further below), **it is advisable to place the Hosting Structure under the supervision of a steering committee** (or a similar kind of body), composed of representatives from the main stakeholders taking part in the process. This will enhance the legitimacy of the new structure vis-à-vis the dialogue participants while ensuring their ownership and inciting them to work together for the sake of the advancing the process.

Whatever solution the donor chooses, it is crucial to make sure that the Hosting Structure sticks to the core values of the Operating Model. To achieve this, the donor needs to ensure that the project team, whether inside the CSO/CSO network or in the newly created dialogue secretariat, is trained on how to apply the Integrated Support Framework (see below in this chapter) and that it internalises the logic of intervention of the Operating Model.

In the worst-case scenario, the project manager of the Hosting Structure would simply invite his or her friends to participate in the dialogue, to the effect that less well-connected stakeholders are excluded even though they might be more relevant for the success of the dialogue. While it would be unrealistic to assume that the 'human factor' can be cancelled out completely from the equation, donors can work towards limiting the risk of supporting a biased process by making it very clear from the beginning that the dialogue must follow the path, or at least one of the possible paths, proposed by the Operating Model.

The application of mapping tools can prevent the Hosting Structure team from going the easy way, relying on those individuals and organisations they are well-acquainted with and selecting the participants for the dialogue according to their own knowledge of the policy in question (which is, by the way, necessarily limited, as a policy field can hardly be embraced from a single standpoint).

The central role that methodological and reporting tools play in the process does not mean, however, that there is no room for flexibility and innovative solutions. On the contrary, the Operating Model limits itself to providing a 'logic of intervention' and a framework, while the implementing structure should be given a mandate to direct the dialogue according to the needs and demands of the participants.

The only 'non-negotiable' element of the Model is the respect of the core values of inclusiveness and participation, which is why the donor needs to be able to oversee their respect in an objective manner. To this purpose, the Operating Model includes an Integrated Support Framework (as an alternative to the Logical Framework), which will be explained in detail in the next section.

The role of the Hosting Structure

The Hosting Structure will need to combine a wide range of skills to conduct an inclusive and participatory policy dialogue and translate its results into proposals for concrete measures for institution building and policy reform. In this regard, working with a single project manager struggling to deal with all the aspects of the process is not a viable solution. The workload can be overwhelming and the prominence of a single individual may be counterproductive when trying to foster stakeholders' ownership over the process.

Instead, the donor should foresee working through a multidisciplinary team. It should be up to the Hosting Structure and/or the donor to decide on the internal composition, organisation and definition of staff portfolios. Whatever choice is made, the team of the Hosting Structure should be able to fulfil the following core functions:

1. ***Convening the stakeholders.*** The Hosting Structure must have sufficient 'convening power', ensuring a sound representation of stakeholders that get involved at the adequate level by assigning representatives with a mandate to speak on behalf of their organisations. There are of course means to enhance this convening power: high-level missions by CdM have proved very successful in this regard, providing the local project managers with access to political figures that can publicly endorse the process, as well as attracting the interest of key stakeholders towards it.

The Club de Madrid

In most, if not all of its projects, CdM regularly links leaders of government and civil society by transmitting messages, articulating demands and initiatives, or advocating for particular reforms for the strengthening of democracy.

CdM's convening power provided multiple benefits for INSPIRED. It gave local project managers access to political figures that can publicly endorse the process. The profile of CdM 'members', along with their political credibility and know-how not only provided the project with independent and impartial facilitators for strategic dialogue, but also helped to attract the interest of key stakeholders. This served to build bridges and create spaces for constructive dialogue among different key actors, facilitating their engagement in targeted discussions. Likewise, CdM's important networks and its members allowed INSPIRED to maximise the visibility of activities and outcomes.

A good example of this convening power is CdM's high-level mission to Moldova led by former Presidents of the Republic of Poland, Albania and the Republic of Serbia, Mr Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Rexhep Qemal Meidani, and Boris Tadic respectively.

The mission received high media coverage and contributed to the dialogue process through a number of public events and leader-to-leader meetings. By setting the discussions of the Association Agreement and DCFTA in the right context, CdM members were able to share the lessons learnt from their respective countries concerning political and economic reform linked to Association Agreements and to share multiple points of view on the process. Other CdM missions, such as the ones to Kyrgyzstan, acted simultaneously as a convening mechanism and a trust-building tool within the framework of the dialogue process. Indeed, using the experience of CdM members in sharing good practices from similar contexts provided the different stakeholders with a non-partisan experience which they could relate to.

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A dialogue host can also have convening power thanks to his/her reputation as being impartial, either on grounds of their institutional reputation or the reputation of the individual chosen to 'chair' the process.

Finally, donors can also use their own influence and networks to support the Hosting Structure in its efforts to engage with the appropriate participants, although this needs to be evaluated and determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on how the donor is perceived in the country.

2. ***Facilitating the process.***[28] As mentioned in a guide for political party dialogue jointly published by NIMD, International IDEA and the Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights, facilitators must be able to navigate through the "complex web of political interests and views, varying expectations, altering wishes and demands, all within the framework of a continuously changing political context" (Kemp 2013). The same is true for facilitators in multi-stakeholder policy dialogues, which involve political parties but also many other types of organisations and institutions. Facilitators should have the same skills as facilitators in multi-party dialogue settings, i.e. they must be a) perceived by all the dialogue participants as politically independent and impartial, b) show political sensitivity, and c) be proactive in finding solutions that foster democratic ownership over the dialogue.

   Although the Hosting Structure can make use of a wide range of methods and tools for trust-building and conflict resolution (as will be outlined in the next section), it is still advisable for it to work with a professional facilitator with experience working in multi-stakeholder settings. The selection of instruments to be used in the facilitation of the dialogue should be left to this professional, who needs to have enough flexibility to use them as he/she sees fit, in light of the local context and constellation of stakeholders; i.e. according to the needs and requirements of the dialogue process.

3. ***Assessing the policy at stake.*** Working on policy requires more than good facilitation skills. The Hosting Structure must also have a good understanding of the technical aspects and the current state and developments in the policy area that is to be addressed in the dialogue.

   This need entails a different type of profile, as facilitators are rarely specialised in a precise policy area. It does not really matter how the person in charge of preparing and explaining the specificities of the targeted policy has acquired his or her knowledge, but previous experience in government or a track record of working with the public sector can be an advantage, allowing the 'policy expert' to translate the language of public officials into the sort of discourse that goes beyond technicalities and focuses on the impact of reforms on their different target groups.

4. ***Communicating results.*** The Hosting Structure must also ensure that the achievements of the dialogue process are communicated to a wider audience; i.e. beyond the stakeholders already taking part in it. This involves briefing relevant media outlets about the process and its main results (Roadmap for Reform and Policy Recommendations). Having strong media coverage can be a key

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[28] The term 'facilitation' as it is used in this handbook encompasses both the moderation of concrete dialogue events and the facilitation of the whole process.

factor for gaining wider support for the proposed policy measures and for pushing them onto the official policy-making agenda.

There are, of course, different ways to ensure fluent communication with the media. The Hosting Structure may integrate an expert on media relations or hire consultants on an ad hoc basis. In any case, the timing and degree of active media engagement should always depend on its usefulness for advancing the policy reform agenda of the participants. In some contexts, and in particular at the early stages of the process, it might be wise to keep the media out of the dialogue, as trust among the participants needs to be built first. In other cases, where there is already a minimum level of trust and/ or the stakeholders agree on some key messages that can be communicated to the wider public, the dialogue can indeed benefit from early media coverage.

Whether they are two, three or four people, **the multidisciplinary team that makes up the Hosting Structure should be trained on the Operating Model and how to use the Integrated Support Framework**, the key reporting tool, which will be presented in detail in the next Chapter. This is crucial for ensuring that results are made visible and that progress can be measured and documented, which will in turn enable any 'outsider' to appraise the level of inclusiveness and participation that is achieved through the dialogue process.

Working with different stakeholders

For the purposes of the Operating Model, **stakeholders are those organisations that have a direct interest and/or can make a difference in the policy area tackled through dialogue;** in other words, those that can affect or are likely to be affected by the policy reform in question. They could be members of the government and relevant officials from public administration, representatives of political parties, members of parliament, civic activists and representatives of civil society organisations, village representatives or other kinds of traditional community leaders, business representatives and independent experts. In a way, the key ingredient for success is to identify these organisations (and the individuals that can represent them) and to involve them in the project from the very beginning, fostering their ownership over the process.

Next to organised groups and institutions, citizens may also be considered as stakeholders. In a recent publication (Valmorbida et al. 2014) the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) provides some interesting examples of giving voice to citizens in local decision-making processes. Those include the COHEIRS project, where citizen observer groups have been identifying health and environmental issues that need to be tackled at a local level, and the SPREAD project, which launched a monitoring system on the implementation of laws concerning communication and cooperation between citizens and their representatives, disseminating information on citizen participation at the local level.

Nevertheless, and despite the many advantages of working directly with citizens, it is probably advisable within the setting of a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue to **stick to those actors that can speak on behalf of a wider group of people; in other words, those who have a clearly defined constituency**. Nonetheless, it may be worthwhile to back up the dialogue with additional input gathered through direct citizen engagement. More information on the added value of citizen knowledge and how it can be used to make policy dialogue more inclusive can be found in this chapter.

The following pages present the different groups of stakeholders that are to be engaged in inclusive and participatory policy dialogue.

1. Government officials and decision-makers

For the dialogue process to yield tangible impact in terms of actual policy change, those with the power to make that change have to be on board. Depending on the stage of the policy cycle and the policy issue under discussion, those decision-makers can be government representatives, officials from line ministries, members of parliament or indeed any other person representing the public institution(s) in charge of elaborating and/or adopting those concepts, laws and regulations that constitute policy. While it would be ideal to have high-level representatives of the relevant decision-making bodies actively involved throughout the dialogue (or at least at certain key moments), this will rarely be the case in practice, as Members of Parliament or ministers are unlikely to commit to such a long-term engagement.

Quite naturally, such 'power elites' tend to have different priorities to mid-level officials in the ministries, and at the end of the day, political office often revolves much more around politics than actual policy-making, and especially so in polarised countries, where the political debate is often locked in sterile confrontation. The upside is that mid-level officials, the ones who have the technical knowledge needed to 'talk policy', tend to be more predisposed to actively participate in dialogue processes, as they can help them to assure the necessary buy-in for 'their' reforms. It is on those mid-level officials that the Hosting Structure should concentrate on inviting stakeholders from the government side.

One of the key tasks of the Hosting Structure is therefore to identify the appropriate level on which to exert influence in order to **engage those officials who can speak – to a lesser or higher degree – on behalf of their institutions.** If well-selected, these individuals will have direct access to the higher levels of decision-making in the targeted policy field and can even help to attract representatives from other institutions that might also feel concerned by the issues addressed in the process.

However, if this is not the case, the Hosting Structure must find other ways to involve the real decision-makers. At the very least, it must keep them informed on a regular basis about the dialogue's progress and its main outcomes. The dialogue process can succeed without their direct participation, but it is bound to fail if they actively oppose it or if other participating stakeholders think that they do.

Ideally, the Hosting Structure should try to secure not only tacit acceptance by decision makers, but also some form of endorsement, even though they might only have a limited personal role in the process. Given the fact that talking directly to the superiors of the officials taking part in the dialogue might jeopardise the trust dynamics among participants, it might be advisable to openly discuss the best way the Hosting Structure could approach their 'bosses' in the best way.

One way to reach out to decision-makers is through the help of 'peers', i.e. individuals with a high public profile and reputation at the regional or international level. This peer-to-peer approach can indeed be useful in certain circumstances, especially when the exchanges have a clear objective that matches the needs of the dialogue process. This is one of the lessons learnt from the cooperation between the dialogue facilitators in three of the four INSPIRED countries and CdM, a network of democratically-elected former heads of state or government from over 60 countries with first-hand experience in leading policy reform from the very top.

Thanks to their stature and network of contacts, the CdM members often enjoy direct access to decision-makers and other stakeholders. If properly briefed about the dialogue process and the objectives of their exchange with the political leadership of the country, they can be of great help, providing political leverage, summoning reluctant stakeholders or even unblocking gridlock in the dialogue process. When selected carefully and according to the needs and political sensitivities of the target country, **high-level peer-to-peer missions** can help facilitators to achieve the following objectives, among others:

- **Provide access to high-level decision-makers,** enabling the Hosting Structure to follow up on the outcomes of the dialogue;

- **Break stalemate,** mediate conflict or help stakeholders in assessing the situation in less confrontational terms;

- **Inform decision-makers** about the need for policy reform and/or the advantages of pursuing it through inclusive and participatory dialogue;

- **Persuade decision-makers of the relevance of the policy dialogue** and the need for them to support the implementation of the final consensus or agreement (the Roadmap for Reform; see Chapter IV);

- **Gather intelligence** on the political factors and power relations that might hinder policy reform or make it possible.

High-level CdM missions or other forms of peer-to-peer exchanges can be useful in any of the three phases of the Operating Model. What is key for their success is that they are well planned and that the individuals that are sent to support the dialogue process are properly briefed about a) the local context, b) the stakeholders involved and c) the purpose of the high-level meetings that they are to hold and the ways in which they fit into the logic of the dialogue process.

2. Political parties

Political parties have a mandate to integrate and mobilise citizens, articulate and aggregate interests, recruit political leaders, organise parliament and government, and formulate public policy (Bartolini and Meir 2001). In traditional representative democracies they are the policy developers (via public debate and more confidential compromises), as well as the 'indirect' adopters of policy via the formal parliamentary voting procedure. Whereas in less well-functioning democracies (mainly where parties are somewhat oblivious to the 'public good' perspective) they have long been accused of using their majority in parliament to rubber-stamp those policies that are being promoted by their party colleagues in government.

Increasingly, policy development is sought by including civil society as well as an additional provider of input for decision-making. The paradox is that with democracy becoming more participatory and deliberative – and the dialogue process proposed in this handbook can be ascribed to that trend – donors and practitioners now have to make an effort to include political parties in what is by definition their main role.

Therefore the Hosting Structure's approach needs to be realistic enough so that **no legislation is adopted without having the agreement of the main political parties.** This is not only a matter of principle (political parties have a 'right' and duty to make policies), but also of securing sustainable solutions, given that the opposition parties might become part of the government in the near future.

This introduces a second paradox, which has to do with the relationship between political parties and their constituencies. While being in debt to their actual and potential voters and the views that they represent, parties also have a role in government, and all-too-often this role requires them to balance conflicting interests and make concessions. They might thus appear to lack clear opinions on the issue at stake when in reality what they are trying to do is, for better or worse, fit their decisions at the policy level into another, wider logic.

Donors and democracy support practitioners seem to be less and less aware of the leading role of political parties in decision-making, trying above all not to appear as partisan and hoping that the balancing of conflicting interests can be achieved by inviting a wide array of civil society representatives to provide input and discuss reform options (Power 2011). The problem with this approach is that compromise is political by nature and therefore civil society organisations may end up playing the sort of game that should be reserved for parties. Needless to say, **organised civil society is not democratically accountable to take decisions on behalf of others, while political parties are.**

Both paradoxes described above converge in a third one that might well reflect the risks of combining deliberative methods of decision-making with traditional institutional frameworks of representative democracy. Political parties (and the governments they form) end up being the only bodies to be held accountable

for policies, although in most cases many other stakeholders have also contributed to their inception, formulation or even implementation.

In some ways, political parties end up being the perfect scapegoat for any failure, a fact that makes them reluctant to participate in these sorts of multi-stakeholder dialogue processes. But in any case, **political parties must take part in the dialogue if deliberative forms of decision-making are to gain legitimacy within representative democracies** and, more importantly, if the resulting policies are to be rule-bound and rule-based. In particular, they should play a leading role when it comes to actual policy drafting, making sure that the policy reflects a plurality of views while also being in line with key political criteria such as constitutionality, legal standards, national interest, international relations, etc.

On a practical level, working with political parties in dialogue processes must start from the recognition that there is often mistrust between those parties because of 'power politics', electoral competition or simply because parties are the entities where great societal cleavages (religion, region, ethnicity) manifest themselves. Furthermore, there is frequently a high degree of mistrust between political parties and all the other stakeholder groups involved, predominantly due to the paradoxes related above. This means that, in order to gain the trust of political party representatives, the Hosting Structure should follow a number of key recommendations.

First, the dialogue facilitator not only has to be perceived by the parties as being impartial, but also needs to be extremely attentive to those issues that must not be touched due to their politically sensitive nature. Second, the facilitator should not only engage with the parties in the setting of the formal dialogue; but he/she should also test the ground with them individually to develop their trust. While this advice is also valid when it comes to other types of stakeholders, it is particularly important to reassure political party representatives that the things they say and do in the framework of the dialogue will not be used against them in the political arena.

Finally, the Hosting Structure should **encourage the parties to develop ownership over the dialogue process,** but without allowing them to hijack it; a risk that is always present in polarised societies. All in all, the most important thing to keep in mind is that, both in parliamentary and presidential democracies, the sustainability of any agreement on reform and its further implementation will depend to a large extent on the engagement of political parties. This fact is not likely to change, whether civil society organisations like it or not.

3.Civil society organisations[29]

Participation of relevant – i.e. representative – civil society groups can be of key importance for the success of policy dialogue and reform, as it widens the support base and thus increases the chances for those reforms to be sustainable. Since the huge momentum that civil society gathered after the Cold War, donors have been promoting CSOs in different ways, from designing development projects to acting as watchdogs or influencing and monitoring policy processes – especially in the framework of pro-poor policy (Pollard and Court 2005).

One of the main challenges for donors in this regard has been to find the 'right' CSOs, i.e. identifying the ones that really represent and are accountable to certain segments of the population, and not merely to those funding them.[30] All too often, local CSOs and grass-roots movements are being manipulated to rubber-stamp decisions that have already been made by other, more influential stakeholders (UNDP 2007). Making things even worse, the number of governments restricting the operating space for CSOs has been steadily growing in recent years.[31]

In light of these challenges, it is more important than ever that donors support legitimate CSOs and involve them in planning development cooperation and democracy support strategies and actions. But rather than focusing mainly on those organisations that have the means to be visible and vocal vis-à-vis their own governments and the international community (as has happened so often in the past), donors who want to support inclusive policy dialogue should look beyond the usual suspects or 'donor darlings'.

The fact that in practice this does not happen very often reflects the *"tension between exogenous notions and endogenous and vernacular processes."* At the end of the day, *"mappings and Civil Society Assessments are generally shaped by the agendas of donors or other international actors and driven by the nature of the funds and the funder"* (Sanz Corella 2012).

[29] For the purposes of this Handbook the broad definition given by Simon Forrester and Irem Sunar, focused on enhancing citizen participation, seems to be the most suitable: "Popular definitions of CSOs tend to refer to organisations which work in the arena between the household, the private sector, and the state, to negotiate matters of public concern. CSOs include a very wide range of institutions and operate at many different levels, including the global, regional, national and local. The various types of CSO that are commonly referred to include NGOs (non- governmental organisations), community groups, research institutes, think tanks, advocacy groups, trade unions, academic institutions, parts of the media, professional associations, and faith-based institutions" (Forrester and Sunar 2011).

[30] International donors have been providing support to civil society for decades, often through capacity-building programmes aimed at professionalising local CSOs so that they resemble more closely 'Western-style' NGOs that are able to manage donor money correctly and achieve results in terms of donor-defined impact. As a result of this line of support, there is a wide range of CSO in many developing countries that barely have a constituency but are always at the table in donor-led consultations. This has been a recurring issue for the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness established by the Development Assistance Committee (OCDE) and there is extensive literature denouncing this unintended and very damaging effect on international support.

[31] A recent article in The Economist (Sept 13th 2014) shows to what extent this issue is becoming central to international relations, especially since the 2012 Russian law on 'foreign agents' began to require NGOs that receive foreign funding and that engage in any kind of 'political activity' to apply for inclusion in a special government list. After this move, many other authoritarian regimes felt legitimised to follow the same line of action –at least more openly than before. Even within the borders of the EU, some Member States are taking similar positions, as revealed by a recent polemic speech by Viktor Orban, Hungary's Prime Minister, accusing activists of being foreign agents.

For policy dialogue to be truly inclusive it should involve CSOs that have constituencies other than donors; in particular, facilitators should look for organisations and groups that are based outside the capitals and big cities, in areas that are neglected both by governments and international donors.

Likewise, organisations representing minorities or vulnerable groups of the population should be represented as well, if the policy at stake has direct implications for them. However, the selection will of course depend on the mapping of stakeholders that will be carried out during the Collective Assessment phase and that – according to the core value of inclusiveness – will not only take into account the leverage of the stakeholders, but also their exposure to the consequences of a potential reform of the targeted policy (see 'Phase I: Collective Assessment').

Generally speaking, the dialogue will benefit from a diversity of CSOs and their respective viewpoints and knowledge. Depending on the definition of choice, civil society includes many types of organisations other than CSOs, such as trade unions, faith-based organisations, NGOs, philanthropic foundations and professional associations.

The biggest challenge for dialogue facilitators is to **identify organisations and individuals that can speak on behalf of those groups or constituencies that will be most affected by policy change**. Those may not always be the best-known organisations, but taking the time and effort to identify and involve them in the dialogue is crucial in achieving reforms that lead to more inclusive policies in addition to more inclusive policy-making.

4. The media

The media have an important role to play in democratic societies; reporting the news, channelling information between the government and the people, helping lawmakers and decision-makers to determine which issues should be discussed, and involving people in society and politics. It has even been suggested that the media represents the 'fourth pillar of democracy', next to the legislature, executive and judiciary.

In the framework of multi-stakeholder dialogue, **media coverage can increase the transparency of the process**, as results are shared with the general public or those groups in society that are most affected by the policy reform process. **However, too much media attention can also have negative effects** upon the trust which the process precisely aims to build, especially if it sheds light on the participants' trade-offs. After all, the stakeholders do not want to be seen as disadvantaging their own constituencies, who often see political bargaining as a zero-sum game where compromise equals loss of power and privileges.

Moreover, too much media coverage can create a feeling among the dialogue participants of being monitored, something which diminishes trust (Kemp 2013). Indeed, in highly-polarised societies in particular, facilitators and dialogue participants need to be careful on what information they want to share with a

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wider audience. For instance, in the early stages of the process, it might be preferable to provide only general information about the dialogue; e.g. about the policy under discussion and the stakeholders involved. As trust among the participants increases, the more likely it will be that they want to share more detailed information with outsiders, including media representatives.

As a general rule, the media should be seen as a positive force for change that can help raise people's awareness concerning the policy under discussion. Whenever possible, the Hosting Structure and the participants should therefore try to **involve media representatives as allies** in the process who can help in raising awareness about the need for policy reform among wider strata of society, going beyond the limited number of stakeholders that are directly participating in the dialogue.

This was the case in INSPIRED Ghana, where the project team involved the media right from the start, so as to disseminate the main arguments speaking in favour of affirmative action to all parts of society. This decision reflected the relatively uncontroversial nature of the topic (women under-representation in political decision-making) as well as the fact that all dialogue participants held some shared beliefs about the basic recipes for addressing this problem.

In some cases, the media might even be represented as stakeholders in the dialogue, as it happened in Kyrgyzstan, where participants of the INSPIRED programme included journalists from minority language news outlets and owners of broadcasting companies. It was only logical to include them in the discussions, as the dialogue focused on the content of TV and radio programmes under the new framework for digital broadcasting that was to be developed by the government. In such cases, the media can play a very useful role in helping stakeholders from civil society monitor the government's implementation of policy reform agreements that its representatives have signed up to in the framework of the dialogue process.

NIMD's experience in multi-party dialogue shows that finding the right balance between openness and seclusion is often a matter of timing and defining the scope and level of detail of the information that is shared with the media. Whatever the decision adopted by the participants, it is important that they stick to it and do not unilaterally provide information to journalists, as this could strongly diminish trust and jeopardise any nascent consensus.

5. Think tanks and policy research institutes

There are numerous advantages to including think tanks or policy research institutes in policy dialogue processes. Thanks to their focus on research, evidence-based argumentation and their experience in communicating complex analyses and in putting forward policy change arguments to policymakers, the media and the general public alike, think tanks can indeed be very useful allies in inclusive and participatory policy dialogue processes. If they are perceived as sufficiently independent, they can **feed the dialogue with the necessary data and analysis** to create a knowledge foundation and base that are accepted by all the participants.

As a matter of fact, the degree of participation by think tanks in policy monitoring – but above all in advocating for policy change – will vary according to their mandate and degree of independence (from government, from parties, from business, etc.). A think tank that is funded by public money is very unlikely to confront the government or relevant ministry in charge of policy elaboration.

Likewise, think tanks or research institutes that are attached to universities have mandates that restrict their activities to *thinking* rather than *acting*, while others define themselves as 'think and do tanks'. Goran Buldioski provides a useful categorisation of the different roles that think tanks can play, ranging from thinking (analysis only) to thinking and advocacy, thinking and demonstration and thinking and doing (Buldioski 2014).

Similarly to the media, **think tanks can even be considered viable stakeholders in situations where they have a stake in the reforms under discussion**. This would be the case if they have a strong influence on government decision-making; for instance, due to close relations with key decision-makers or due to their possession of high-quality research which is considered useful. Naturally, it would also be the case where the dialogue focuses on research policy, as this would mean that they are directly affected.

What seems clear is that, whatever their exact role in the dialogue process, think tanks or research institutes can certainly 'enlighten' the discussions thanks to their focus on evidence, thus facilitating the creation of shared knowledge among the participants.

Summary

- Donors have an important role to play before the launch of the policy dialogue in identifying policy areas to be addressed through multi-stakeholder dialogue.

- The actual dialogue process should be hosted by an impartial Hosting Structure whose tasks include convening the stakeholders, facilitating and moderating the dialogue process, assessing the policy at stake and communicating results.

- The Hosting Structure should have expertise on engaging a wide range of different types of stakeholders such as decision makers, political parties, civil society organisations, the media and think tanks.

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Preparatory steps

Before initiating a dialogue process, donors are advised to take a number of preparatory steps that will allow them to determine the overall frame of the intervention. The following pages will try to provide answers to the classic preliminary questions that need to be answered before the official start of a dialogue process; i.e. the 'what' (which policy area), the 'when' (in what timeframe) and the 'how much' (with which budget).[32]

Selecting a policy area

Donors operate through different programmes and funding instruments, allowing them to take action in some policy areas but not in others, as well as to be more or less flexible with regards to the kind of projects they can support. In general terms, however, it can be said that they have the tendency to try to control the initiatives that are being run under their flag, something which is only too natural, given that they will be associated with those initiatives (at least where support is provided in a transparent way).

Given such constraints, **donors should be clear from the start about the policy areas in which they are willing and able to 'invest' in**, yet this doesn't necessarily mean that they should pre-determine the exact issues to be addressed in the dialogue. It is rather a matter of deciding on a broad range of topics of interest, leaving enough room for stakeholders to direct the dialogue towards those issues that are most relevant to them.[33]

Interestingly, the EU has recently started to explore new ways of working in a number of priority countries for democracy support. The new approach foresees a strong role for the EU Delegations and focuses on inclusive dialogue practices in partner countries, which aim to provide the EU with an assessment of the state of democracy while also appraising prospects for change – and thus possible areas for intervention.

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[32] The 'who' question has already been addressed in the previous section, where the roles of the donor and the Hosting Structure, as well as the different types of stakeholders, were discussed.

[33] This is especially relevant when it comes to policy dialogue, in which donors have the inclination to steer negotiations towards pre-determined results. As Mc Coullough et al. explain in their Review of Literature and Practice in Policy Dialogue: *"The definition of 'success' in policy dialogue depends on the political agenda of the donor. The higher the political agenda of the donor, the more useful it is to define the success of policy dialogue in terms of influence exerted. Evidence suggests however, that dialogue based on coercive conditionality (that is, when donor influence is heavily exerted) does not necessarily produce pro-development outcomes and has, in fact, led to inefficient aid investments"* (Mc Coullough et al. 2011).

While the official purpose underlying this endeavour is to assess the background for political dialogues and development cooperation activities, its results may offer interesting hints about the need for policy reform that could be explored in more detail through the kind of Collective Assessment foreseen by the Operating Model (see below).

In the same vein, the indicators developed by V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) might offer the perfect starting point for inclusive and participatory dialogue processes. With over 400 indicators and a team of more than 2.500 researchers all over the world, the level of accuracy and data aggregation that V-Dem has achieved is well beyond those of any other existing index. And what is more, the project measures the progress of all the countries in the world against the backdrop of different dimensions – or 'varieties' – of democracy, based on those principles that best define (albeit never exclusively) our conception of that term: from liberal, electoral and majoritarian to consensual, egalitarian, participatory or deliberative.[34]

Setting a timeframe

Supporting locally-led processes of reform certainly has its drawbacks from the standpoint of donors, mainly in terms of predictability. It is very difficult to pre-determine how many months – or even years – it will take domestic stakeholders to collectively analyse the policy issue at stake, reach a consensus on policy reform and, on top of that agree on mechanisms that will ensure that collectively-agreed decisions are put into practice by the government.

As a general rule, and based on the experience of INSPIRED in Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tunisia, **donors should foresee a period between 18 months and two years at least**, while also allowing for sufficient flexibility in terms of a potential extension. Yet in reality, there is no guarantee that the dialogue will come to a successful conclusion in any pre-determined timeframe, as windows of opportunity might close due to external events or sudden shifts that occur in the stakeholders' power relations, to name just two possible developments that lie outside the control of external actors.

The impact of exogenous factors in INSPIRED Tunisia and Moldova is particularly revealing in this respect. The assassination of a Tunisian opposition leader on the one hand, and a hunting incident that brought down the Moldovan government on the other, show to what extent policy dialogue is dependent on the stability of the overall political context. The effects of this kind of external shocks and ensuing gridlocks can be mitigated, either by nurturing trust and cultivating inter-personal links among the dialogue participants, as INSPIRED did in Tunisia, or by trying to focus the attention of the debate on its most technical aspects until the political situation settles down.

[34] There is indeed great potential for practical use of the V-Dem online tools (www.v-dem.net) when it comes to identifying those specific issues regarding democracy that might be in urgent need of support in a given country.

This is precisely the way in which INSPIRED Moldova tried to overcome a period of stagnation which had blocked the process for almost half a year. This period was characterised by a distant approach of most officials, who preferred to focus on keeping their positions amidst the storm. On top of this, once the new government came into office – and the EU's reservations concerning Moldova's record in respecting the rule of law were withdrawn – the negotiations took a sudden turn that didn't allow for much debate, especially when the events in Ukraine (another exogenous factor, this time at regional level) pushed Brussels to speed up the talks in order to secure the signing of the Association Agreement and the DFCTA as soon as possible.

The most desirable solution would be not to set a timeframe at all, but this is not realistic considering the programming mechanisms and internal constraints of donor administrations. Since budgetary cycles are essential when it comes to providing aid and ensuring proper and timely accountability to taxpayers, a middle ground needs to be found between flexibility and unmovable deadlines. It was argued before that this dilemma could be addressed through new working modalities, where the donor and the Hosting Structure collaborate closely from the beginning in ways that will enable them to jointly search for ways in which to navigate the troubled waters of domestic politics.

Establishing a budget

In the case of democracy support, most donors provide the bulk of their funding through grants given to organisations that commit to implement activities as outlined in a log-frame and corresponding project budgets. This is completely understandable from the point of view of the bureaucracy-heavy administrations, which are tasked with ensuring that public money is spent in a proper way. However, policy dialogue needs a higher degree of flexibility to **allow the Hosting Structure to use the available resources according to the direction and speed of the dialogue** and the needs of the participants.

For instance, in one country it might be relatively easy for the stakeholders to collectively assess the policy landscape, as data is available and there is a widespread consensus on the main reforms needed. Consequently, relatively few resources will be needed to commission additional research and hold workshops to discuss the findings and elaborate policy options. In another country, the situation might be totally different, with stakeholders applying very different readings of the policy under discussion. In this case, the Hosting Structure needs to be able to organise a larger number of meetings to build trust, while also ensuring that the stakeholders accept data and research that may contradict their initial positions. Thus, more resources will have to be used for commissioning studies on the policy issue of interest that can build the ground upon which a constructive dialogue can be conducted.

In any case, even if budgets for inclusive and participatory dialogue should allow a certain degree of flexibility, the lion's share will go to financing the Hosting Structure, and this can be done either in the form of a grant contract (when working directly with existing CSOs) or a service contract (when setting

up a new entity). Whatever the choice, it is advisable to define the types of activities to be implemented by the dialogue's host rather broadly – allowing for spending on research, events, communications materials, etc. – as seen fit, while at the same time enabling the donor to monitor spending and to remain closely involved (as an observer and advisor) all along the process.

In this regard, the budget should also include provisions about the methodology to be applied, adapting the Operating Model to the specificities of the case and allowing the donor to ensure that the Hosting Structure works towards promoting inclusiveness and participation, both in terms of the process and its results.

Summary

- Donors should identify the wider policy area in which they are willing to 'invest', without pre-determining the exact issues to be addressed in the ensuing dialogue process.

- Donors should foresee at least 1.5 – 2 years for the dialogue process, but should allow for an extension in the event that new windows of opportunity might arise, increasing the chances for the participants to achieve consensus on policy reform.

- Budgets for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue should define the types of activities to be implemented rather broadly. This flexibility will enable the Hosting Structure to spend available funds in accordance with the changing needs and requirements of the process.

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The Integrated Support Framework:
a new tool for monitoring and evaluation

In this section:

- *Problems faced by donors when monitoring and evaluating policy dialogue*

- *Overcoming the 'problem of attribution'*

- *Different types of indicators*

- *The Integrated Support Framework (ISF)*

The use of planning, measurement and reporting tools is a thorny issue that goes straight to the heart of the donors' procedures and organisational culture. Although donors are aware of the importance of remaining flexible and open-minded when tackling inherently political issues (such as public policy), their *modus operandi* remains strongly determined by an overly technocratic approach and an often chimerical emphasis on causality.[35] However, measuring the results of policy dialogue is very difficult, not only when it comes to quantifying its impact - outcomes are highly dependent on the context and suitable indicators and baselines are rarely available – but also with regards to the levels of trust, inclusiveness and participation that the process itself can produce.[36]

Constrained by their internal procedures and the need to base their financial allocations on programming documents that support the investment, officials in donor administrations will almost 'instinctively' insist on the importance of conducting a sound planning exercise before committing any funds. At the same time, most of them are becoming aware of the possible trade-offs of impact versus measurable outcomes, and there is a certain fear of incentivising the wrong indicators, which could have a negative impact on other spheres. In other words, **too strong of an emphasis on measurement can be discouraging and could even end up influencing the process negatively**, for instance by putting the nascent trust dynamics at risk.

No one denies that results, outcomes and impact must be measured somehow, as this is important both in terms of donor accountability and for planning further actions. But instead of becoming a stressful and often futile exercise of ticking boxes and matching inputs, outputs and results, measuring and reporting should serve to promote genuine learning, especially in multi-

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[35] As Josephine Tsui, Simon Hearn and John Young put in their recent working paper on monitoring policy influence, *"Traditional monitoring and evaluation approaches which rely on a simple linear, cause and effect model with predefined indicators, are simply not adequate in this context"* (Tsui et al. 2014).

[36] *"Attempts to develop meaningful indicators that can be used consistently have been problematic. As democracy is about power, so democracy support is very much driven by different interests; the level of agreement on common frameworks is, as on many other matters, itself a product of politics. Previous attempts to achieve multi-donor consensus on a single set of indicators have not met with much success"* (Foresti and Harris 2011).

stakeholder policy dialogue, where a thorough understanding of the dynamics and interests that shape the process is probably *the* most important factor co-determining failure or success.

Since one cannot do without planning, measuring and reporting, which are largely institutionalised and conform with the standard mind-set that is prevalent in development and democracy support, there is a need to develop alternative tools that can serve as useful and integral elements in any given dialogue process. This is exactly the case of the **Collective Policy Analysis** and **Roadmaps for Reform**, two key outcomes that act as pillars upon which the dialogue process will be built, each marking the end of one of the three phases of the Operating Model and, at the same time, the beginning of the next (see further below).

Yet focusing exclusively on the effects that the process produces on the dialogue participants would encourage a kind of operational solipsism; the same process also needs to insert itself into the political context of the recipient country, thus remaining open to external influence. This openness can result in a sort of capillarity, highly desirable in terms of relevance, but making it even harder to determine which outcomes are direct results of donor support.

Once again the old problem of attribution comes to the fore, since policy reform is an open cycle with plenty of entry points and democratisation processes are essentially locally-owned, which makes it difficult to fully understand, let alone 'steer' them (which is not desirable anyways). Donors need to acknowledge that their role is very limited – and often contested – and that putting too much emphasis on enhancing their own direct involvement and visibility in the process can be counterproductive, going against the principle of local ownership and possibly raising mistrust amongst the participants.

These are just some of the conceptual and technical challenges involved in measuring policy influence and attitudinal change. Their effect is that practitioners are often trapped between the demands of the donors and the constraints they encounter during project implementation.

Fortunately enough, the struggle to determine clear links between advocacy and the final outputs of policy-making, which doesn't follow a 'linear' path or rational causal chain, has given rise to a number of innovative tools. They are the result of a long debate about the advantages of using log-frames and similar frameworks that appear too rigid for planning and monitoring a process that needs to evolve according to the changing attitudes and shifting objectives of the actors involved.[37]

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[37] *"Most policy and advocacy programmes have multiple objectives which may change at short notice, where it is not always possible to plan interventions in advance, where multiple inter-related interventions are necessary, and where cause-and-effects relationships are unpredictable. Planning, monitoring and evaluating approaches that require strict adherence to a pre-defined plan will not work well in these contexts, and neither will those that require standardised implementation approaches or heavy top-down governance"* (Tsui et al. 2014).

This debate about the problems of "projectising policy dialogue" (Watson and Pierce 2008) dates back to a few years ago, until DFID admitted that there was no sense in approaching such sensitive issues from a 'business as usual' perspective and finally renounced to making policy dialogue fit into the Project Cycle Management (PCM) approach.

The discussion is bearing fruit, at least academically, as it has produced alternatives to the classical frameworks, from Outcome Mapping to the RAPID Outcome Assessment designed by ODI, the Force Field Analysis developed by WWF or the Rapid Results Framework, recently proposed by the World Bank for actions that are susceptible to shifting objectives on the run. The choice is widening and practitioners are finding that donors are becoming more receptive to new methodological approaches, as long as they provide some visibility and help to build long-standing partnerships with key actors in partner countries.

The Operating Model has used a number of these tools to produce the **Integrated Support Framework**, a sort of dashboard that aims at providing an accurate snapshot of the dialogue process and its different outcomes. **It allows donors, the Hosting Structure and participants alike, to follow the different stages of the process and see the evolution of the stakeholders' attitudes and positions.** It also provides an overview of the three types of indicators that have to be collectively agreed by the stakeholders at the end of each of the three phases: the policy indicators (resulting from the participatory assessment of the policy at stake), the process indicators (reflecting the interests and incentives of the actors taking part in the consensus building phase) and, finally, the impact indicators (that should be expressed in terms of policy influence).

The Integrated Support Framework (ISF) is presented below. The final chapter, which describes a multi-stakeholder dialogue process that follows the Operating Model, will discuss when and how the Hosting Structure should use certain tools that will enable it to fill in the different cells of the ISF.

Summary

- Sound reporting and measurement are needed for the sake of accountability, but they shouldn't encumber the implementation of the dialogue process. On the contrary, they offer the possibility of enhancing mutual understanding among participants through collective learning.

- The ISF allows the Hosting Structure, the participants and donors to follow the different stages of the dialogue process and see the evolution of the stakeholders' attitudes and positions.

- The ISF provides an overview of the 'policy indicators', 'process indicators' and 'impact indicators', which serve to measure the policy at stake, the inclusiveness of the whole dialogue process and its impact in terms of policy change.

	POLICY		PROCESS		RESULTS
(A) TOPICS / ISSUES	**RELATED POLICIES**		**POINTS OF CONTENTION**		**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR REFORM**
1 ISSUE A					
2 ISSUE B					
3 (ETC.)					

	INFLUENCE	EXPOSURE	INTERESTS	INCENTIVES FOR CHANGE	IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS AND CAPACITY GAPS
(B) STAKEHOLDERS					
1 MINISTRY OF …					
1.1 DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR …					
1.2 CHIEF OF UNIT IN CHARGE OF …					
2 CSO					
2.1 CHAIRMAN					
2.2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR					

	POLICY INDICATORS		PROCESS INDICATORS		IMPACT INDICATORS (POLICY INFLUENCE)
(C) INDICATORS					
1 QUANTITATIVE CRITERIA					
2 QUALITATIVE CRITERIA					
D OUTCOMES	**PARTICIPATORY POLICY ASSESSMENT**		**ROADMAP FOR REFORM**		**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM**

Integrated Support Framework

INSPIRED
E I D H R

Phase 1: Collective Assessment

Rationale

The Collective Assessment phase aims at mapping the political context in target countries in order to validate – or change – the policy area initially selected by the donor. Once the pertinence and opportunity of launching a dialogue process is confirmed, the Hosting Structure needs to map out the possible issues of conflict and the power relations amongst the stakeholders who can influence policy making and/or will be affected by the policy change.

Right from the onset, the Hosting Structure must ensure that no key stakeholder is left aside, while working actively so that those taking part in the dialogue recognise each other as legitimate interlocutors. This is indeed the main challenge when trying to initiate an inclusive and participatory multi-stakeholder dialogue: for participants to recognise each other as having a stake and therefore a right to be involved in the process.

Mutual recognition is intricately and intrinsically linked to trust. **Both trust and ownership require an early involvement of the participating stakeholders in the definition of the main needs and priorities to be tackled.** Collective research methods, widely used in the field of conflict transformation, appear as one of the most effective means of building personal bonds between participants. Working together on defining the content and scope of the dialogue process, as well as analysing the policy and the implications of reform, can enhance the ownership of the stakeholders. Nonetheless, in order to achieve this kind of shared knowledge and ownership, participants need to first recognise each other as legitimate interlocutors.

This will probably be the main difficulty that the Hosting Structure will encounter in the launching phase: ensuring that the key values of inclusiveness and participation are accepted by the strongest stakeholders; i.e. those without whom the dialogue effort would be meaningless, as they hold the power to adopt policies or block reforms (government representatives, trade unions, political parties and so on, depending on the issue at stake).

Usually playing from a position of power, they will find it annoying to share the negotiating table with weaker or disadvantaged players. Furthermore, insisting on these two core values will almost certainly slow down the decision-making process and will often appear as strategically counter-productive to stronger stakeholders, which indicates the degree to which the Hosting Structure needs to act as an active facilitator from an early stage and throughout the whole process.

Facilitation in itself however will not suffice. There must also be clear incentives for the stakeholders. This is why the donor and the Hosting Structure need to carry out an assessment of the key stakeholders' interests and build incentives accordingly. What donors should avoid in any case is to allow their 'craving' for results in a given policy area and their interest in speeding up the reform process to impair the core values of inclusiveness and participation.

Modus operandi

The Collective Assessment phase comprises a series of focus groups (or other suitable discussion formats), collective mappings and participatory assessments. It is important to allow the Hosting Structure enough flexibility to organise as many bilateral and multilateral meetings as necessary to narrow down the policy area to those aspects on which the stakeholders can possibly reach a consensus. Likewise, the Hosting Structure and participants must jointly review this **series of iterative mappings of the policy landscape and the stakeholders**. It is important that these assessments remain open to discussion all along the dialogue process for the sake of transparency and accountability.

Bringing to the surface the power dynamics, underlying positions and the different participants' preconceptions should help them to develop trust in a progressive manner. At the same time, sharing evidence and focusing on the technical aspects of the policy tackled will pave the way for a more rigorous and objective approach towards policy-making, which is a crucial element in a culture of dialogue.

Each new round of collective assessment and mapping will bring more clarity about the challenges and opportunities for policy reform. Likewise, any changes in the focus of the dialogue process that might result from this exercise can lead to inviting additional stakeholders to take part in the discussions, whereas other stakeholders might decide to drop out as a result of a change of focus.

Another reason for organisations to quit the process might be that other stakeholders aligned with similar views have already taken the lead so that their participation has no added value. For instance in INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan, many of the initially invited officials lost interest in the project after the focus had been shifted from ethnic minorities in education to ethnic minorities and media, while most of the civil society representatives working on minorities' rights stayed involved. Moreover, new stakeholders joined the process, including media corporations, journalists and representatives from ministries and the presidential office.

The Collective Assessment phase ends when the stakeholders reach a first agreement in the form of **three outcomes that lay the foundations of the ensuing Consensus Building phase**. Simply put, these outcomes refer to the 'what' (participatory policy assessment), the 'who' (list of participants) and the 'how' (programming document and rules of the game).

The first document will contain an **overall policy assessment** stating the areas of contention and the conflicts, interests, and potential winners and losers of policy reform; always based on the discussions with and among the stakeholders.

The second will consist of a **list of organisations and individuals invited to the process**. It should also foresee a follow-up mechanism to keep track of their involvement along the Consensus Building phase).

The third outcome will be a **participatory programming document** with a corresponding budget estimation to be agreed between the Hosting Structure and the donor. This will refer to the organisation of the dialogue process, including sufficient funds for renting venues when necessary, commissioning additional and more targeted policy research, etc. This last deliverable will also contain the 'rules of the game', collectively agreed by all the participants and, if possible, signed.

Objectives

- To Identify key stakeholders that have an influence on the selected policy area and/or will be affected by policy reform;

- to establish a working relationship among those stakeholders;

- to ensure that no key stakeholder is left out of the process and that those taking part in it recognise each other as valid interlocutors;

- to identify areas of contention, points of friction and power dynamics among the stakeholders;

- to build trust through joint research and transparency;

- to allow the stakeholders to jointly validate the key issues for policy reform and to assess whether there is a window of opportunity for achieving consensus, and;

- to support the stakeholders in the adoption of a work plan outline an approximate timeframe for reaching an agreement in the form of a Roadmap for Reform.

Stages

a. Appraising the context and deciding on the topics to address

Appraising transition contexts, which are movable by definition, is not an easy task. It requires the combination of different kinds of mapping, as well as the choice of reliable and realistic indicators in countries in which data, either for technical or for political reasons, is not always available. While no mapping is entirely objective – it is always influenced by the standpoint from which it is conducted – this bias can be minimised by incorporating as many different perspectives as possible.

Needless to say, the theoretical framework will have a strong influence on the kind of problems that will be addressed in the assessment, more or less in the same way as a question determines the scope and sometimes the content of its own answer.

Probably the best way to avoid this bias is to design and **conduct a mapping as a collective exercise, based on a mix of tools that are seen as useful by the individuals involved**. The Hosting Structure can propose, combine and adapt the different theoretical frameworks that have been adopted by donors over the last decade to the local reality (from SIDA's Power Analysis to DFID's Drivers of Change).[38]

There are interesting experiences that show what can be achieved with a more tailored use of political economy tools that build on locally and collectively-produced knowledge (Booth and Unsworth 2014). In addition to providing technical assistance based on general assessments done by international experts, some donors have started to provide spaces for dialogue for local stakeholders to discuss and identify needs and ideas for policy reform.

A recent project, run in the Philippines by the Asia Foundation with funding from USAID and AusAID, has successfully addressed tax reform – an area traditionally considered as 'tricky' – by tackling a very concrete aspect (excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco) and by coordinating and nurturing a coalition of diverse stakeholders until it was broad enough to overcome the vested interests of those groups that were opposed to change (Booth and Unsworth 2014).

Nevertheless, the dominant approach of most donors towards supporting policy reform remains overly technical. Donors tend to see themselves as providers of technical know-how and even when using assessment tools that

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[38] An overview of these frameworks is provided in the Development Assistance Committee's "Survey of donor Approaches to Governance assessment" (OCDE 2008). Further information and references to the most prominent of these approaches can be found in the bibliography, but probably the most useful source to get acquainted to their logic and to understand their evolution is the recent paper "From political economy to political analysis" by Hudson and Leftwich. After arranging Political Economy Analyses in three generations, they conclude that: "*The key analytical concepts are seldom well-defined, carefully differentiated or usefully disaggregated. Among these we include institutions, structure, agency, ideas, contingency and – above all – power. The way they are used tends to provide for lumpy, one-dimensional analysis. It does not allow analysts or policy makers to reach the detailed inner politics that shapes or frustrates change*" (Hudson and Leftwich 2014).

are supposedly more politically smart, they rarely capture the hidden agendas and vested interests that explain the current situation (Hudson and Leftwich 2014).

Moreover, most of the tools for political economy analyses aim at assessing the entire polity, an effort that may be useful to get a first understanding of the overall political situation, but which doesn't allow delving into the specificities of a concrete public problem. In addition, even if the focus of Political Economy Analysis has recently been shifted by its users towards the analysis of local or sector level contexts, these tools are still widely perceived as offering "*commentaries that identified problems without offering solutions*" (Fisher and Marquette 2014).

In order to overcome this sort of 'analysis paralysis', the Operating Model proposes the tackling of very concrete problems (previously identified, for instance through the V-Dem indicators mentioned above) and then zooming in on the specific policy landscape that is of relevance for addressing those problems.

I any case, policy can hardly be understood without considering the individuals and institutions that shape it, acting simultaneously as the main driving forces for both *status quo* and change. In the words of Hudson and Leftwich:

"*There is now a growing realisation that we need to refocus not simply on 'big structures' but also on actors – in short, agency, defined as the ability of individuals, organisations and groups of collective actors to consciously deliberate and act strategically to realise their intentions, whether developmental or not. But, whether individual or collective, agents do not work politically in a limitless, structureless and institution-free plane of open possibilities. The structural and institutional contexts of power - formal and informal, local and external - always and everywhere constitute constraints. However, while structures and institutions are constraints, they are not destiny. People, groups, organisations and coalitions do not move in unison, like reeds in the wind, to a change of incentives.*"

All of which shows that **the mappings of the policy context, stakeholders and of the institutional landscape must go hand in hand**, feeding each other to provide an accurate depiction of the real state of affairs in the field. There is a wide array of tools for this purpose; once again ODI, through its Research and Policy in Development Unit, has been developing different toolkits for Mapping Political Context, in some cases tailoring them to civil society's specificities and needs. (Nash et al. 2006). A more recent toolkit, also addressed to CSOs but mainly focused on Africa, is the one that Anna Schnell and Erika Coetze developed for CAFOD, Christian Aid and Trocaire (Schnell and Coetze 2012).

Whichever tools chosen, they should enable the stakeholders to appraise the context in a participatory manner, turning the mapping into a collective exercise that allows on the one hand to capture local reality from many different angles and on the other, to progressively build trust among practitioners through joint

research. This, in turn, will bring to the surface the values and moral judgements underlying the tacit knowledge of the participants.

Collective Assessment workshop

To get a better understanding of the policy area under consideration and the interests of the main stakeholders, the Hosting Structure should organise a first joint workshop, ideally taking the form of a focus group and not involving more than 15-20 people representing different stakeholders. A facilitator should steer the discussion through targeted questions and short interventions.

The main objective is to ensure that the participants focus on the policy area under discussion and that, at the end of the workshop, it is possible to **identify existing tensions and points of contention**. Moreover, the facilitator should also ask questions with a view of identifying additional stakeholders that need to be involved in the dialogue.

Notwithstanding this general advice, in the case of highly polarised societies, the facilitator might have to speak to potential dialogue participants individually before convening the first multi-stakeholder workshop, so as to build a minimum degree of trust in the Hosting Structure and its mandate to organise the dialogue. Sometimes, it may even be advisable for either the facilitator or the policy analyst to voice the positions and concerns of those stakeholders who are afraid or unwilling to participate actively in a joint meeting on their behalf.

The experience of the INSPIRED team in Kyrgyzstan presents a telling example. Representatives of the Uzbek minority group would not speak up during public events, as they were fearful that their interventions could be misinterpreted, leading to new inter-ethnic clashes. The project team designed and distributed questionnaires among Uzbek communities in the county's southern regions, in order to better understand their needs and demands with regards to the content of media programmes in Kyrgyzstan. The answers helped the team to understand the Uzbeks' agenda and enabled them to voice their concerns in bilateral and multi-stakeholder meetings without provoking resistance on the Kyrgyz side.

For the purpose of structuring the discussions at the workshop, it might be advisable for the Hosting Structure to prepare an analysis of the state of play in the selected policy area and share it with the participants before the meeting. It must be made clear, however, that any background paper distributed to the stakeholders may be subject to revision at a later stage.

Moreover, **stakeholders should also decide collectively what further research is needed** (if it is needed) in order to feed their discussions with reliable information, as well as the type of knowledge that they want to take into consideration for their debates (see section 'Preconditions - Knowledge in dialogue processes'). Apart from relying on its own in-house policy analyst, the Hosting Structure might also want to invite other policy experts to take active part in the discussions in case a basic understanding of the topic requires

explanations of legal, financial or technical aspects. In this case, the facilitator should address questions to the external expert at specific moments in the discussion, whenever his or her technical knowledge may be relevant to clarify a specific element of the policy under discussion.

Problem analysis

Facilitators have a broad range of tools at their disposal to analyse the problems in the selected policy area in a methodical and consistent manner. One simple and widely used tool is the **'Problem Tree'**, which provides an overview of the known causes and effects of a given problem, showing the inter-relations among them and thereby establishing the context within which a dialogue will be taking place.[39]

Other techniques of diagnosis that go beyond the problem/solution dichotomy such as the '**SWOT Analysis'**[40] (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) can be used instead. There are also behavioural methods that bring agency into the picture, such as **'Outcome Mapping'**, a method initially developed by the International Research Centre that has managed to gather a wide community strongly convinced by and committed to its approach.[41]

There are of course many other alternative methods for dissecting and assessing problems and the final choice has to be made by the facilitator, depending on the profile of the participants and the level of detail that the focus group is aiming at. **What is important is that the tools used have to be accepted by the stakeholders** and that they enable the group to clearly depict the main issues that need to be tackled.

If this is done successfully, the policy analyst should be able to process the problems in order to present them from a 'policy perspective', a key step to ensure sustainable and realistic solutions. This is something that cannot be achieved without taking the legal framework into account and building on those existing policies that, either directly or indirectly, touch upon the problems at hand.

[39] The problem tree involves writing causes in a negative form (e.g. lack of women representation in political decision-making or lack of TV and radio programmes covering topics of interest to ethnic minorities). This is very useful for planning a policy dialogue project, where a prior assessment of needs is key to identify windows of opportunity that the stakeholders can exploit in order to come to collectively-agreed solutions. Another advantage of this method is that it builds on a collective identification of problems by those concerned. As a by-product this collective work can help to lay the foundations upon which to build trust among the participants. More info at: http://www.evaluationtoolbox.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=134, or www.odi.org/publications/5258-problem-tree-analysis

[40] www.odi.org/publications/5876-swot-analysis-context-mapping
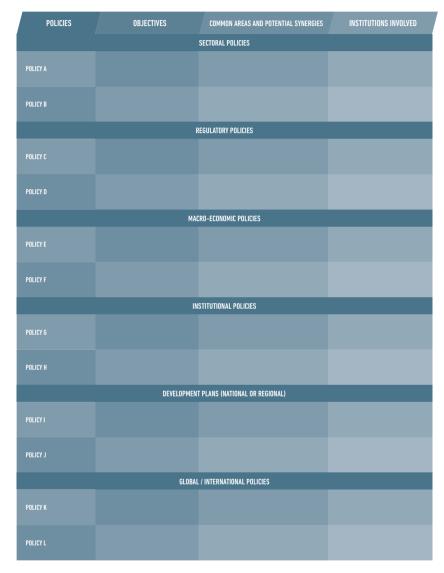
[41] www.outcomemapping.ca/

Policy landscape

Policies are far from being monolithic blocks that stand by themselves and can be neatly separated, replaced or reformed. Rather, they are interlinked and often the success or failure of one policy depends on other, related policies. Thus a key challenge for any policy-oriented approach is to overcome the widespread tendency to think either in terms of policies *or* in terms of institutions. Both must be considered jointly so that one can get hold of the dynamics underlying the policy area and the specific problems that a given policy reform can address. Regardless of whether the dialogue process tackles sectoral policies, regulatory policies, institutional policies or global/international policies, the targeted policy will certainly be influenced by other policies and institutions.

To avoid the pitfalls of policy incoherence, the Hosting Structure is advised to carry out a sound analysis of the policy landscape. This enables it to better understand these inter-dependencies, as well as the political implications of trying to reform or adjust those other policies and/or institutions which have an influence on the problems to be tackled by the dialogue process.

The following table (the policy landscape) can be used to measure the influence of other policies and institutions on the policy reform process on which the stakeholders will focus. Furthermore, it allows the Hosting Structure to identify synergies and possible areas of cooperation with related policies and policy-reform processes.

POLICIES	OBJECTIVES	COMMON AREAS AND POTENTIAL SYNERGIES	INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED
SECTORAL POLICIES			
POLICY A			
POLICY B			
REGULATORY POLICIES			
POLICY C			
POLICY D			
MACRO-ECONOMIC POLICIES			
POLICY E			
POLICY F			
INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES			
POLICY G			
POLICY H			
DEVELOPMENT PLANS (NATIONAL OR REGIONAL)			
POLICY I			
POLICY J			
GLOBAL / INTERNATIONAL POLICIES			
POLICY K			
POLICY L			

The policy landscape

Determining the stage of the policy cycle

Equally important, the Hosting Structure must determine, along with the participants, the precise phase of the policy cycle they are aiming to influence. Due to political factors and depending on the stability of the political context in which the targeted policy is embedded, these phases (agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation) often overlap, or are not even completed before another initiative is launched. Nonetheless, this depiction is useful as it provides civil and political society representatives with a more or less clear idea of when their chances for inserting and advancing their interests are best.

As was explained before, the policy stage pre-determines to a large extent the kind of measures or recommendations that the Roadmap for Reform may include. So in order to enhance the focus and effectiveness of the dialogue process, it is crucial to provide the participants with a clear idea of where they stand within the policy cycle, thus presenting them a target that is adapted to the real circumstances of the political context and that doesn't raise expectations around objectives that are out of reach in the given time-frame.

b. Mapping and engaging the stakeholders

The Hosting Structure needs to conduct a preliminary assessment of those stakeholders that should be invited to jointly identify the main problems in the selected policy field, as well as the opportunities for addressing these problems through policy-making. Yet this first appraisal needs to be refined through additional collective exercises, in which the participants themselves should point out which other stakeholders are missing and who should be invited to the process.

As is usually the case, the stakeholders will have different degrees of leverage over the policy-making process. While some actors will be in a position to take direct decisions or even allocate funds for specific purposes, others might compensate their lack of political power with their capacity to propose original choices or to put external pressure on policy-makers.

Owing to its inter-disciplinary nature and in combining the skills of the facilitator with the technical knowledge of the policy analyst, the Hosting Structure should be able to understand not only where the power lies, but also to what extent the incumbent actors can become drivers of change within the current institutional landscape. In other words, it must identify stakeholders that are relevant (from an objective perspective) and committed to promote change (subjective dimension).

To achieve this, the Hosting Structure must carry out the mapping of stakeholders with an eye on the two core values of the Operating Model. In a process aimed at promoting inclusiveness and participation, it is equally important to identify (a) those actors that can *influence* policy making and (b) those that will be *affected* by it.

Accordingly, there are two key criteria for selecting and engaging organisations in the dialogue process: one is **influence** (political leverage or capacity to produce change) and the other is **exposure** (understood not only as vulnerability, but also as susceptibility to be affected by any potential policy change).

The importance of each stakeholder for the process can be measured through two variables: exposure to the policy area (weak or strong) and influence over the policy process (weak or strong). Both variables can be scored on a scale; e.g. from 1 to 10 (from weak to strong). The higher the score of the stakeholder, the more 'affected by' or 'able to influence' policy it is. The result should be noted down in the Integrated Support Framework, but it can also be visualised by placing the organisations on a two-axis chart, as shown below.

Stakeholder mapping

For the sake of inclusiveness, the Hosting Structure must take the risk of inviting to the process those stakeholders that might lack influence but are strongly affected by the policy at stake. Involving exposed stakeholders might jeopardise the feasibility of policy reforms in the short-run, but it enhances the legitimacy of the dialogue process in the medium-term and helps to create broader coalitions for reform.

What is more, by involving otherwise neglected actors, the 'winner-takes-all' attitude should give way to a more open approach towards societal problems, which in turn will contribute to the promotion of the culture of dialogue.

Appointing a permanent representative

The Operating Model aims at mobilising organisations, but for doing so the Hosting Structure needs to work with people that can speak on behalf of those organisations, which means that **building trust dynamics will require the personal involvement of relevant figures within those organisations identified as key stakeholders**. This can only be done by identifying and engaging those individuals that have shown a commitment to policy change or who are acting as 'champions of reform' within their respective organisations.

To this purpose, the organisations identified as key stakeholders should be asked to appoint a permanent representative to the dialogue process. This is crucial, as it will be much harder to build trust relations if stakeholder representatives change at every dialogue meeting. Furthermore, those individuals that have experienced the dialogue right from the beginning will understand better the interests and incentives for change of the other stakeholders than someone who enters the dialogue later on. Without this insight, the newcomers might find it harder to make compromises and find consensus on needed reforms.

One of the positive by-products of processes following the Operating Model logic will be the creation of a network of people coming from various organisations and holding different positions within the political spectrum. These individuals will be interacting throughout the dialogue process, taking part in activities and progressively building a personal relationship around these encounters.

Setting the rules of the game

It is important that the dialogue participants understand and accept the core values guiding the dialogue, i.e. inclusiveness and participation. Moreover, they need to agree on the 'rules of the game' that will govern their interactions.

This basic agreement should be documented in writing, also **stating the objective of the process and outlining how the participants will take decisions collectively** (e.g. by an absolute majority or by consensus). In addition to these basic provisions, the Hosting Structure can also propose a more detailed set of rules. In particular, those may include provisions on governance and participation, meeting procedures, decision-making and the use of available funds (if foreseen by the donor and agreed upon with the Hosting Structure).

c. Outcomes

Participatory policy assessment

The joint elaboration of a 'participatory policy assessment' is set to prepare the ensuing dialogue process by contextualising it within a concrete policy landscape and by identifying those areas of contention that need to be addressed in order to achieve consensus. This first collective endeavour is crucial, not just for the sake of ownership, but also for trust-building. A growing number of similar methods are being implemented in different contexts and situations, drawing inspiration from the 'Participatory Action Research' and its philosophy of combining knowledge and experience to promote social change (see Chapter II – The approach).

List of participants

Once the key stakeholders are identified and officially invited to take part in the dialogue process, the Hosting Structure should prepare a list to be shared with the participants and the donor. This list of participants should include the following information:

I.   the names of individuals representing the participating organisations;

II.   the reasons for choosing each participant/organisation, and;

III. a brief analysis of each participant's positions, expectations and attitudes towards the process.

Self-evident and simple as it may seem, this list is key, as it can be used as a sort of baseline that focuses on 'agency' aspects, while leaving the structural aspects open to collective appraisal by the participants themselves.

Programming document

It will be up to the participants to jointly analyse the structural aspects of the chosen policy area in order to find room for consensus. To do so in an effective manner, their joint work must be oriented towards results. While the exact results that may be achieved are not known at the early stages of the dialogue process, the Hosting Structure should nevertheless ask the participants to elaborate a document in which they set out *what* goals they want to achieve and *how*. This programming document will be indicative and subject to modification, but it remains crucial when it comes to providing a framework that allows the stakeholders to foresee the direction in which they are heading and the type of activities and funding that is needed.

Rules of the game document

The participants must also know what attitudes and behaviours are acceptable to the other participants and which aren't. Collectively elaborated rules of the game will provide guidance on these day-to-day interactions and will represent a first commitment towards each other.[42]

d. Policy indicators

A key function of the Participatory Policy Assessment consists of the production of a sound and comprehensive set of policy indicators through which the dialogue participants, the Hosting Structure and the donor(s) can measure the state and evolution of the policy at stake.

This insistence on **basing the discussions on concrete and reliable data** stems not only from a belief in the importance of promoting a more rigorous approach towards policy-making, but also from the assumption that promoting a culture of dialogue in transitional contexts requires overcoming the sort of partisan dialectics that tend to neglect facts when they contradict a given ideological position. Not incidentally, the principles of transparency and accountability, which most donors aim to promote, are a 'horizon' in themselves; something that even donor countries still need to keep improving back home, within their own political systems.

The promotion of these principles requires a sustained effort at different levels that cannot be attained once and for all. Public administrations all over the world need to keep improving their information and statistical systems in order to provide citizens – and policymakers, of course – with accurate and reliable data. While technical problems are sometimes the reason for the unavailability of certain sets of data, all too often the real reason is the lack of willingness on the side of governments to share information that can put them in a difficult situation towards their constituencies.

Aware of the importance of transparency and accountability for the sustainability of democracy, the international community has turned its attention to means of ensuring that governments grant access to information. Amid the growing number of initiatives fostering transparency and accountability, such as the Transparency and Accountability Initiative, the International Aid Transparency Initiative, or the International Budget Partnership, a wide alliance of donors and other interested institutions led by the World Bank has recently launched the Open Government Partnership, an initiative that doesn't focus exclusively on emerging democracies but also on those that are supposedly 'consolidated'.[43]

Building on this work and similar initiatives, the policy analyst within the Hosting Structure should collect all the relevant and available data regarding the policy at stake, guided by existing indicators. He/she will then have to

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42 A facilitator's guide jointly published by International IDEA and NIMD contains a whole section, in which different options for setting rules of the game in dialogue contexts are presented and discussed (Bartolini et al. 2013)

43 More information at: www.opengovpartnership.org.

assess the accuracy of the information and the consistency of the measurement system before proposing an 'ideal' set of indicators (combining existing and new indicators). Although this might seem to be the kind of technical work that can be done by an expert, it is important that it is discussed and eventually validated by the stakeholders participating in the process, and this for three reasons.

First, they must have a final say on what is to be considered as evidence for the sake of ownership. In that sense, **the policy indicators set the common ground upon which the dialogue is to unfold**. Second, in discussing this question openly, the stakeholders will bring to the surface many biases and preconceptions, which will force them to base further discussions on shared data instead of political vision or ideology. Finally, co-deciding on the indicators will enable at least some of the stakeholders to contribute through their own resources to improving the Data Collection Methods (DCM) related to each of those indicators.

Furthermore, agreeing on policy indicators is a precondition for the success of the third and final phase of the Operating Model, in which the stakeholders themselves are to monitor the implementation of the Roadmap and Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform. In this regard, diversity represents a clear advantage, as the different types of stakeholders (NGOs, trade unions, business associations, think tanks, community-based movements, etc.) can put in place their own mechanisms to measure those aspects of the policy that are most relevant to them.

The main role of the Hosting Structure will consist of ensuring that the different sources – and underlying interests – can complement each other, taking up information from different angles and balancing the diverse types of knowledge at play.

While policy changes often occur over long periods and therefore making it rather impossible to measure them in the time-frame of a short-term project, the collective effort of assessing the existing policy indicators and defining new ones – out of the resources available within the group of stakeholders itself – represents a firm step towards a more inclusive and participatory form of policy dialogue.

Furthermore, this exercise provides donors with a useful snapshot of the stakeholders and the policy in focus at a specific moment in time, allowing for a comparative analysis of the outcome of the policy dialogue process over a given period.

Finally, as already announced, **shared policy indicators form the basis for the activities that will take place during the third and final phase of the Operating Model**, which is devoted to the monitoring of the policy and the alignment of international donors with the policy reform process.

Summary

- Guided by the Hosting Structure, the stakeholders appraise the context through a collective mapping exercise.

- Based on this assessment, the stakeholders identify the key problems, which will then be translated into policy terms by the Hosting Structure.

- The Hosting Structure and the stakeholders assess the influence of other policies and institutions on the policy reform process to be addressed through the dialogue.

- The participants, with the support of the Hosting Structure, determine which stage of the policy cycle they are aiming to influence.

- Based on a mapping of the stakeholders – to be updated on a regular basis during the whole process – the Hosting Structure invites organisations to take part in the dialogue.

- The participating stakeholders appoint permanent representatives for the dialogue process and agree jointly on the rules that will guide their interactions as well as common goals and how they plan to achieve them.

- Based on the participatory policy assessment, the Hosting Structure in consultation with the stakeholders produces a sound and comprehensive set of policy indicators against which the state and evolution of the targeted policy can be measured.

INSPIRED
EIDHR

Phase 2: Consensus Building

- *Building trust among stakeholders*

- *Mapping their interests and incentives for change*

- *Keeping track of the evolution of incentives*

- *Formalising a consensus: the Roadmap for Reform*

- *Ensuring inclusiveness and participation through a tailor-made set of process indicators*

Rationale

In the previous phase, the stakeholders gathered around specific problems and started analysing them in terms of policy. By directing them to focus on concrete policy issues instead of the big political picture, the Hosting Structure can set the conditions for trust to be built gradually, while the stakeholders collectively identify the main points of contention and get to know each other's 'red lines' – political, ideological, temperamental. This also implies exploring, at least tacitly, possible room for consensus on the scope and priorities of policy reform.

Therefore, once the policy area has been clearly demarcated by the stakeholders, the **discussions will deepen and the debate will be oriented towards finding constructive solutions through sustained dialogue**. This phase is extremely sensitive, as trust among participants can be diminished at any moment due to unforeseen exogenous factors or changes in attitudes of the stakeholders themselves. Hence, the facilitator should be ready to apply swift and effective techniques in response, trying to mitigate any risk of gridlocks or conflict among the participants.

When Mohamed Brahmi, a renowned leader of the opposition, was assassinated on 25 July 2013, the Tunisian Constituent Assembly suspended its workings and political life became stuck in an open confrontation between the Front Populaire, a leftist electoral alliance made up of 12 political parties and independent candidates, and Enhadda, the Islamist party that had won the previous elections. The country stood at the brink of disaster for several weeks, while the main political parties agreed to work together on finding a way out through the mediation of the so-called Quartet; composed of the UGTT (the main labour union), UTICA (Tunisian Employers Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts, which represents employers), the Bar Association, and the Tunisian Human Rights League. Until the solution came in the form of a provisional government of technocrats led by Prime Minister Joma, the dialogue process carried by INSPIRED Tunisia was 'frozen' due to the strong polarisation and the simple fact that its key stakeholders were busy resolving the national crisis.

Although the workshops initially foreseen for September 2013 had to be postponed until October, the impact of this delay was not that significant, thanks in part to the summer break and Ramadan, but mainly to the insistence of CEMI, the local dialogue host, whose staff remained in contact with all the key stakeholders involved in the process so that they wouldn't become completely disconnected. More importantly, the same stakeholders that were struggling for power at the national scene were willing to keep cooperating within the framework of a concrete issue and its related policies. Social justice appeared to be the notion that helped them to keep looking forward in search of a shared vision and to adopt the sort of constructive attitude that helps to overcome past differences, paving the way for consensus.

This is what the Consensus Building phase aims at doing: establishing and maintaining a conducive environment for dialogue by structuring the debate around constructive choices, avoiding drawbacks and keeping the discussions oriented towards the objectives jointly agreed in the Collective Assessment phase. Only though this sustained effort can the main outcome of this phase be produced: the Roadmap for Reform, a set of collectively agreed principles and guidelines for policy reform, which will allow the Hosting Structure, with the support of the stakeholders, to elaborate Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform during the final phase of the Operating Model.

Modus operandi

The Consensus Building phase consists of a **series of dialogue events, to be organised following an incremental approach and ushering in the joint adoption by the stakeholders of a Roadmap for Reform**. A dialogue event can take the form of practically any kind of meeting, workshop or seminar that provides time and space for the stakeholders to meet and discuss, negotiate, learn and/or analyse different aspects of the selected policy area.

Dialogue events are not an end in themselves, but the means to achieve a pre-defined goal or milestone within the consensus-building process. Therefore, every event should be embedded within the programming document adopted by the stakeholders at the end of the Collective Assessment phase. However, the Hosting Structure and stakeholders should have the flexibility to adapt their initial planning to any unforeseen circumstances that may –and probably will– arise during this phase, and dialogue events should of course reflect those changes.

Each dialogue event should focus on clearly stated objectives and expected results, which should not be extremely complex or ambitious in order to allow the Hosting Structure to monitor the discussions without disturbing the nascent trust-dynamics among the participants. It is important that the stakeholders themselves agree collectively on the objectives and expected results of each dialogue event, as this will strengthen their ownership over the process.

Dialogue events may last from half a day to one or two days, depending on the format and the results to be attained. They can take different formats, but it is recommended that facilitators favour focus groups or deliberative workshops, which allow for more in-depth discussions on specific aspects of a given policy. Although it is advisable to involve all key stakeholders in every dialogue event, a certain degree of flexibility will be needed for the sake of pragmatism: for instance, the stakeholders themselves may want to set up sub-groups with a limited number of participants to discuss certain elements of the policy in more detail and then report back to the larger group.

The main task of the Hosting Structure is to assess the situation and actively promote any kind of dialogue events – including those carried out in the form of sub-groups – that can bring the discussions forward, always under the condition that none of the stakeholders feels excluded.

While a dialogue event may in principle take many different forms, it is advisable to use at least some of the following formats:

- **Focus Groups.** A facilitator leads a guided discussion among a small group of people to understand their attitudes and views on the policy area *in focus*. Focus groups can provide useful information on how stakeholders respond to particular questions. However, being short in terms of timing, the depth of discussion remains rather limited.

- **Workshops.** As the name implies, workshops have a collaborative connotation. Stakeholders gather in a space and work together to achieve a result, mainly by jointly analysing different policy choices and studying those alternatives that would seem appropriate to the political, social and economical context of their country.

- **Seminars.** Etymologically speaking, the word seminar comes from the Latin 'seminare', to lay the seed that will eventually grow roots and flourish. Seminars have thus a very important learning component: They are suitable for the exchange of experiences and offer the perfect environment to explore solutions for the implementation of public policies.

- **Deliberative sessions** can be used to give the participants a better understanding of the perspectives of the other stakeholders while allowing those same stakeholders to challenge their own views. As a result, this process may improve the relationships among the dialogue participants. Finally, deliberative workshops can provide the participants with additional knowledge on the policy issues under discussion, which may in turn open new spaces for consensus.[44]

- In addition to the dialogue events, dialogue hosts are advised to organise **bilateral meetings**, phone calls, exchange emails, etc. with individual stakeholders on an *ad hoc* basis. These exchanges should aim at collecting personal impressions about the process, exploring

[44] For focus groups and deliberative sessions see Involve website: www.participationcompass.org/article/show/153

possible areas of contention, searching for a common ground and setting the path towards consensus. They can be organised at any moment during the Consensus Building phase, but in particular they may be useful shortly before a joint meeting (focus group, deliberative workshop or other), as they help the facilitator to steer the discussions around sensitive issues that might put the dialogue process at risk.

- **Conferences** can serve to create visibility for the dialogue process among a larger group of individuals and organisations. The usefulness of this format depends on the degree of trust among the stakeholders and the sensitivity of the policy area under discussion. The main goal of the facilitator is to help the participants find a consensus on policy reform priorities among themselves. If this is hard to achieve, it might be advisable to focus efforts on trust and consensus-building rather than greater visibility. In most cases, the best moment to organise a conference is at the end of the Consensus Building phase; i.e. after the participants have agreed on a Roadmap for Reform. Such a final conference should have as its main goal the dissemination of the Roadmap to a wider audience. The format of the conference will depend on the groups that are targeted, such as policy experts, members of the government and parliament, media, direct beneficiaries of the policy at stake or the general public.

The Hosting Structure must be free to choose, together with the stakeholders, the best-fit combination of dialogue events. For instance, in Tunisia the Hosting Structure decided to initiate the dialogue through a large national conference where the results of the Collective Assessment phase were presented to an audience of around 100 participants with an interest in the topic of social justice.

This was followed by a series of workshops during which 20 key stakeholders discussed four sub-topics in more detail (tax reform, public-private partnerships, regional development and the governance of investments). Towards the end of the process, the 10 most active stakeholders were mandated by the others to organise *ad hoc* meetings in order to draft the Roadmap. The dialogue was concluded with a final conference where the members of this *Comité de suivi* presented the Roadmap to the general public.

Conversely in Ghana, the Consensus Building phase consisted of a series of workshops during which the participants produced recommendations regarding an upcoming initiative on affirmative action, led by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. At the end of the process, a big national conference brought together over 50 participants.

One of the members of the INSPIRED working group formally handed over the recommendations to the Minister, who promised to take them into consideration when drafting the Affirmative Action Bill. The conference allowed the project to enhance awareness about the need for affirmative action to increase women's participation in political life among political parties, CSOs and the general public.

However, this was by no means the end point of the process, as from January to May 2014 the Hosting Structure gave a series of interviews to different media outlets to keep the issue on the agenda and in people's minds. Moreover, IEA organised follow-up advocacy meetings with the ministry, which served to ensure that many of the recommendations elaborated by INSPIRED were included in the draft bill, which was validated during a national conference in June 2014.

In addition to the chosen nature of the meeting, **it is crucial to consider the setting with regards to sensitivity**. Public meetings can generate visibility for the participants and at the same time may exert outside (media) pressure. This may be desirable at one state of the process, but not at another.

By contrast, holding events in secluded out-of-town venues may increase focus and lessen participants' day-to-day distractions and thus the risk of them prematurely walking out because of other priorities. Exchange visits and learning trips abroad (budget permitting) or into the field may provide high density and focussed learning experiences.

At the same time they can be very instrumental for trust building at an interpersonal level. Nothing is more beneficial to increasing mutual understanding and bonding than putting opposing stakeholders in a small bus together for 20 hours, or having them wait for hours in the airport's boarding room for a delayed airplane.

Objectives

- • To ensure the inclusiveness and participation of the policy dialogue process;

- • to maintain a sufficient level of representation among the different forces of the social and political spectrum;

- • to build a network of relevant stakeholders and to promote relationships among them based on trust and mutual understanding;

- • to create an environment that allows stakeholders to develop a shared vision of the policy at stake;

- • to help stakeholders collectively identify, explore and analyse different solutions to the main problems in the chosen policy area;

- • to build bridges between the policy dialogue process and other related initiatives at local, national and international level, and;

- • to facilitate the adoption of a Roadmap for Reform containing the main findings, commitments and policy recommendations agreed by the stakeholders through inclusive and participatory dialogue.

Stages

a. Understanding and promoting trust dynamics

It is widely assumed that trust creates the conditions for civic engagement, participation, social integration and public awareness, acting as a sort of social capital that determines the way in which individuals interrelate, but also what they can expect from each other and from society as a whole.

Trust is not a single, unmovable variable. On the contrary, it is composed of different dynamics that converge or diverge depending on both attitudes and facts. In polarised societies there are normally a number of issues that provoke the immediate reaction of the 'opposition', whether it has to do with ideology, religion or, in the case of post-conflict contexts, the roles and responsibilities of each faction. Dealing with these aspects can easily get dialogue stuck into a blaming and shaming exercise, with the participants locking themselves into their initial positions.

In order to overcome this kind of situations, experts on conflict transformation try to start dialogue by means of research and by inviting the participants to embark on a joint effort that can help them overcome their first preconceptions and misjudgements of each other. This is precisely what the Operating Model aims to do with its first phase: through the collective assessment of a shared problem, participants should focus on the identification of potential solutions and therefore engage in a constructive debate that looks forward and does its best to leave past differences behind.

This sort of approach has worked in contexts as difficult as Lebanon. Indeed, as a result of a civil war, the Lebanese community is still affected by a general feeling of mistrust and hatred, enhanced by the lack of an effective reconciliation process at national level and the unstable situation in the region. Tensions are still very present, especially in those regions such as Brih, in which Christians were ousted during the civil war. In 2012, GIZ launched a project that aimed at helping the Muslim and Christian communities of the region to overcome their differences; the initiative was initially addressed towards community leaders, but during the 'power conflict mapping', GIZ soon realised that the effects could be multiplied by targeting youth leaders and reinforcing their capacities so that they could become the actual agents of change within their communities.

This approach proved to be successful, as it created a snowball effect by raising awareness not only among the direct beneficiaries, but also within their communities, translating the big vision of reconciliation into personal and simple messages that the audience could understand and be inspired by. Therefore, the success of the Youth Building Reconciliation initiative was not only a matter of being able to overcome the past and look forward, but also about focusing on specific goals and allowing the stakeholders to give shape to their own ideas, building on their direct experience of the problem at hand.

In this vein, the policy-oriented approach of the Operating Model helps participants to focus on concrete aspects of a given public problem; the key differences among stakeholders will certainly remain, but instead of blocking the dialogue they can be turned into one of the most valuable assets of the process. Indeed, building on difference is crucial to promoting trust dynamics.

Treating different points of view as a driver for innovation and an opportunity for mutual learning should help the Hosting Structure, through its facilitator, to turn differences into value as potential approaches to solve a given problem, rather than trying to 'overcome' them by pushing too hard towards a premature and weak consensus.

For this to happen however, **everybody needs to feel that they're being heard and their input is being taken into account**. Trust is a feeling, and thus, trust-building processes are strongly subject to the 'human factor'. Even if people around the table are representing an organisation or an institution, they remain above all, human beings, with all that this implies. Indeed, hidden fears, along with personal and social traumas could render some participants incapable of escaping their own prejudices and judgemental attitudes.

Tolerance, however, cannot be imposed. As a result, some participants will need special attention and guidance from somebody who fully understands the behavioural aspects underlying dialogue. This is why it is so important to rely on the experience of practitioners in the fields of peace-building, mediation and multi-party dialogue, among others. They have developed a wide range of tools that can be of use to facilitators of inclusive and participatory policy dialogue, allowing them to go beyond the technicalities in order to grasp those other aspects that play a key role in achieving consensus.

Finally, the hardest part for any facilitator is to go beyond just understanding what stakeholders want. To make the real difference, a facilitator needs to actually be able to grasp the real reasons why stakeholders want something and to what extent they are bound to pre-conceived ideas. This can only be achieved by drawing hidden issues to the surface, something that requires extreme care and a high degree of subtlety on the side of the facilitator. He/she should be perceived as being impartial and for this reason he/she must remain focused on the individuals who represent the stakeholders, leaving to the policy analyst every aspect related to the policy at stake.

The policy analyst will be tasked with structuring the knowledge generated by the participants, through an assessment of the policy positions of each player. Talking openly about one's interests and incentives is usually not common in polarised societies, where stakeholders tend to view reform processes as zero-sum games or win-lose situations. This constitutes the main challenge faced by the facilitator, supported by the policy analyst: to break with this logic by **creating an environment that allows the participants to speak openly** about their needs and fears.

At the end of the day, dialogue is a matter of attitude, and one of the preconditions for success is that participants are open to active listening. For this to happen, it is often necessary to let people vent their frustration. They need to fully understand what they are saying and to be able to put themselves in the shoes of others without judging, which represents the first step towards mutual understanding and respect. To this purpose, the use of audio-visual methods may also be helpful so that participants can see themselves on tape and realise that apparent contradictions can be turned into elements of convergence; disagreements are not to be denied, but should focus on commonalities.

As a matter of fact, common goals can be reached by different paths, but everyone must acknowledge the significant value of the others and the importance of joint achievements. In this regard, facilitators should work towards achieving tangible results in a predictable and realistic timeframe, encouraging stakeholders to keep moving forward by letting them see that small successes do indeed pave the way for greater success.

The reform of the Security Policy after the peace agreements in Guatemala is a good example of a complex issue and context in which this approach has worked. The institutional transformation of the army to ensure its democratic control after such a long and devastating conflict was made possible due to an appropriate mix of trust-building and joint research.

By applying the '**Participatory Action Research**' methodology, Interpeace – at the time WSP International – managed to keep all the key stakeholders engaged during a three-year process. This feat was managed despite the plurality of participating stakeholders, including the government, the army itself, civil society organisations, and a group of civil and former military public figures invited on a personal basis.

Several working groups produced proposals along six thematic areas which were deemed crucial for identifying the role of the armed forces in a democratic society; including intelligence reform, military doctrine, security agenda, and others. By allowing the members of the group to develop a shared identity, stakeholders who were initially coming from rather antagonistic positions managed to overcome the ideological divide and achieve consensual agreements.

Once they are in place, trust-dynamics need to be continuously nurtured through measures that enhance the credibility, predictability and mutual accountability among dialogue participants. Handling transparency is not an easy task and requires a strong understanding of all the factors at play (human, political, ideological, etc.).

Not everything must emerge to the surface, nor must everybody be involved in every discussion. Bilateral talks and backstage diplomacy may be necessary to overcome certain bottlenecks or to ensure that the strongest stakeholders remain engaged in the process. This engagement must take place at two levels: institutional (by means of the stakeholder organisations) and personal (through the appointed representative). What's more, trust needs to trigger down to

constituencies. Once it has been built on a personal level between the dialogue participants, these individuals need to convince their constituencies that cooperation with the other stakeholders is indeed in their own best interest.

The case of South Africa is well known but nevertheless remains stunning and strongly inspiring. When one sees the famous picture of Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk sharing the Nobel Prize in 1993, it is hard to believe that less than a decade before, the relations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) were of distrust and outright antagonism. Each one tried to put pressure on the other by all means possible – violence included – until they realised that there was no possible way out without the other.

It was only once this inter-dependence became fully apparent to both parties that processes such as those leading to the release of Mandela from prison in 1990 and the un-banning of the ANC took place, which signalled the beginning of a progressive investment of both parties in the dialogue process. Many factors were at play, from external pressure – in the form of international sanctions in the fields of trade, finance, industry or sports – to internal unrest and escalated violence, as increasingly well-organised grassroots organisations sought to make the country ungovernable.

The official negotiations were broken off at several stages. But, as Ivor Jenkins, Director of In Transformation Initiative, explains, something quite exceptional happened on a personal level: the Chief negotiators, Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa, managed to develop a very strong feeling of trust in each other, setting what was to become known as 'the Channel', an interface that always remained open, even in the most critical moments.

This highlights the fact that trust can often be better developed below high leadership, at a more technical level, setting the basis for further commitments with a stronger political impact but which can also face a stronger resistance from their constituencies. In any case, there is a need to produce results in order to avoid what has come to be known as 'dialogue fatigue'.

Therefore **it is imperative to orientate dialogue to results and to link trust dynamics to concrete policy issues**, so that the stakeholders are able to focus their joint efforts on meaningful actions.

b. Interests and incentives

Understanding the trust dynamics and points of contention in transitional contexts is crucial when searching for sustainable consensus. However, it is equally important to understand the 'political economy' of reform, something in which the main donors have been increasingly focusing their efforts over the last decade. By acknowledging the importance of the political aspects that underpin any process of change, the donor community is re-inventing its role and approach in providing democracy support and development aid.

This change in itself is part of an on-going struggle between those who argue that thinking and acting 'politically' is the only way to achieve meaningful impact and those who still believe that donors should avoid 'meddling' into domestic affairs and should remain simple providers of technical assistance. Therefore, the economic approach of Political Economy Analysis appeared to be a compromise between these two views: seeing politics through an economic lens allowed donors to remain 'politically aseptic' (as long as policies conformed to the liberal orthodoxy).

Based on this analytical view, the disaggregation of interests and incentives has become one of the most widespread tools to analyse power relations and to assess the roles of different stakeholders in policymaking. Nonetheless, although Political Economy Analysis remains a very powerful tool, it needs to be complemented with other assessments that take into consideration other key factors, such as power relations or trust dynamics; both generally and with regards to specific policy issues.

The Hosting Structure should thus draw elements from the most important frameworks developed in recent years, from the DFID's 'Drivers of Change' to SIDA's 'Power Analysis' or the Dutch MFA's 'Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis'.

Whatever method is chosen, the most important result of this exercise is for the Hosting Structure to **get a clear understanding of the interests and incentives for change** of each of the dialogue participants. This is crucial in terms of evaluating the quality of the Roadmap for Reform, which will reflect to what extent the different stakeholders have made concessions to agree on jointly elaborated positions.

For a consensus to be achieved and last however, a balance must be found between the shared vision and values of the stakeholders and their individual interests and hidden agendas. Policies evolve over time, and so do the interests and incentives of stakeholders with a stake in those policies. Indeed, the weight of those interests is by definition relative and the negotiating positions of the participants are subject to change. Incentives may emerge as a result of dialogue or, on the contrary, remain hidden or unidentified. Understanding these dynamics is a necessary step towards helping the different negotiation positions to converge, a task in which the policy analyst of the Hosting Structure is to take the lead.

This evolution of incentives must consequently be captured and traced through the mapping of incentives, a matrix that analyses the array of interests, assumptions and prior commitments that determine the initial positions of all the participants, as well as their expected behaviours and their attitude towards the dialogue process. This will help the facilitator to anticipate the ways in which they might want to influence the discussions on policy change and understand what is needed for them to develop ownership over the process.

	POLICY		PROCESS		RESULTS
A TOPICS / ISSUES	RELATED POLICIES		POINTS OF CONTENTION		RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR REFORM
1 ISSUE A					
2 ISSUE B					
3 (ETC.)					
B STAKEHOLDERS	INFLUENCE	EXPOSURE	INTERESTS	INCENTIVES FOR CHANGE	IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS AND CAPACITY GAPS
1 MINISTRY OF ...					
1.1 DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR ...					
1.2 CHIEF OF UNIT IN CHARGE OF ...					
2 CSO					
2.1 CHAIRMAN					
2.2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR					
C INDICATORS	POLICY INDICATORS		PROCESS INDICATORS		IMPACT INDICATORS (POLICY INFLUENCE)
1 QUANTITATIVE CRITERIA					
2 QUALITATIVE CRITERIA					
D OUTCOMES	PARTICIPATORY POLICY ASSESSMENT		ROADMAP FOR REFORM		RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Integrated Support Framework

Taking the mapping of stakeholders as a point of departure, and considering that the distribution of the actors within the four quadrants will determine their overall importance to the process, the mapping of incentives provides a pattern that will make it much easier to target the right stakeholders and to involve them by creating the appropriate incentives.

It would be useful, for instance, to identify those actors that might be tempted to use their influence to prevent change and try to counteract their resistance by giving them a prominent role in the process. In any case, special attention must be paid to the 'spoilers' that may seek to undermine the process from within or, even remaining outside, can have the power to block the reform.

For better or worse, these positions will change throughout the dialogue process, so the Hosting Structure should update the tool whenever the facilitator and the policy analyst acknowledge an important change in the balance of power within the policy field. In any case, **at least three versions of the mapping should be produced** in order to track the evolution of the policy field and the adaptability of the dialogue process to the changing political reality:

- *At the beginning of the dialogue process,* before determining the list of participants and launching the formal invitations to the dialogue.

- *During the mid-term assessment,* in order to review the positions of the stakeholders and/or to integrate new ones that weren't relevant at an earlier stage or that had been overlooked.

- *At the end of the dialogue,* which will allow the Hosting Structure to evaluate the efficiency of the process in creating an environment that is conducive to dialogue and its capacity to enable and empower the weakest stakeholders in the policy area under discussion.

Needless to say, the task at hand is not an easy one. Analysing and building the incentive structure requires sound analytical skills and a deep knowledge of the stakeholders involved in the process. Stakeholders will adopt different attitudes towards the process depending on how affected they might be by the success or failure of reform in the targeted policy area, the influence they might have over policy implementation, or their fear to lose privileges or be excluded from future benefits.

The Hosting Structure must not lose sight of the fact that it is not only dealing with organisations, but also with individuals (appointed representatives). This therefore dictates a deep understanding of the 'human factor'. This sort of continuous double-check is to be carried out by the policy analyst and the facilitator who, by combining their views, can provide the sort of three-dimensional perspective that is needed to address simultaneously the social and economic structure and those other aspects related to agency that play a key role in any reform process.

c. Outcomes

The Roadmap for Reform

The Operating Model has been designed to help donors put into practice this alignment between institution-building and the needs of partner countries and societies. For this to happen, the Operating Model places great importance on the **document that spells out the consensus reached by the key stakeholders** on a given policy reform process: the Roadmap for Reform.

The Roadmap is of key importance for two main reasons: first, it provides the basis for the stakeholders to monitor and evaluate future initiatives by public authorities and law-makers in the targeted policy area. Second, it provides donors with a solid base on which to build further support (in the form of technical assistance, capacity building, budget support, etc.).

1. Features

The Roadmaps represent a guide to action, capturing proposals, putting forth recommendations and exploring potential lines of work for all the main stakeholders involved in a given policy area. They set the path for further action in that policy field and, at the same time, they set a precedent that may very well lead to policy dialogues on other policy areas.

Nevertheless, their importance and scope should not be overestimated. Roadmaps are expected to make policy reform more likely under the given political circumstances, but they cannot change overnight the political landscape in a country. Consequently, they should adjust to two main criteria:

- *Resilience*: Sudden changes in the political environment and the division of power are very common in contexts of democratic transition. The Roadmap should therefore not be static, but instead allow stakeholders to adjust it to changing circumstances or unforeseen events. In other words, the underlying agreement must remain flexible enough to reflect a shift in the interests of a group of stakeholders or unexpected events affecting the political environment. Only by attaining a certain degree of flexibility will the Roadmap stand a chance of prevailing as a reference and guidance for action in the targeted policy area.

- *Coherence*: The Roadmap must be consistent with related policies (at different levels) and foresee coordinated actions among the stakeholders that have elaborated it and other actors who will participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of related policies. This minimises the risk that actions based on the Roadmap will lead to clashes with other reform initiatives.

2. Elements

A Roadmap spells out key stakeholders' consensus on the need for policy reform in a certain way. Depending on the scope of the dialogue and the stage of the policy cycle it tackles, the Roadmap may take different forms, from a simple communiqué to a detailed action plan. For the sake of clarity and 'communicability', a Roadmap should contain the following elements:

- *Introduction:* It should provide an introduction to the policy area, where the stakeholders explain how they assess the situation and on what issues they would like to see policy reform happen. In other words, this introduction or preamble should reflect the shared values of the dialogue's participants and their shared vision about the country, while indicating how the policy in focus may help to bring the country in line with that vision.

- *Recommendations:* Ideally, the Roadmap should contain concrete recommendations on how the key issues identified in the preamble should be tackled through policy reform. Some recommendations

may also be about setting up safeguards to prevent the policy process from reverting or diverting into a direction other than the one agreed upon by the participants.

- *Follow-up mechanisms:* The Roadmap should include proposals for setting up – or even commitments to setting up – a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of those recommendations containing specific lines of action.

- *Signatories:* As a declaration of commitment, the Roadmap should be signed and/or publicly endorsed either by the chief representatives of the organisations that were represented in the dialogue process, or the dialogue participants themselves.

3. Types

The content of the Roadmaps will vary not only depending on the policy issue that is being tackled, but also on the phase of the policy cycle that they address. Whereas INSPIRED Tunisia aimed at setting the basic principles of social justice (agenda setting), INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan developed an Action Plan for the Transition to Digital Broadcasting, assigning duties, tasks and responsibilities to the stakeholders (formulation phase) and INSPIRED Moldova built on pre-existing strategies (Moldova 2020 and the DFCTA itself) to ensure the engagement of civil society during the transition period foreseen in the trade agreement (implementation phase).

Finally, INSPIRED Ghana brought together stakeholders to provide input for an on-going policy making process in the area of affirmative action. Given the advanced status of the discussions, the project participants managed to produce concrete recommendations for changes to the draft Affirmative Action Bill.

These real life experiences show that Roadmaps for Reform (even though they were not named as such) can serve as entry points to different phases of the policy cycle. In turn, these different entry points can pre-determine to a large extent the kind of effects that the whole dialogue process can produce and the sort of influence that the Roadmaps may play.

While the final outcome of INSPIRED Tunisia resembles a social pact between the main political and social actors in the country, the level of detail achieved in INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan corresponds to the specificities of a policy reform process which is more advanced and therefore focused more on concrete questions related to the digitalisation of radio and TV programmes.

Based on this experience, an **indicative typology of Roadmaps** can be drawn. Nevertheless, in reality most Roadmaps will look more like a mix of these prototypes:

- *Declaration of intent:* represents a basic consensus on principles vis-à-vis a policy area or broad policy objective. Characteristics: non-binding; no clearly defined timeframe; no provisions for implementation; serves to set the agenda.

- **Framework agreement:** spells out a commitment by the stakeholders to take action on clearly defined objectives. Characteristics: binding; may include a timeframe; includes general provisions for implementation; serves to set the agenda.

- **Action plan:** includes a timeframe and concrete tasks for a clearly defined target group. Characteristics: binding; detailed provisions for implementation; serves to formulate policy options.

d. Process indicators

The Hosting Structure needs to evaluate the effectiveness of the dialogue process in promoting the values of inclusiveness and participation for at least three reasons. Firstly, this is imperative because the legitimacy of the Roadmaps in the eyes of the international community depends precisely on the level of inclusiveness of the process that has generated them. Secondly, because the systematic analysis of the positions held by the different stakeholders and the evolution of their perceptions – towards the process, towards the policy field, or even towards each other – will help the Hosting Structure to steer the negotiations, directing the dialogue towards those areas where an agreement among all the key stakeholders can be reached. And finally, because the openness and transparency of the dialogue process are key to promote a culture of transparency and accountability in which the interests and incentives of the stakeholders are brought to the surface.

In order to get the clearest possible picture of the dynamics that will govern the dialogue events, a set of process indicators should be developed collectively by the stakeholders, allowing the Hosting Structure to **measure the level of accomplishment in the application of the core values: inclusiveness and participation.**

A combination of quantitative indicators (what can be considered as the 'objective dimension' of an inclusive and participatory process) and qualitative indicators (mainly for those aspects such as trust or the culture of dialogue that fall within the subjective realm) should provide a basis for evaluating the impact of the dialogue process on those same values that the Operating Model aims to promote.

The quantitative indicators' main advantage is that they are easily comparable and comprehensible, while they are also seen as objective and verifiable in the sense that their value can be directly observed and recorded. Since quantitative indicators measure outputs, they are also easier to define and find. Examples of quantitative indicators are: number of participants in an event, gender or age. In practice, these indicators can help describe in a detailed way the overall profile of an event or organisation.

Qualitative indicators, on the other hand, are more subjective and can thus be perceived as more difficult to verify and collect in comparison to quantitative indicators. Probing the contexts of people's decisions, actions and perceptions, qualitative indicators can be challenging to articulate and capture in a

comprehensive way. However, qualitative indicators can be valuable to the evaluation process because a dialogue process is, by definition, actor-oriented, and changes in agency – attitudes, predispositions, actions – are the main direct result that can be expected from that process. Qualitative indicators are useful for measuring precisely the impact and evaluate the long-term effects and benefits of a dialogue since they can be focused on an individual's experience and perceptions in relation to trust, participation and inclusiveness.

For instance, the number of women attending dialogue events becomes more significant if female participants are asked whether the participation in those events contributed to their sense of inclusiveness and enabled them to contribute to actual change. An important principle to remember is that qualitative indicators can play an important role in promoting and understanding stakeholders' perspectives, and thus fostering their participation and inclusion, producing a virtuous circle of ownership.

Many of these 'measurements' are usually done intuitively by dialogue facilitators; without necessarily leaving a trace for external observers to understand the shifts in behaviour of some participants. So even if the staff members of the Hosting Structure (convener, facilitator and policy analyst) need to follow their instinct, they should also make the effort of developing a set of indicators that are specific to their dialogue process.

While it is not easy to assess the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding such delicate issues as trust, facilitators can use the following sample questions to get started:

- Do participants recognise each other as legitimate partners in the dialogue?

- Do participants consider that all interested parties are represented in the dialogue? If not, which interested groups are not represented?

- Do participants feel that their counterparts in the dialogue are willing to review their positions and contribute to mutual agreement?

- Do participants consider that throughout the project the level of trust between stakeholders is increasing or decreasing?

Naturally, **the process indicators proposed by the Hosting Structure should be discussed and adapted by the group of stakeholders**, according to the rules of the game (collectively agreed in the previous phase) and considering the specificities of the policy area. It is important to insist on the fact that these process indicators refer to the dialogue process itself and not to the targeted public policy.

Having the stakeholders agree on the process indicators is crucial for a series of reasons. First, it will enhance their ownership over the process. Second, it allows for a context-specific measurement of inclusiveness and participation, taking into consideration the cultural and social background against which both values have to be measured.

Finally, discussing openly about the importance of trust and the means to achieve and measure it, will certainly enhance their awareness of the difficulties that they might encounter during the Consensus Building phase. Once again, the participatory approach of the Operating Model paves the way to mutual understanding through joint research.

Summary

- Trust among the stakeholders needs to be built gradually through joint research and dialogue events.

- The Hosting Structure maps the interests and incentives for change of each of the dialogue participants and updates this mapping at least three times throughout the process: at the beginning, during the mid-term assessment and at the end.

- The Hosting Structure organises dialogue events as needed, choosing among different formats such as focus groups, workshops, seminars, deliberative sessions, bilateral meetings and conferences.

- Guided by the Hosting Structure, the stakeholders produce a Roadmap for Reform, which should be resilient and coherent; include an introduction, recommendations and provisions for follow-up activities; and be signed by the dialogue participants on behalf of their organisations.

- A Roadmap for Reform can take different forms, ranging from declarations of intent or framework agreements to more concrete action plans.

- The stakeholders agree on a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators measuring the inclusiveness and participatory dimension of the dialogue process (process indicators).

Phase 3: Monitoring and Donor Alignment

- *Moving towards the implementation of the Roadmap*

- *Monitoring its implementation*

- *Advocating policy change*

- *Identifying capacity gaps*

- *Measuring impact in terms of policy influence*

Rationale

The third and final phase of the Operating Model builds on the Roadmap in order to ensure its impact on the policy or policies at stake and to consolidate the level of trust and consensus achieved by the stakeholders during the previous phase. It should be stressed here that the impact of the dialogue process will be assessed in terms of the influence exerted on the policy in question. To be fully effective, this capacity to influence must remain dynamic and go beyond the Roadmap. As such, the stakeholders will have to adapt its recommendations and commitments to the circumstances of an ever-changing context.

Indeed, given that it aims at producing effects on an on-going policy reform process, the Roadmap cannot afford being static; it needs to evolve and adapt to the changing circumstances in the policy landscape. So instead of remaining a single document, it must give way to a series of them that will become the main outcome of this phase: the Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform.

Donors will therefore see results that are more concrete and easier to measure than values such as trust or the inclusiveness of the dialogue. In turn, if national decision-makers are committed to translate truly inclusive and participatory roadmaps into policy measures, it can only be in the interest of donors to support them. Indeed, aligning support with locally-led processes of reform is one of the scarce guarantees that donors might receive on their 'investments'.

Further measures of institution-building, sector reform or even budget support will at least stem from a realistic account of the local needs, as it will be the stakeholders themselves who will conduct an assessment to identify those capacity gaps that hinder the implementation of the Roadmap.

However, measuring the impact of the dialogue initiative is not only the affair of donors. It is also of crucial importance for the sustainability of the multi-stakeholder alliance itself, as its members are more likely to continue exchanges and cooperation on the same or related policy areas if they feel confident that they can achieve tangible results together.

Moreover, support from donors for translating the Roadmaps into concrete policy measures may be the way to reassure stakeholders that inclusive and participatory dialogue pays off, thus increasing the likelihood of similar forms of exchanges and cooperation in other policy areas.

Modus operandi

The Monitoring and Donor Alignment phase unfolds in two parallel and complementary lines of action. The first aims at consolidating the Roadmap as a key milestone for policy reform in the target country, whereas the second aims at strengthening the coherence and coordination of donor-funded cooperation instruments by connecting the programming of assistance with the locally-defined reform agenda.

The first line of action involves **monitoring the implementation of the Roadmap and, if needed, adopting advocacy measures** to increase the chances of implementation. The second line of action is essentially about translating the consensus achieved by the dialogue participants into concrete recommendations for policy reform that can be supported by donors. It should be stressed that both lines of action should take place in parallel, as they are supposed to converge at different points and strengthen each other.

On the one hand, the monitoring activities will help the Hosting Structure and the stakeholders to identify those factors that might jeopardise the proper implementation of the Roadmaps, such as lack of resources, conflicting priorities, or external events. Based on this knowledge, civil society organisations and other stakeholders can design advocacy strategies to address these challenges.

On the other hand, the involvement of the international donor community at this stage can allow incentives for change to be built at different levels and fields of action. For this purpose, the Hosting Structure, in close cooperation with both the government and donors interested in the targeted policy area, should identify those capacity gaps (in public institutions and among stakeholders be they CSOs, think-tanks, unions, political parties, etc.) that need to be addressed in conjunction with the issues identified through the dialogue process.

As a result, the Roadmap can contribute directly to the **alignment of international assistance with the broader reform agenda developed by the key domestic stakeholders**. This will in turn enhance local ownership over the definition of reform priorities while improving the coordination between democracy support activities and technical assistance.

Objectives

- To generate ownership over the Roadmap among the public institutions and transform policy makers into advocates of the reform process;

- to promote the adoption by the competent authorities of a legal framework for policy reform in accordance with the principles and commitments agreed upon in the Roadmaps;

- to foster local ownership over the programming of international cooperation through the alignment of cooperation instruments with the priorities established in the Roadmaps;

- to ensure continuous oversight by the Hosting Structure and key stakeholders of the policy area tackled by the project;

- to ensure the sustainability of the dynamics of trust and constructive dialogue through the institutionalisation of a network of relevant stakeholders;

- to increase the level of awareness of the general public about the policy issues covered by the Roadmap and the importance of inclusiveness and participation in the policy-making process, and;

- to provide donors with 'intelligence' about the political factors defining the policy landscape, thus affecting the success of further technical assistance projects targeting the same or related policy areas.

Stages

a. Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform

Even the best Roadmap produced will be useless if not followed by concrete steps that can lead to its implementation. While the Hosting Structure cannot guarantee that this will happen, it can ensure that the public body in charge of elaborating concrete policy measures is monitored effectively. The following example illustrates how this can be done in practice.

On 24 April 2013 the collapse of a building at Rana Plaza in Savar, Bangladesh which housed five clothing factories resulted in the death of 1,132 people, most of them workers. This was one of the largest industrial accidents in the world in recent memory. Following the Rana Plaza tragedy, the government and other stakeholders came up with targeted programmes to address the problems that led to the tragedy.

The proposed actions covered a diverse range of areas, including compensation for the families of the dead and the injured workers, treatment of the injured, legal help, rehabilitation of workers who had lost their jobs and livelihoods, compliance assurance and work-place safety, trade union rights and relocation of factories.

The Government of Bangladesh, entrepreneurs' association and the International labour Organisation (ILO) managed to agree on a fairly detailed Action Plan. However, there was widespread apprehension by citizens that many of these actions would not be implemented at all or at least not within the stipulated timeframe. Aware of these concerns, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) decided to bring transparency to the implementation process of the Action Plan and to ensure its implementation.

The initiative was titled 'Post Rana Plaza Monitoring: A Civil Society Initiative' and included public discussion, dialogue, awareness raising and outreach activities, publications, and media briefings. By holding the key public and private stakeholders responsible and accountable, the initiative was able to give voice to the people that were affected by the accident and contributed towards raising the effectiveness of implementation of the various initiatives envisaged under the Action Plan.

The Post Rana Plaza case illustrates very well that no action plan is valid without due monitoring and a strong commitment to push it forward. In this regard, the Roadmap cannot be the end point of the dialogue process. Instead, its main value lies in its potential of becoming a solid basis for further actions inducing policy change.

Following up on the implementation of the Roadmap is therefore a key task both for the Hosting Structure and the stakeholders that have taken part in the dialogue process. This 'operationalisation' of the Roadmap should be done by translating it into concrete **Recommendations for Policy Reform and Institution Building**, to be shared with the government and donors. For this purpose, the Hosting Structure should rely on its policy analyst and build on the existing capacities among the participants in the process.

However, external assistance might also be useful, especially in those policy aspects that require a high level of specialisation. For the sake of ownership, the stakeholders should validate this choice and decide jointly on the modalities of the drafting process as well as the actual content of the Recommendations.

While the recommendations will derive from the Roadmap, they will also have to respond to the current situation in the targeted policy area. This adaptation requires the **continuous monitoring of the policy at stake through a permanent mechanism**, which can gather analysis and information. Ideally, this monitoring mechanism should build on the capacities and access to relevant data of the individuals and institutions that have taken part in the dialogue process.

Keeping them involved will not only consolidate their ownership during the process and its results, it can also help to consolidate the dynamics of trust achieved during the previous phase. This means that from the adoption of the Roadmap onwards the main mission of the Hosting Structure will consist of promoting, monitoring and communicating its implementation.

To this purpose, the Hosting Structure should rely on the network of stakeholders resulting from the dialogue process. It must ensure that those stakeholders continue to meet at regular intervals throughout the duration of the Monitoring and Alignment phase, steering the work of the Hosting Structure and validating its actions. The continuous involvement of the stakeholders is crucial in ensuring the legitimacy of the actions undertaken by the Hosting Structure, as well as in preserving the trust dynamics that the dialogue process has helped to build.

Therefore, the Hosting Structure must take all the necessary measures for the proper development of its meetings, such as drafting the agenda and the minutes and providing the members with relevant and updated information on the state of policy change linked to the Roadmap.

Furthermore, the **Hosting Structure** constitutes a pivotal point of reference in the process of translation of the outcomes of the Roadmaps into the programming cycle of international donors, as will be discussed later. Its main tasks in the Monitoring and Alignment phase are as follows:

- To **monitor the process of implementation** of the Roadmap by collecting and recording, processing, analysing and comparing the information provided by the different stakeholders that are part of the monitoring network;

- To **channel relevant information** to and from the members of the network that has been set-up along the dialogue process;

- To **serve as an arbitrator** for informal conflict resolution in those cases where the views of different stakeholders towards a given problem may diverge;

- To **help in identifying potential bottlenecks** for the implementation of the policy reform (as agreed upon in the Roadmap) within the public administration;

- To **function as an 'Early Warning System'** vis-à-vis the disruption of the dynamics of trust and consensus that have made possible the establishment of the Roadmap, and;

- To **act as a point of reference** for the international community throughout the process of alignment of the cooperation instruments with the Roadmap.

Monitoring and advocacy strategies

Shortly after the adoption of the Roadmap, the Hosting Structure should invite the key stakeholders to jointly discuss how they want to monitor the policy reform process. The debate should be oriented towards the identification of existing capacities within the network and the resources available for monitoring activities. It should also foresee a debriefing mechanism allowing the Hosting Structure to keep the members of the network updated with regards to relevant news that will likely result from its regular contacts with the officials in charge of policy implementation.

As a result of these discussions, the Hosting Structure should be able to prepare a **Monitoring and Advocacy Strategy**, which should also include provisions on the use of media with a view to holding public authorities accountable for delays and demanding appropriate remedial action where necessary.

However, this manner of applying pressure on the government should be used with extreme care, in order not to breach the relations of trust with those officials that have taken part in the process and are acting as allies within the government or public administration.

In fact, the approach particularly towards advocacy will depend on the nature of the issues tackled by the Roadmap and the actual leverage of the stakeholders. This goes to underline the extent by which monitoring and advocacy are intricately related, especially when the aim of the monitoring activities is to check if the provisions contained in the Roadmap are being taken into account by the government or the other decision-makers.

As has already been stated, there is a wide range of theories that try to explain the way in which policy change takes place and, consequently, the way in which advocacy efforts might produce their intended effects, from the 'Large Leaps' theory to the 'Advocacy Coalition Framework' or the 'Power Elites' theory. However, as is the case with all theories, there is no guarantee that pegging advocacy actions on any one of these theoretical frameworks will yield the expected results. Or, to put it differently, the recipes derived from a theory might work in one context but not in another.

For instance, the 'Power Elites' theory would prescribe advocacy actions targeting those that hold the power to make decisions (on policy or anything else), but in practice this sort of strategy may lead to policy stasis instead of policy change, especially when these elites benefit from the extractive institutions in place. However, ignoring them and failing to provide them with appropriate incentives would be counter-productive and even detrimental to the cause, as it would kill every chance that the Roadmap may lead to policy change.

This is to say that no single theory should inform exclusively the advocacy strategies built upon the Roadmaps. On the contrary, the Hosting Structure and the stakeholders that want to work together on advocacy actions should

tailor their approach to the situation in their country as well as their own capacities.

What is important, however, is that the stakeholders set objectives, means and expected results for their advocacy campaign, as this will allow them to assess its success. Whether the campaign itself targets the government directly or the general public or both, its audience must ultimately be chosen in a very pragmatic way. The stakeholders should ask themselves if their chances of getting the Roadmap translated into concrete policy actions would be higher if they opt for closed-door meetings with government officials or whether raising awareness among the wider public would prove to be more advantageous.

Nevertheless, the Hosting Structure should also show restraint in proposing advocacy strategies that are too confrontational, as this may put at risk the dynamics of trust between the dialogue participants. For instance, if the dialogue includes a key official from a given ministry, it might be wiser to work together with him or her on influencing the policy-making process instead of publicly blaming the minister for not taking action.

In this vein, the stakeholders need to assess the degree of visibility they want to achieve through advocacy actions. Accordingly, they should decide if and what kind of information they want to share with the media. In any case, for the advocacy campaign to be perceived by its target group as credible and relevant, it must be built on reliable data and information about the state of implementation of the targeted policy reform. Which brings us back to the importance of proper monitoring as a basis for 'evidence-based advocacy'.

Proposals for policy design and suggestions for improvements

The main outcome of the monitoring component should consist of a set of proposals for policy design and suggestions for improvement. In other words, the Hosting Structure and the network of stakeholders cannot limit their work to overseeing the policy reform process and ensuring that the government is fulfilling its commitments towards the Roadmaps.

On the contrary, they must launch different proposals for policy design in a continuous and constructive debate with public authorities. The goal should be to maintain the trust dynamics created by the dialogue process by adopting a proactive role towards problem-solving and institutional reform.

Such proposals and suggestions should be realistic, relevant and timely, taking into consideration the actual state of the policy field. Wishful thinking and overly ambitious schemes are the best way to trigger frustration and put decision-makers in a defensive mode. Thus the importance of carrying out a sound assessment of the technical aspects regarding the policy at stake and of conducting a regular monitoring that can help to know what is working and what is not.

This is crucial because the Hosting Structure will have to transform those proposals – once they have been discussed with and approved by the government – into the above-mentioned **Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform**, where both components (monitoring and alignment) converge into a clear and widely supported agenda for institution-building in the targeted policy area.

b. Identification of capacity-building needs

As it has been repeatedly stated, the Operating Model facilitates the alignment of international cooperation instruments with the policy reform priorities signalled in the Roadmap and the ensuing Recommendations. The ultimate goal is to reinforce the virtuous cycle of ownership, alignment and mutual accountability sanctioned in the Paris Declaration and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Moreover, the Model aims at facilitating the division of labour amongst donors by involving them as observers in the whole process (collective assessment, consensus building, and monitoring and donor alignment). With the benefit of their newly acquired or deepened knowledge and insight into the targeted policy area, donors should find it easier to make informed decisions with regards to the support they want to provide in the future (for institution building, sector reform, etc.).

To this end, both the Roadmaps and the more elaborate Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform represent the kind of insight that donors are looking for in order to anchor their programming mechanisms in domestically-owned agendas for reform. Apart from the important role that inclusive multi-stakeholder policy dialogue can play in the practical alignment of international cooperation, it can also serve as a basis for the division of labour among donors, as well as for the overall improvement and coordination of developmental efforts.

This should be the point at which all the pieces of the Operating Model fall into place, providing the partner governments and donors alike with a comprehensive overview of the policy landscape, the interests at stake, the points of contention and the commitments and trade-offs made by the stakeholders along the dialogue process.

All of these aspects find their place in the matrix that forms the **Integrated Support Framework**. Its main added value is that it allows any observer to assess simultaneously the two key elements underpinning policy change: **structure** and **agency**.[45]. Whereas the analysis of a given problem from a

[45] *"There is now a growing realisation that we need to refocus not simply on 'big structures' but also on actors – in short, agency, defined as the ability of individuals, organisations and groups of collective actors to consciously deliberate and act strategically to realise their intentions, whether developmental or not. But, whether individual or collective, agents do not work politically in a limitless, structure-less and institution-free plane of open possibilities. The structural and institutional contexts of power - formal and informal, local and external - always and everywhere constitute constraints. However, while structures and institutions are constraints, they are not destiny. People, groups, organisations and coalitions do not move in unison, like reeds in the wind, to a change of incentives"* (Hudson and Leftwich 2014).

policy-oriented approach shows the social, economic and political structures that are at the root of malfunctions, putting the focus on stakeholders brings to the surface the interaction of the agents' interests, incentives and power share. It is only by addressing all those elements as a whole that governments and donors will be able to overcome those malfunctions and conflicts of interest that hinder development and prevent positive change in institutional structures.

Since the Paris Declaration and the resulting 'Backbone Strategy for the reform of Technical Cooperation', the European Commission's progressive shift of focus from mere technical assistance to 'capacity development' reflects a new awareness of the scope and ambition that international cooperation can realistically achieve. Institutions are locally built, and are seldom created from scratch. They are shaped by other pre-existing institutions and usually generate social codes and conventions that foreign models can hardly grasp and even less so, integrate. If capacity is understood as "*the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully*", the most that donors can do is to help these actors "*unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time*" (OECD 2006). What better way to do so than by observing – from a short distance – how domestic policy dialogue processes unfold?

By closely watching the attitudes, positions and interests of the key stakeholders – and following their evolution along the dialogue process – **donors can identify the real drivers of change** and assess their actual capacities against the policy landscape background. Instead of dealing with local CSOs individually, donors will be able to see how these organisations interact collectively and to what extent they are representative of society.

They will also find it easier to appraise whether the government's willingness to promote policy change is genuine and to swiftly identify in advance the bottlenecks, gridlocks and potential conflicts of interest that so often block reform and condemn the international community's support to minor and sometimes even counter-productive results.[46]

The programming of such complex and sensitive interventions needs to be done following an integrated approach that takes into consideration all the factors at play in a given sector. This is the sort of insight that the Integrated Support Framework tries to provide in a single snapshot: a more or less accurate picture of the structural and agency factors that define a specific public problem. Through a locally-driven collective assessment of related policies and by virtue of a clear identification and listing of the main points of contention around them, donors will know if the Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform are realistic and capable of producing change.

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[46] "*When donors exercise detailed 'content' control and quasi-management instead of focusing on the domestic system and the results this system produces, they must carefully balance the trade-offs and seek to diminish the damage to the system caused by their own direct governance interventions*" (EuropeAid 2008).

In other words, it is only by accepting the complexity of any policy change that donors will develop a more informed understanding of all the aspects that need to be tackled simultaneously, thus avoiding lone ventures that rarely produce results and subsequently end up being much more costly than a coordinated and comprehensive support programme.

On the other hand, focusing on the stakeholders and assessing their share of power, as well as their interests and incentives, will allow donors to understand the actual role that each of them is playing, as well as their potential contribution to change. By following their behaviour along the dialogue process, the donors (supported by the Hosting Structure) can carry out an on-going 'needs assessment' of each and every stakeholder involved. Instead of doing this in isolation however, the exercise will take place against the background of real-life politics, providing the donors with a 'three-dimensional' vision of those that are expected to lead change.

In this regard, the Rapid Assessment for Capacity Development (RAC), described by the EC as a 'non-invasive' approach to assess capacity development outcomes, is a new instrument to measure the impact of development interventions when it comes to individual and institutional capacities.[47] Presented as complementary to the technical assistance component of the development interventions carried out by the EC, it represents a new trend that puts the emphasis on agency instead of structure. Using such tools along the dialogue process will help donors tailor their technical assistance and capacity building efforts to the actual needs of both the policy at stake and the actors that shape it.

The case of **PASC-Tunisie** illustrates very well to what extent policy dialogue and capacity building are intertwined. During the last two decades, the EU and other donors have been investing in all kinds of training workshops dealing with a wide range of issues, from women's rights to strategic planning, project design and formulation. At the same time, donors have widened their interpretation of civil society to include not only those CSOs or NGOs that provide 'services' to the population, but also those that can act as watchdogs vis-à-vis their governments and public authorities.

The risk of focusing exclusively on these kinds of organisations is that they become entrenched in confrontation and contestation, and end up unprepared – and unwilling – to adopt a more constructive approach towards policy-making. It is by confronting CSOs with current problems that donors can identify their real needs with regards to their political capacities (power, base of support, loyalty, incentives, etc.) as well as their functional capacities (mandates, goals, procedures, structure, etc.). Both dimensions interact permanently and determine the kind of organisational problems that cannot be isolated and tackled independently.

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[47] *"The challenge is to find a non-invasive approach that allows an evaluation of CD outcomes responsive to sound methodological criteria, but at the same time still achievable with relatively accessible means and capable of being combined with other project management activities such as standard programme evaluations, high-quality instruction and monitoring"* (DRN 2012). More info at: www.capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-cd-tc/minisite/training-materials/rapid-assessment-tool-capacity-development-rac

If CSOs lack specific capacities that would enable them to engage in policy-making processes, then the government will not be eager to lend a hand while helping them represent and advocate the interests of their constituents. Examples include low institutional sustainability, lack of fundraising skills, low financial management capacities, non-transparent governance and lack of accountability to stakeholders and constituents, all of which contribute to lack of trust in expert and public perception of CSOs.

Once again, the experience of civil society support in Tunisia appears to be opening the sort of path that can lead to a new way of understanding the role of donors and that puts the 'beneficiaries' in the driving seat of their own reform processes; not only for the sake of ownership but also for reasons of efficiency. Aware of the importance of confronting CSOs with real-life situations in order to assess their actual (and potential) capacities, PASC is conducting a wide array of dialogue processes at local level that follow a bottom-up approach and are therefore allowing the programme to identify those organisations and public administrations that are truly willing to engage in operational partnerships.

Similarly to the Operating Model, the two types of actors are expected to agree on Roadmaps for Reform regarding concrete policy problems that affect their respective regions. Here, similarly, dialogue is not an end in itself but rather an aid to structure civil society after the sudden mushrooming of associations that followed the fall of Ben Ali on the one hand, and, on the other, to identify the concrete needs of CSOs through a system of indicators that allows the programme to measure their actual performance regarding concrete aspects of their role in society and public life.

c. Outcomes

Monitoring and advocacy strategy

Supported by the Hosting Structure, especially by its policy analyst, the network of key stakeholders that has been progressively built and consolidated through the dialogue process will devise a strategy to monitor the policy at stake and to assess to what extent decision-makers are taking the collectively agreed Roadmap into account.

This strategy must be realistic, relying on monitoring techniques that can be carried out by the members of the network themselves. In this regard, the diversity of the stakeholders involved in the dialogue process represents a clear advantage, allowing the network to cover a broad number of issues.

Each organisation will probably be specialised in a given aspect of the policy and can contribute to the joint monitoring effort with its own data and, of course, by applying its own data collection methods. In order to reach a clear division of labour that will save time and resources, the policy analyst should actively promote a certain degree of specialisation. In turn, this will enable him or her to better coordinate the individual roles and contributions of the participants in the collective monitoring endeavour.

Yet despite this central coordinating role of the Hosting Structure, which serves to keep the network together and maintain its daily work, it must be up to the stakeholders to interpret the collected information and to 'rationalise' it, acting as a sort of steering committee that is to decide the shifting priorities and objectives of the overall strategy.

Policy has to be monitored with regards to its proposed objectives (e.g. does it lead to higher representation of women in political life?), but in the Operating Model the monitoring effort must go a step further to assess the ways in which the contents of the Roadmap are being taken into consideration by policy makers. This means that the Roadmap has to provide a common point of reference that will guide the joint monitoring strategy and the coordinated efforts of each organisation taking part in the monitoring exercise.

While the Roadmap might have its value as guidance for decision-makers, it would be naive to believe that policy makers will go so far as to adopt its recommendations as a whole. Therefore, the stakeholders need to engage in continuous monitoring activities to prove that there are key aspects of the policy that need to be reformed. When pointing out those deficiencies, they can advocate alternatives; which in turn brings us back to the Roadmap.

The point is that **monitoring and advocacy cannot be neatly separated**; in practice, advocacy underpins many of the monitoring exercises carried out by CSOs, NGOs or think tanks. Nonetheless, in many cases advocacy is done without a thorough understanding of the policy or policies at stake. As a result of demanding overly ambitious or outright unrealistic reforms from policy-makers, organisations may end up triggering mistrust among the officials, perceiving them thus as being either ignorant or exclusively guided by their own narrow self-interest.

For this reason, promoting new ways of 'evidence-based advocacy' should be the perfect complement for informed policy-making, presenting an opportunity for calibrating the relations between the state and civil and political society around a virtuous circle of transparency and mutual accountability that helps to consolidate democracy.

The monitoring component of the Operating Model does not refer exclusively to the policy, but also seeks to assess the Roadmap's 'real impact', or in other words, the effectiveness of the dialogue process itself. As was mentioned before, the impact of a dialogue initiative that focuses on policy needs to be measured in terms of policy influence, which can be phrased as follows:

Has the dialogue process managed to produce change both at policy level and in the ways in which those policies are being made? Has is therefore transformed the decision-making process into a more inclusive and participatory one?

These policy changes can be of different nature (attitudinal, discursive, behavioural, procedural etc.) and do not happen in isolation; they tend to generate the sort of positive – or negative – dynamics that are very difficult to

dissect. Indeed, the complexity of these processes resides in the fact that they depend almost by definition on the interaction of a multitude of forces and actors (Jones 2011b). This, in turn brings us back to the classic problem of attribution. If it is already difficult to determine the extent to which a 'traditional' project can take credit for positive – or negative – effects resulting from its activities, then evidently it is even harder to prove causality (activity A led to result B) when it comes to assessing policy influence.

At the same time, influencing policy-making requires the ability to convince decision-makers and to make sure they buy-in to an idea. As it is precisely those decision-makers that will have to assume the final responsibility, they are unlikely to openly – and often not even privately – admit that they have been 'influenced'.

For this reason, the Operating Model proposes a way of translating the Roadmap's recommendations into more dynamic elements that can serve to update its contents by adapting them to the changes in the policy contexts. These elements take the form of Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform.

Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform

Given that in most cases, policy changes do not happen overnight, there is a need to perceive the Roadmap as a 'living' document that is to be adapted in reaction to external factors; thus the importance of it being not only coherent, but also resilient (see above: 'Features'). Policy is never isolated but embedded within a context that is likely to change, which means that **policy-influencing activities should be continuously adapted to the changed policy context** so as to remain relevant.

This explains the importance of the Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform. Stemming from the Roadmap, they are expected to tackle very concrete aspects of the policy at stake and to provide specific recommendations pointing out very precise lines of action. To remain focused and provide realistic advice, the recommendations must be based on a continuously updated appraisal of the policy context; which highlights therefore the essential role of monitoring in the process.

By developing further the existing proposals contained in the Roadmaps, the stakeholders will keep it alive and relevant. Likewise, periodic meetings focused on what could be called 'Roadmap implementation', can ensure that the stakeholders continue to use the document and its related Recommendations as a point of reference for their monitoring and advocacy activities.

The **Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform** should address the government and take the form of very concise documents combining i) an assessment of a concrete problem regarding the current policy and institutional landscape (stemming from the monitoring activities) and ii) proposals about concrete measures to address this problem.

Although these recommendations need to be concrete, they need to remain faithful to the commitments underlying the Roadmap so as not to endanger the consensus achieved in the previous phase. Advocacy activities centred on the recommendations can be run in parallel, but this has to be handled with care so as not to break trust or jeopardise the alliances with high-rank officials that have resulted from the dialogue process.[48]

Apart from the government, the Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform also address the international community with a view to promoting its alignment with the Roadmap through concrete assistance measures. Anchoring external support to domestically owned reform agendas is possibly the best way of ensuring a clear division of labour amongst donors.

Due to the information contained in the Integrated Support Framework, donors will be much better equipped to understand the dynamics, specificities and forces which characterise and structure the contextual environment of the particular policy field. This makes it easier for them to identify where their respective programmes can bring a concrete added value.

In this respect, the 'Civil Society Roadmaps' launched by the EU through its Delegations are a good example of donor coordination in the field. Tackling 'civil society' as a field in itself, those roadmaps analyse the operating environment for CSOs in EU partner countries and set directions for support actions covering a three-year timeframe (2014-2017). To this purpose, the EU Delegations have been incorporating a wide range of actors in the assessment of the situation as well as in the definition of priorities for support, including EU Member States, partner governments, (international) NGOs and CSOs. This example proves that any efforts to foster coordination have to begin prior to any programming of assistance, while these efforts need to engage from the earliest stage possible those actors who are expected to take part in the implementation.

d. Impact indicators

In dialogue processes that aim to influence policy, the 'result' indicators are set to measure the impact of the Roadmap and the Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform on the policy at stake. But policy influence is a long-term affair. Changes don't happen overnight and, while they appear to be slow, they are also incremental, building on previous developments.

In that sense, there is no ideal way of measuring policy influence. As was mentioned earlier in the discussion concerning the Monitoring and Advocacy Strategy, **the stakeholders need to agree on a common definition of what they consider as impact** as well as the means to measure it. In other words, they need to agree on assumptions about how they can produce the expected change at policy level.

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[48] Awareness of the nature of the approach for policy influencing that the group of stakeholders is following (advising, lobbying, advocacy or activism) is key to understanding the type of means at their disposal (Start and Hovland 2004).

In particular, an intervention that has been promoted by an external actor, even if managed by a local Hosting Structure, needs to be especially careful with the problem of attribution. Making claims about causality that are not exact or do not feel fair can trigger distrust. Nevertheless, a series of questions could be asked that enable the Hosting Structure and the group of key stakeholders to establish indicators that will guide their efforts to influence policy.

Specifically:

- What changes are observed?

- What is the reaction of policy-makers to their suggestions?

- What secondary or unintended effects have been produced?

Given the different types of actors involved, influence and impact on policy will most certainly follow multiple approaches that at best complement each other, but which can also turn out to be contradictory. This makes it imperative that inconsistencies that could endanger the whole advocacy effort are promptly identified. Since goals will continuously and rapidly shift according to changes in the political context and policy landscape, the Monitoring and Advocacy Strategy must be updated or redefined throughout the process. As a result, the work of the monitoring network can take different forms, depending, once again, on the stage of the policy cycle that is being tackled.

Inclusive and participatory policy dialogue can for instance contribute to frame the debate and push certain issues onto the political agenda. This is what INSPIRED Tunisia achieved: it contributed to frame the debate around the notion of social justice and the promotion of a common understanding on the issue among the main social and political actors. The participating stakeholders themselves have developed a strong ownership over the Roadmap and have pushed for the adaptation of legislation that is informed by a shared vision of what social justice should mean in Tunisia.

Indicators in this regard focus on: the number of legislative proposals aimed at increasing social justice and their content in the upcoming months (after the elections foreseen for late 2014); the frequency in which the term 'social justice' is being used in the programmes of the political parties according to the definition agreed during the dialogue; or the number and relevance of media content regarding the issue of social justice.

Second, policy dialogue can change the political discourse by introducing new rhetoric addressing a given problem, which would then be framed as a 'challenge'. INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan worked in this direction, contributing to a change in the attitudes and perceptions of the Kyrgyz majority towards the country's ethnic minorities.

Here, indicators include the expressions and phrases used in the media and by different societal and political actors to discuss minorities' rights. This new rhetoric is to be reflected in official speeches and statements, in media contents and in government initiatives to promote multilingualism in broadcasting.

Going beyond rhetoric, the main indicator in the case of INSPIRED Kyrgyzstan is the number of TV and radio stations broadcasting in minority language and on topics of importance to them.

Third, the impact of policy dialogue can be defined in terms of changing the ways in which decisions about policy are made. As such, INSPIRED Moldova advocated for new mechanisms for participation and accountability within the policy making process related to the DCFTA with the EU. The demands of the Moldovan civil society and different business sectors for a more transparent negotiation and implementation of the agreement have induced the Moldovan Government to commit to the establishment of an independent monitoring platform made up of CSOs and think tanks.

Indicators for measuring impact in this case include: the number of recommendations by the participating stakeholders that are retained by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration in its implementation plan for the DCFTA; the number and quality of public consultations held during the implementation process; and the number and content of reports about the implementation of the DCFTA by the soon-to-be established monitoring platform.

Whereas the process indicators could combine qualitative and quantitative measurements, it is extremely difficult to measure policy influence quantitatively. Most measurements of impact rely on subjective assessments, which implies that differences of opinion – all too natural in multi-stakeholder settings – affect the level of accuracy that quantitative indicators can produce.

On the other hand, on-going discussions about the right mix of indicators and the ways of interpreting them will help to keep the culture of dialogue alive. Once again, decisions in this regard need to be made collectively so as to nurture trust relations among the stakeholders. The indicators resulting from these debates will depend on the approach adopted by the monitoring network and will aim at changing policy while also trying to change the behaviour of some stakeholders. Women's participation in INSPIRED Ghana for instance required more than the adoption of an Affirmative Action Bill; it also required convincing the male leaders of the main political parties about the importance of substantially enhancing the role of women in their organisations.

Given the numerous difficulties involved in assessing the impact of dialogue initiatives in terms of policy influence, such as problems of attribution, measurement among others, **it is crucial to establish adequate mechanisms for learning**. For real learning to happen however, donors and practitioners alike need to admit that failure is an essential ingredient in these kind of interventions, and that it can actually play a very positive role in recalibrating the dialogue efforts by unveiling unexpected factors at play.

Summary

- The Hosting Structure and the stakeholders translate the Roadmap into concrete Recommendations for Institutional and Policy Reform, to be shared with the government and donor organisations.

- The Hosting Structure ensures that the stakeholders continue to meet at regular intervals to monitor the policy at stake and update the Recommendations in accordance with their findings.

- Based on input from the stakeholders, the Hosting Structure prepares a Monitoring and Advocacy Strategy to hold public authorities accountable and promote the proper implementation of the Roadmap.

- In the Monitoring and advocacy strategy, the stakeholders set objectives, means and expected results for their advocacy campaign and spell out whether this campaign will target the government, the general public or both, and if/how they will engage the media.

- Using the regularly updated Integrated Support Framework, the Hosting Structure identifies capacity gaps of the participating stakeholders and other institutions and organisations involved in the policy-making process, which will facilitate the alignment of international assistance programmes with locally identified needs.

- The Hosting Structure measures to what degree the dialogue process has led to policy change, based on indicators that have been jointly agreed by the dialogue participants (impact indicators)

- Through the ISF, the international community can appraise the levels of inclusiveness and ownership of the policy reform proposed in the Roadmap and donors can decide the allocation of funds to support its implementation.

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ANNEX: THE PILOT PROJECTS

The Operating Model is based on the experiences of the partner organisations that acted as Hosting Structures in their respective countries, bringing together key stakeholders from civil and political society to discuss policy reform needs and facilitate a broad-based consensus on reform priorities. The challenges they faced and the results they managed to achieve must be seen in the light of their specific country contexts.

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Kyrgyzstan: opening the media landscape to ethnic minorities

1. Identifying the key demands/needs of ethnic minorities with regards to representation in, languages used by and topics addressed in the media;

2. Identifying gaps in the media policy framework related to the demands of ethnic minorities;

3. Identifying needs for reform in the legislative framework for state media policy;

4. Providing input to the development of the strategy for Digital Broadcasting and to the media section of the Action Plan for Inter-ethnic relations and consolidation of society;

5. Raising awareness among Kyrgyz decision-makers about the need for an inclusive media policy;

6. Contributing to the development of a culture of dialogue and trust among the key stakeholders.

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Results:

1. Key demands/needs of ethnic minorities with regards to representation in, languages used by and topics addressed in the media have been identified;

2. Decision-makers have gained knowledge and understanding of the demands of ethnic minorities;

3. Mapping of the gaps in the Digital Broadcasting framework;

4. Mapping of opportunities and obstacles for realising a more inclusive media policy;

5. Recommendations for the media section of Action Plan for Inter-ethnic relations and consolidation of society have been accepted by the State Agency for local government and inter-ethnic relations in a charge of elaborating this document;

6. Recommendations for the development of the Strategy for Digital Broadcasting have been accepted by the government agency in charge of elaborating this document;

7. Consensus on developing a state media policy framework, which responds to the demands of the ethnic minorities, has been achieved;

8. Mapping of priorities for technical assistance in the field of media policy.

Partner organisation:

Institute of Constitutional Policy (ICP)

Duration:

September 2012 – June 2014

Budget:

EUR 152,844

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The project:

> "One session was about the switch to digital broadcasting. This was particularly important because it focused on how to make content answer the needs of ethnic minorities, something that had not been discussed so much before."
>
> **– Participant**

Country context

Since Kyrgyzstan gained independence in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country has been facing challenges of state and nation-building. The Kyrgyz Republic is a multi-ethnic state, with one-third of the population belonging to an ethnic minority. For many years, existing tensions between the different groups remained hidden and entirely unexpressed within the political discourse. However, a political coup in 2010 provided the setting for bloody clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks, leaving a deep feeling of insecurity and distrust among the population.

On 7 April 2010, President Kurmambek Bakiyev was ousted by the opposition and replaced by Rosa Otunbayeva as Interim President. Shortly after, on May 13, supporters of Bakiyev took over government buildings in the city of Osh, the ousted president's hometown and political stronghold, asking for his return to power. Bakiyev, who had fled the country, sent conflicting messages to the Kyrgyz people, signing an official resignation only to revoke it a few days later.

On June 9 violence erupted in Osh as Kyrgyz mobs attacked the Uzbeks, setting many properties on fire. After the violence had spread to the city of Jalal-Abad on June 12, the interim government declared a state of emergency in an attempt to reassert control. By the time the clashes ended, several hundred people had lost their lives. In the aftermath of the riots, two private Uzbek language TV stations were closed down, following an order by the Supreme Court that accused them of adding fuel to the fire.

The exact origin of the clashes remains uncertain, with blame falling on Bakiyev, the interim government and Russia. What can be said with certainty is that this episode contributed to the heightening of political polarisation in the country, adding an ethnic dimension to the already existing political tensions.

However, a window of opportunity for advancing the cause of Kyrgyzstan's minorities presented itself in late 2012. The recently finalised process of constitutional reform opened concrete spaces for increasing cultural and linguistic pluralism in the country. A new constitution, drafted by the interim government, explicitly recognised for the first time the rights of the country's ethnic minorities to develop and practice their native languages and cultures. These rights then had to be translated into concrete policies for Kyrgyz citizens to enjoy them.

The project

When INSPIRED entered the scene in September of 2012, Kyrgyzstan was still recovering from the violence. Politicians and civil society representatives alike avoided raising issues related to minorities' rights, as they feared that such a political debate could turn into ideological fighting and ignite violence between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities once more.

Taking these sensitivities into account, EPD and the local INSPIRED partner Centre for Social Integration Policy (CSIP) initially chose to steer the focus of the dialogue on the needs and demands of ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan's education policy. The EU had been active in this field for several years, promoting educational reform in Kyrgyzstan and other countries in Central Asia, while CSIP had extensive experience in this field. Moreover, the government of Kyrgyzstan had recently started working on a large reform of its education system.

The first programming workshop was held in November of 2012 in Bishkek, bringing together key stakeholders in the field of education policy in Kyrgyzstan. The participants were asked to collectively chart the issues they wanted to focus on. The debates were facilitated by the INSPIRED project manager,

who had an extensive network of contacts in the presidential office, civil society, government ministries and the parliament.

Despite the seemingly favourable conditions, it became obvious during the workshop that there was very limited space for real dialogue, in which participants could exchange their views openly and try to find a consensus on reform priorities, since the government had recently adopted a new policy on education and did not show any willingness to (re-)open the discussions. As a result, the participants discussed technicalities, complaining about the lack of funds for training teachers and printing textbooks, rather than questioning the general direction and content of education reform.

In spite of the project manager's efforts to direct the discussions to the more political questions related to the rights of ethnic minorities to receive an education in their own languages (i.e. in addition to Kyrgyz and/or Russian), government representatives present at the meeting systematically came back to issues related to the implementation of what they saw as a pre-set education reform that left no space for schooling and university education in minority languages.

Moreover, most ethnic minority representatives kept silent throughout the workshop, fearing that openly advocating for their rights might be perceived as an attempt to increase tensions and polarisation. At this point CSIP was commissioned to implement a state action plan on education, which further complicated matters. While the organisation's closeness to the government would ensure that the policy dialogue reached a very high level of expertise, it was also clear that the organisation could not play the role of an 'impartial broker' in an open-ended dialogue process.

Subsequently there was a clear need to change the project's focus towards a different policy field with better chances to open up spaces for genuine and inclusive dialogue. Witnessing minority representatives refusing to speak openly in the workshop was a clear indicator of the real situation underlying the open-ended speeches that dominated the workshop, and therefore reinforced the need to insist on the project objective of improving the situation of ethnic minorities in the Kyrgyz society.

Then, another opportunity to work towards a better representation of minorities in Kyrgyz society presented itself. The Kyrgyz government was obliged by international treaties to switch the country's broadcasting structure to a digital one by June 2015. According to the relevant state programme for this transition, two separate state bodies – the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism – were given the lead in preparing a new policy framework that would ensure that the switch from analogue to digital television and radio broadcasting would be implemented by the aforementioned deadline.

In this context, the project's new challenging task was to make sure that the upcoming media policy would be more inclusive than the one in place, and

thus incorporating media coverage of issues relevant for the country's minorities, in their own respective languages. The issue was a 'hot' one, highlighted by the fact that the government had defined media policy in terms of security rather than cultural diversity and education.

> "I think over the course of the activities of INSPIRED, problems and issues were discussed thoroughly and without fear. Many important issues were discussed such as the representation of different languages in media and it was seen to that no one got an unfair advantage over others."
>
> **- Participant**

This showed that there was a real need for an open and frank debate among politicians, experts, media companies and minority groups about the positive effects of media diversity, especially following the closure of the two Uzbek language TV stations in 2010.

After securing an agreement with a another reputable organisation to host the dialogue, namely the Institute of Constitutional Policy (ICP), INSPIRED changed direction and reinitiated the Collective Assessment process by organising another multi-stakeholder workshop in Bishkek. As with the previous workshop, the aim was to understand the different positions and incentives for change of all the main stakeholders who would be invited to participate in the policy dialogue. Once again, several officials, experts and representatives of broadcasting companies present that day tried to keep the debates focused on technicalities. This time however, some of the participants also expressed an interest in discussing the content of TV and radio programmes; in other words, the elements that were of importance to ethnic minorities. Based on the outcomes of the second workshop it was evident that there was a real chance to launch a meaningful dialogue that could bring to the surface those (unspoken) aspects that were preventing the Uzbek and other minorities from acceding to information and broadcasting contents in their own languages.

Institute of Constitutional Policy (ICP)

ICP was established in 2004 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Its mission is to support the development of democratic institutions and practices, and promote the rule of law. ICP has received support from Freedom House, the World Bank, CIPA, NED and other international organisations to research Kyrgyz laws in terms of decentralisation of power and development of local authorities, as well as improvement of the electoral code and the judicial system. ICP was involved in the process of elaboration of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2010.

The local INSPIRED management team acted fast, setting up a dialogue platform that brought together all key stakeholders, including high-ranking government officials, members of parliament, broadcasting company representatives, independent experts, journalists and CSOs with a focus on minority rights. Of course, minority representatives were involved from the very beginning and, although initially suspicious – or afraid to speak out – they progressively built a strong ownership of an initiative that held enormous potential for contributing to the development a culture of dialogue and pluralism. Over the course of seven months, the INSPIRED team managed to reshape and redefine the official agenda on the switch to digital broadcasting, bringing previously unheard voices into the debate.

One of the key messages that the INSPIRED project manager and the local team continuously shared was that the discussions on media policy needed to go beyond technicalities and focus on the content and languages of the programmes that would be available to the Kyrgyz citizens in the era of digital broadcasting.

To confirm that all stakeholders would find an interest in collaborating on a joint position and actively participate in the dialogue process, the project team constantly navigated between different positions to build trust and ensure commitment. Over 40 bilateral meetings were organised to design and present the questionnaires that should assess the demands of minorities in the far-off regions of the country.

Most importantly, INSPIRED found strong political allies such as the Deputy Minister for Culture, Information and Tourism (responsible for media policy) and prominent members of parliament leading the work on media reform in the Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Sports. All of them showed an openness to "do things differently", many of them having worked for international donors or NGOs in the past. At the same time, the INSPIRED project manager reached out to other initiatives and actors in the field of media policy to ensure that the project would achieve relevant results.

At the request of ICP, CdM organised a high level mission in November of 2013, led by the former Prime Minister of Canada and CdM member, Ms Kim Campbell, in order to share Canada's experience with multilingual TV and Radio broadcasting. During the mission Ms Campbell stressed the important role of media in consolidating society and strengthening inter-ethnic harmony in a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings with representatives of the government, political parties, CSOs and policy experts as well as a public conference with a number of key interlocutors.

As a matter of fact, media policies in Canada represented a valuable case study with important lessons learnt in a multilinguistic context that could be compared to the Kyrgyz reality. Moreover, Ms Campbell supported the INSPIRED proposals to increase the role and representation of ethnic minorities on national TV and radio, as a means to strengthen national unity and promote stability and social cohesion. Not least due to her crucial intervention, the Kyrgyz government and Members of Parliament welcomed those proposals.

The ensuing meetings with the INSPIRED dialogue participants showed that there was room for finding an agreement upon a common position. With the support of two policy experts, a strategy document was elaborated, laying down particular steps for the development of TV and radio content in the context of the upcoming digitalisation process. The document included recommendations on actions to be taken by the government, national broadcasters, CSOs and international donors with a view to making the new media policy more inclusive. After circulation for comments and suggestions, the final version of the Roadmap document was endorsed at a public conference in May 2014.

Shortly after, in June 2014, a second high-level mission to Kyrgyzstan was organised to promote the endorsed Roadmap. This time the mission was led by former President of Serbia, Mr Boris Tadic and the objective consisted of fostering the implementation of the recommendations and results of INSPIRED whose aim was to create an inclusive Kyrgyz audiovisual product that would meet the new challenges in expanding the technical capabilities of digital broadcasting. The strategic engagement of Mr Tadic was based on his experience as former Minister of Communication in Serbia, a multi-ethnic society that was divided by violence for many years. His agenda included meetings with key stakeholders such as Kyrgyz Prime Minister, Mr Otorbaev Joomart, Members of the Kyrgyz Parliament, civil society representatives, the Head of the EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan Ambassador Cesare de Montis, and local experts.

Based on his own experience in implementing media reforms in Serbia, the former Serbian President presented strong arguments supporting inclusive media policies in countries with multi-ethnic societies. Moreover, he presented the strategy for the development of digital broadcasting content in Kyrgyzstan to Mr Otorbaev and Members of the Kyrgyz parliament and discussed possible ways of implementing it, sharing and comparing lessons learnt from the Serbian experience.

The Kyrgyz government welcomed the recommendations contained in the document. There were even concrete proposals by the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism. Moreover, the Kyrgyz Prime Minister went on to sign three government regulations based on these recommendations.

Tunisia: towards a broad consensus on social justice

Objectives:

1. Contribute to enhancing the participation of the business sector in the debate on public policy regulating Public Private Partnership (PPP);

2. Contribute to fostering the involvement of local and regional stakeholders in the debate on the reduction of inequalities between the country's regions;

3. Contribute to including decentralised authorities and civil society in the dialogue/consensus on tax reform, with a view to reaching 'fiscal justice';

4. Contribute to the improvement of the investment climate by fostering the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in public policy debates.

Results:

1. The participation of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and all relevant economic agents to the definition of a legal framework for public-private partnerships (PPPs) is assured according to international standards and best practices;

2. Centralised and local key stakeholders recognise each other as valid partners in the policy dialogue about regional inequalities;

3. Civil society organisations and local authorities participate actively in the dialogue/consensus on tax reform and fiscal justice;

4. The dialogue on the needed reform of the investment climate has become more inclusive by providing opportunities for all relevant stakeholders to get involved.

Hosting Structure:

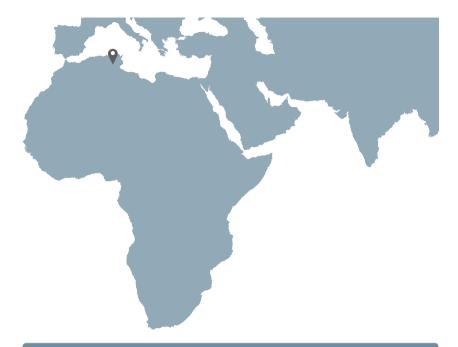Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI)

Duration:

September 2012 – June 2014

Budget:

EUR 148,172

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"INSPIRED was a success to the extent that it has promoted meetings and debates between the various political forces and national organisations with divergent and even contradictory speeches."

- Participant

Country context

In January 2011 popular unrest in Tunisia forced President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to step down, triggering an unprecedented wave of political change across North Africa and the Middle East. As the birthplace of the Arab Spring, the success of Tunisia's transition is of vital importance, due to its strong symbolic significance for the people in the region. Not surprisingly, donors and democracy support practitioners have centred their efforts in this sort of laboratory for political change in Muslim societies.

An overall positive prognosis for democratic transition in the first months of the revolution aided in developing an international belief that if Tunisia could succeed, this would lead to other Arab countries following suit as well. Unfortunately, reality has proved the optimists wrong, making the case of Tunisia unique among its neighbours and putting further pressure on its leaders, who try their best to make sure that the surrounding geo-strategic instability does not affect negatively on the country's domestic arena.

Following the Jasmine Revolution, a political reform process led to the democratic election of a National Constituent Assembly, whose primary assignment was to write a new constitution and manage on-going legislative affairs. The Assembly was dominated by the moderate Islamist 'Ennahdha' party that won 89 out of the total 217 seats. The drafting of the Constitution was delayed amid fears that Ennahdha would use its dominant position in the Assembly to reduce many of the existing individual freedoms by allocating a bigger role to Islamic law. In response, Ennahdha formed a unity government with the inclusion of the secular party Congress for the Republic (CPR) and the socialist Ettakattol party (FDTL).

Other parties in the Assembly, including the Republican Party (Al-Hizb Al-Jumhūrī), the Ettajdid Movement and the centrist Al Moubadara, represented the opposition. Although the unity government and opposition parties expressed different views on the future of the country, they managed to converge on basic procedural and institutional questions. Less than a month after its first meeting on 22 November 2011, the Constituent Assembly adopted a provisional constitution that provided the legal framework for presidential elections to be held the same year.

Despite these early achievements, there were also signs that reaching agreement between political parties and other powerful societal actors on farther-reaching reforms would be very difficult. Shifting alliances and counter-alliances in the discussions on the Constitution foreshadowed the dynamics to come. It clearly appeared that putting in place a democratic framework and carrying through the necessary economic, judicial and administrative reforms would be much harder and require further dialogue and debate.

In particular, the country's main political forces would need to go beyond the dominant debate about the nature of the state (secular vs. religious) and deal with the issues that had existed and still lie at the heart of the revolution: the people's demands for political freedoms and social justice. Tunisians were frustrated about the lack of socio-economic opportunities and the stark disparities in economic development between the capital (and the coastal touristic cities) and the rest of the country, composed of significantly poorer rural regions that had, for decades, remained apart from substantial political decision-making.

The project

An initial assessment by the INSPIRED local partner organisation Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI) confirmed that there might be space for a dialogue among the main political and civil society actors in the country around the question of socio-economic development and social justice. Focusing on social justice also seemed to be a good choice from a more pragmatic angle, as it allowed the stakeholders to overcome their entrenched positions regarding the role of religion in society and to focus on more concrete aspects with a direct impact on the quality of life of Tunisian citizens.

Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI)

CEMI promotes research related to Mediterranean and international questions, notably through: the organisation of conferences, seminars, round tables and workshops; the participation in Tunisia and abroad in research activities related to Mediterranean and international questions; and the organisation of training sessions.

CEMI's main objectives are the development of a democratic culture, one of human rights, citizen participation in public life, building knowledge and practical tools to manage and share policy, building the capacity of new generations of political actors and strengthening the involvement of young political activists in decision-making and actions in their own political structures.

Given the initial progress in the constitutional reform process – in late 2012 it seemed that a new constitution would be in place very soon – the next big task ahead for political decision-makers would be to boost the country's socio-economic development and achieve greater social cohesion. It was apparent that there was indeed a shared vision among wide sections of the Tunisian society and the political elite about the importance of social justice; in other words, everybody seemed to agree on the fact that new social and economic policies should be built on the principle of inclusive economic development. However, what was still missing was a clear definition of this and other related principles as well as their translation into concrete objectives and priorities.

Under CEMI's lead, INSPIRED took its first steps in Tunisia by inviting a wide range of stakeholders to take part in a dialogue about future policies that could ensure social justice for all Tunisians. A first round of workshops was aimed at establishing an additional space for political parties, trade unions, workers associations and other interested groups to exchange political views, analyses and information, while ensuring that the resulting dialogue process wouldn't overlap the workings of the Constituent Assembly. Their objective was to create the necessary neutral space for the participants to build trust and achieve concrete results based on their discussions, leaving aside the confrontational dynamics of the political arena. The ultimate goal was to create a parallel independent platform for the main political and social forces to determine those necessary steps for economic and political reform which would foster Tunisia's democratic transition and economic recovery, an objective that could only be achieved through a broad-based consensus.

"This programme laid the groundwork of a set of common values shared by all the partners without ideological or partisan interference."

– Participant

INSPIRED was officially launched on 11 November 2012, with a first workshop that brought together representatives of political parties, trade unions, employers' associations and CSOs, as well as experts on policy issues related to the question of social justice. Together they carried out an assessment of the situation and the most pressing socio-economic needs in Tunisian society. CEMI followed the INSPIRED approach of asking the participating stakeholders to decide collectively on the concrete issues they wanted to tackle through dialogue.

The participants in the launching event decided to focus on four policy fields with a direct impact on social justice: tax reform, public-private partnerships, regional development and the governance of investments. To deepen the knowledge on these four policy areas and feed future discussions among the stakeholders, CEMI commissioned experts to prepare background analyses.

In April 2013, INSPIRED brought together 30 stakeholder representatives to discuss the four policy papers and plan the future steps in the dialogue process. The debate was then opened to a much wider audience during a public conference that was held in June 2013. Over 100 participants debated the four targeted policies in separate sessions, providing relevant input for the work of INSPIRED and the leading group of stakeholders that would be in charge of charting out a consensus on social justice.

In order to provide support to CEMI in convening high ranked decision-makers around the process, a CdM high-level mission to Tunisia took place in June 2013, led by former Prime Minister of Romania, Mr Petre Roman. The objectives of the mission were to share Romania's experience in democratic transition, economic reform and social justice. Mr Roman spoke about the challenges and needs that the Tunisian government would need to address during the transition process, especially in terms of creating lines for dialogue between political parties and other stakeholders.

In addition to delivering a keynote speech at the INSPIRED opening conference, the former Romanian Prime Minister held key bilateral meetings with prominent politicians from government and political parties. Meetings were held with Mr Beji Caid el Sebsi (a prominent figure in domestic politics and presidential candidate at the date of publication of this book) and Mr Taieb Baccouche, both from the Nidaa Tounes party; Mr Yassine Brahim from the Al Joumhouri Party; Mr Mustafa Ben Jaafar, President of the Constituent Assembly; Mr Elyes Fakhfakh, Minister of Finance; Ms Omezzine Khelifa, advisor to the Minister of Finance; and Mr Moez ben Dhia from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

These bilateral meetings focused on the current political situation in Tunisia, especially the deadlock that the current government was facing and that reflected the importance of consensus in driving the transition process forward. In this context, inclusive dialogue appeared as the only means to launch substantial initiatives in order to develop the regions and improve the socio-economic conditions for people outside the capital; a task that could only be carried out once the mistakes of the past had been duly recognised.

Nevertheless, the political context was far from stable and INSPIRED came to a sudden halt after Tunisians witnessed the assassination of left-wing deputy Mohammed Brahmi. Tens of thousands took to the street to demonstrate against what they saw as government negligence towards the growing polarisation and violence between Islamists and left-wing political forces. Ennahdha politicians and oppositions politicians led by the recently formed Nidaa Tounes party accused each other of being responsible for Tunisia's deteriorating security conditions and the worsening economic situation. A year and a half after the Jasmine Revolution, Tunisia was going through a profound political crisis: politicians were looking uneasily in the direction of the country's neighbours, Egypt and Libya, which were both witnessing unrest, escalating violence and polarisation between different sectors of the society. The Tunisian political class saw the power struggle and violence between Islamists and secularists in the region as a warning that their own democratisation process could be derailed if they were not willing to compromise.

While the political crisis was unfolding, the INSPIRED team stayed in close contact with the individuals that had taken part in the initial activities of the project. They constantly tried to 'take the temperature' to bring those individuals – and the stakeholders they represent – back to the discussions on socio-economic reforms. In this regard, CEMI's position within the political context in running a School of Politics with the support of NIMD, Demo Finland and the Bulgarian School of Politics was key to keep all the participants engaged in the process. As a result of providing capacity-building support to the political parties represented in the National Assembly, the organisation had direct access to many of the politicians involved in the negotiations led by the so-called 'Quartet'; composed of the powerful trade union UGTT, the Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts (UTICA), the NGO League of Human Rights, and the Bar Association to try and broker an agreement between the government and opposition.

Nonetheless, without a political settlement at the highest political level, none of the stakeholders that were engaged in the project would see an interest in discussing policy reform. After all, they were representing the very same organisations and groups that were involved in the conflict over the composition of the government and the content of the new constitution. Without a minimum consensus among these forces on the basic rules of the game during the transition period, it would indeed have made little sense to discuss the pros and cons of public-private partnerships or means of achieving a more equal distribution of wealth between regions.

> "The role of the focus group was important in the choice of the theme of social justice and on the attainment of the desired consensus"
>
> **- Participant**

Fear that a similar scenario to what was happening in Egypt and Libya could occur back home finally induced an agreement on a technocratic caretaker

government which was put in charge of Tunisia's affairs until the general elections. In addition to abandoning power, Ennahdha also made concessions to the left wing and secular parties in the constitution-making process, softening its insistence that Tunisia should become an Islamic state. On 26 January 2014, the Constituent Assembly adopted the new Constitution, which protected civil liberties, separated legislative, executive and judicial powers, guaranteed female parity in political bodies, and granted religious freedoms to all Tunisians, while also declaring Islam as the country's official religion. Confirming the relevance of INSPIRED, the new Constitution mentions social justice explicitly as an objective to be attained by the Tunisian state.

Following these settlements at the highest political level, the INSPIRED team found it easier to reconvene the stakeholders to discuss the four policy papers that had been commissioned during the first phase of the dialogue process. Four workshops were organised on November 15 and 16, 2013, bringing together over 45 political and civil society representatives. The discussions produced recommendations and policy options for the four topics, with a core group of stakeholders charged with elaborating a Roadmap for Reform.

The members of this task force – mostly representatives of the main political parties, trade unions and employers' associations – developed a strong ownership of the process. This task force met twice in February and March to chart the basis for a consensus on the policy reform needs of the country and prepare a first draft of the roadmap document. Nevertheless, it was important that the final outcome would be owned by all the stakeholders involved in the project. To this effect, a roundtable was held in April 2014, where the draft document was discussed and validated by a wider group of key stakeholders.

At a conference on 8 May 2014, members of the task force presented the Roadmap to the general public. To support this accomplishment and the dialogue process behind it, another CdM high-level mission was organised between May 5 and 6. The Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mr Wim Kok, along with the former President of Spain, Mr José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero held meetings with top-level representatives of several of the institutions and political parties that had been represented in the dialogue process so as to ensure their engagement towards its results and their commitment for further action on the Roadmap. This mission also included public and press events to disseminate the Roadmap as well as the significance of the process behind it. In this regard, both CdM members publicly expressed their backing for the Roadmap and stressed the importance of following up on the achieved consensus with concrete policy initiatives.

In this regard, representatives of three political parties (Afak, Al Joumhouri and Democratic Alliance) used formulations from the consensus paper as input for their electoral programmes. CEMI, on its side, is planning to prepare a baseline study on the socio-economic aspects of the electoral programme of all the parties that have participated in INSPIRED as a follow-up of the process. The organisation will keep watch on the implementation of the Roadmap through its School of Politics and continued engagement with political parties and other stakeholders.

Ghana: enhancing women's participation in political life

Objectives:

1. Influence the development of the Affirmative Action Bill by providing input and recommendations to ensure its successful passage;

2. Sensitise and raise awareness among relevant stakeholders on the Affirmative Action Bill so as to obtain consensus and buy-in;

3. Sensitise the general public through advocacy on the needs and benefits of women's participation in political decision making;

4. Map the opportunities for enhancing the legislation on women's participation in the political decision making process.

Results:

1. The draft Affirmative Action Bill is discussed and placed back on the political agenda;

2. Key stakeholders have signed a Roadmap for institutional and policy reform to address the underrepresentation of women in the political decision making process;

3. A partnership with the media is established to propagate the core messages of the INSPIRED working group and create public awareness and interest in the Affirmative Action Bill;

4. Barriers to women's involvement and empowerment in the political decision-making process are identified and solutions are proposed and incorporated in the Affirmative Action Bill.
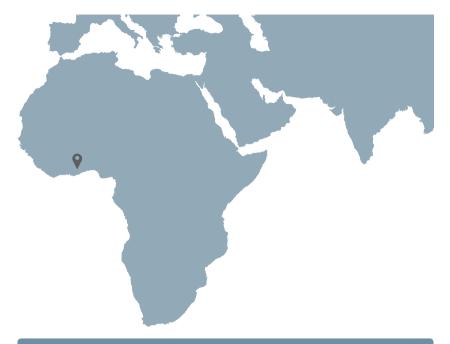
Hosting Structure:

Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)

Duration:

September 2012 – July 2014

Budget:

EUR 148,778

The project:

"The INSPIRED programme made us realise what was happening in other countries and the strides they had made. It gives you some form of encouragement and allows you to map out what strategy to pick. We were made to understand that the models we pick in Ghana will be copied by others."

- Participant

Country context

In 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African nation to achieve independence from a colonial power, triggering a continent-wide liberation movement that eventually led to the end of colonial rule in Africa. Endowed with natural resources and a relatively efficient civil service, Ghana´s independence was positively received until a coup ousted Ghana´s first president, Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. Unfortunately, this triggered a series of military coups that inadvertently ended brief periods of democratic governance. Corruption, mismanagement and human rights breaches were widespread, plaguing the country in this era of transition.

Fortunately, the democratic prospects of Ghana have improved considerably since the 1990s. After the country returned to constitutional rule in January 1993, power struggles were solved through democratic institutions and courts, transforming Ghana into a 'success story' or a 'model of democracy' on the

continent, in the eyes of both Africans and international donors alike. Nonetheless, the persistence of critical democratic deficiencies continued to limit broad-based participation in the democratic process. In particular, the under-representation of women at all levels of decision-making showed little improvement. As such, the parliamentary elections of 2012 resulted in women taking a meagre 11% of places in the National Assembly, while out of the total 1,332 running candidates only 134 were women.

Likewise, women occupied less than 18% of ministerial positions in 2013.[49] This may seem surprising, considering that Ghana passed an Affirmative Action Act as early as 1960 – when the first Constitution was adopted. On top of that, Ghana has signed and ratified many international and regional treatises and frameworks aimed at increasing the role of women in political life and national development. Yet high principles are not that easy to translate into practice, especially when strong patriarchal structures are firmly in place.

Indeed, Ghana's political leaders have done little to help women make their way into political circles, and few policy initiatives target the structural inequalities between men and women. Women may have the formal right to fully participate in local and national elections, but without a policy framework that promotes women's political participation, individual female politicians have to fight very hard inside their own parties to get nominated for political office. Moreover, in the rare cases where women manage to rise within their own political parties, they still have to fight in a political arena that works in favour of male politicians. Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that few women make it into the district and national assemblies.

The project

As Ghana's most influential public policy centre, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) has regularly provided a platform for constructive debates and dialogue on pressing national issues concerning the economy and governance. One of the key findings resulting from its appraisal of the national reality is that the weak representation of women in every aspect of public life is hindering development in many aspects, making it not just a matter of rights, but also one of economic impact and performance.

Through its long-standing partnership and cooperation with NIMD, IEA is very familiar with the world of political parties, working closely with them through workshops, seminars and roundtables on themes regarding the democratic consolidation in Ghana. The Institute's ability to conduct independent high quality research and bring together participants across the political divide to discuss pertinent national issues has earned IEA a reputation as a neutral, credible and non-partisan institution. As such, the organisation is able to direct many of its advocacy activities at the higher executive and parliamentary levels. Therefore, INSPIRED's success in Ghana relied heavily on IEA, one of the few local organisations able to host such a dialogue process and link its results to the political agenda of the country.

49 http://www.womankind.org.uk/where-we-work/ghana/

The Institute of Economic Affairs Ghana (IEA)

IEA's mission is to promote good governance, democracy and a fair market economy in Ghana and Africa as a whole. To this end the Institute seeks to create an environment in which economic, social, political and legal institutions function openly and freely and thus allows for sustainable economic growth and human development. IEA serves as a centre for several activities, including policy analysis and public education; providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and undertaking research on important economic, socio-political and legal issues in order to enhance the understanding of public policy. Moreover, IEA works to strengthen local capacity in Ghana and the sub-region by providing training to institutions of democracy such as the Parliament, judiciary, media and civil society; thereby enhancing their oversight capabilities and enabling them to perform their roles as watchdogs of the society. IEA also translates research findings into accessible forms so that they can serve the purpose of civic education, while it also makes recommendations to policy-makers and key stakeholders.

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and its Department for Women had already started the process of drafting an Affirmative Action Law in Ghana in 2011. With the support of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the ministry embarked on nationwide consultations with civil society, academia, politicians and public officials.

IEA had worked on the topic for several years, most recently through an EU-funded project aimed at building the capacity of female parliamentary candidates. Their line of action consisted in getting more women voted into parliament and advocating for the passage of an Affirmative Action Bill, so as to ensure that gender parity was reflected in the political system. So when the renamed Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (formerly Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs) established a committee to draft an Affirmative Action Bill, the INSPIRED local team was well positioned to propose the use of inclusive dialogue as a vehicle to enhance the ownership of political forces over its contents.

As a matter of fact, the need for such a bill that deals with women's under-representation was widely supported among the proponents of gender equality. However, there remained severe institutional and cultural impediments in the fight against women under-representation. For IEA, it was clear that the upcoming Affirmative Action Bill needed to increase the number of women who could (and would) make themselves available to run for political office. However, other aspects had to be taken into consideration. The promotion of women in society and political life had to be seen as positive not only by women themselves, but also by their husbands, family members, fellow party members and political opponents. While the advantages of female involvement in political life appeared as being obvious to campaigners and economists, a deeply rooted patriarchy system that relied on female subordination risked delaying policy-making or, even worse, turning it pointless by refusing to implement the new rules.

In order to avoid this, the INSPIRED team chose a pragmatic approach, consulting with the relevant minister from the start to ensure that the project would be linked to the official calendar for elaborating the Affirmative Action Bill, which would include specific sections on women. As a next step, IEA hosted a workshop in February 2013 that brought together representatives of the main political parties, women's rights advocates and policy experts to collectively assess the state of affirmative action in Ghana.

INSPIRED was to engage with all of these stakeholders in a constructive dialogue, building trust among them and helping them adopt practical recommendations to be incorporated into the draft bill. Rather than merely convening experts to discuss the bill, IEA chose to commission experts who would feed and facilitate debates. These debates would be designed to give voice to those actors who would be most affected by the new policy on affirmative action, without neglecting those who hold the power to adopt it.

The continuous exchanges with the ministry on the one hand, and the active participation of female politicians from all political parties on the other, guaranteed that INSPIRED was aligned with the official agenda on affirmative action. At the same time, IEA managed to heighten the profile and increase the visibility of the gender-gap in politics by involving the media in the process. The resulting media coverage of INSPIRED events helped take the discussions to the streets, enriching the public understanding of the bill and its implications and stimulating a far-reaching debate on the role of women in political decision-making.

A multi-stakeholder working group, which remained active throughout the project, was tasked with the day-to-day work of preparing input for the Affirmative Action Bill. Indeed, the working group lay at the heart of INSPIRED, as its members represented the wide spectrum of interests and needs vested in the issue of women's under-representation in political decision-making. They included representatives of public institutions, political parties, women's groups and civil society organisations.

> "The activities and the approach adopted well suited our context. They [IEA] handled it so well because they had to introduce the group to the whole subject of what the INSPIRED programme is about and how the affirmative action fits into it before we went ahead to look at the whole process of engaging in the working group sessions and other activities implemented under this programme."
>
> **– Participant**

Their discussions and deliberations were based on research provided by independent experts who helped them achieve a common understanding of the legal implications of the required policy reform. The group also organised regular exchanges with the National Working Group in charge of elaborating the draft bill, which was crucial in ensuring that the work of INSPIRED could be taken up by the parliament and government later on.

The members of the group worked closely together with the common goal of getting an improved Affirmative Action Bill passed as soon as possible. They met on several occasions in the summer of 2013 under the auspices of IEA and INSPIRED. In their meetings, the participants set aside their political affiliations, choosing to speak about issues relevant for women in politics, regardless of their party (or non-party) background. As such, female participants shared their own negative experiences as candidates during election campaigns, giving confidential examples of negative treatment by male party members.

At a national conference on 4 September 2013, a member of the working group presented detailed recommendations and proposals related to the Bill to a wider group of organisations with an interest in the issue. A communication containing the recommendations and signed by all members of the working group was handed over to a representative of the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection.

Between January and June of 2014, IEA focused on convincing the media of the need to advocate for affirmative action legislation and address barriers for women's participation in governance and decision-making. In parallel, the working group continued to meet and discuss ways of ensuring that its proposals informed policy-making at the ministerial level. Thanks to these sustained efforts, many of the INSPIRED recommendations found their way into the final version of the draft Affirmative Action Bill, which was endorsed at a workshop organised by the Ministry of Gender, Women and Social Protection on June 25

and 26, 2014. Coordinated by IEA, the INSPIRED stakeholders participated in the validation exercise to ensure that their proposals were fully incorporated.

Among the most relevant recommendations that were taken on board by the minister were that government appointees and other non-elective leadership positions would include at least 40% women; protected seat constituencies would be created for women; and the educational curriculum of the country would include courses that train females for leadership positions. In addition, women would be given a separate budget to run their own affairs at the district and local assembly level while non-compliance with Affirmative Action rules would be made an illegal practice.

In July 2014, the relevant minister assured participants in a conference of district assemblywomen that the long-awaited Affirmative Action Bill would be sent to Parliament before the end of the year. In November, ministry officials met with the Parliament's Joint Committee on Gender and Constitutional and Legal Affairs, in order to finalise the draft bill before it would be discussed in Parliament in December 2014.

Moldova: making European integration beneficial for all citizens of Moldova

Objectives:

1. Establishing and facilitating an inclusive national platform involving key national, sub-national and international actors in DCFTA and business and trade regulation reforms;

2. Increasing the trust and awareness for participatory policy-making among stakeholders in the implementation of the DCFTA, business and trade regulatory reforms in Moldova, including the Transnistrian region;

3. Enhancing the knowledge and awareness of stakeholders regarding the needs and opportunities for reform in the trade and regulatory sectors within the implementation of the DCFTA and the Moldova 2020 National Development Strategy;

4. Facilitating a dialogue between donors and implementers of international assistance with local stakeholders in the selected policy area;

5. Enhancing donor coordination in assessing and formulating international assistance based on local stakeholders' input;

6. Creating and disseminating transferable knowledge and practice in participatory policy programming.

Results:

1. Policy recommendations on sub-sectors of the identified policy area have been developed based on a participatory approach;

2. A Roadmap for institutional and policy reform has been co-developed by INSPIRED with the participation of stakeholders and promoted with national and international decision-makers;

3. High-level political support for key reforms has been facilitated;

4. Participation of stakeholders from the Transnistrian region of Moldova in the dialogue on the DCFTA and the Moldova 2020 Strategy has been enhanced;

5. Recommendations for future support to Moldova have been developed and shared with donors and international actors active in the selected policy field;

6. Knowledge on the DCFTA and Moldova 2020-related reform and policy processes has been made available to key stakeholders;

7. Transferable practices and lessons learnt have been gathered from the dialogue process and disseminated globally via the INSPIRED consortium.

East Europe Foundation (EEF)

September 2012 – June 2014

EUR 144,761

The project:

"The Government institutions learned the mechanism of the policy dialogue and realised that it is better to debate the document in public, even with undesired impact of the dialogue, than to keep it not discussed and figure out the negative feedback after the approval of the document."

- Participant

Country context

It is easy to play down, amidst the European integration efforts, the importance of the political and institutional changes that Moldova has undergone since its independence in 1991. The country's dilemma of parallel relations and influence from both Russia and the EU has fed the debate on Moldova's economic and political dependency. While Moldova's leading parties took opposite sides in

the debate, the Communist Party has consistently spoken out against European integration, while other political parties have taken a pro-EU stand.

After eight years in power, the Communist Party of Moldova stepped down from government following the 2009 parliamentary elections. It was replaced by a troika coalition with the telling name 'Alliance for European Integration (AEI)'. This bloc of former anti-communist opposition parties consolidated its position in March 2012, when its candidate, Mr Nicolae Timofti, was elected President following several months of power struggles and legal battles with the communist opposition.

AEI has since developed an ambitious programme for advancing Moldova's EU association process, including a National Development Strategy and reforms targeting the justice sector, human rights and democratic institutions and decentralisation. All of these strategies and reforms were aligned with the new EU-Moldova Association Agreement, the EU-Moldova visa Liberalisation Action and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the EU. As a result of these efforts, Moldova led the list of eastern European countries seeking closer ties with the EU in the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

The focus was on results that could be measured relatively easily and give an indication of the government's readiness to make the reforms that were required to adopt a large part of the EU acquis *communautaire*. In their shared euphoria over successful measures for institutional and policy adaptation, the EU and the Moldovan government focused very little on the potentially negative effects that European integration could have on the people and industries of a small, landlocked country with a relatively weak economy that is strongly relying on agriculture. In the rush to get closer to the EU and sign the Association Agreement, the Moldovan government failed to launch a transparent and inclusive consultation process with stakeholders who would be affected by its adoption.

Moreover, the government had made little effort to build consensus concerning EU integration with the opposition, namely the Communist Party. The latter's objection to the integration process since 2012 posed the threat that Moldova's position on EU integration might be challenged if the communists were to return to power in future elections. The reality of this risk became clear in 2012 when President Timofti received only the bare minimum number of votes needed to govern following the resignation of three Members of Parliament, who quit their party to support the pro-Western (pro-EU) course.

Moldova's breakaway region of Transnistria posed another distinct problem. Located between the river Dniester and the eastern Moldovan border with Ukraine, it was considered by its pro-Russian leaders as a separate state following a unilateral declaration of independence in 1990. The region would be heavily affected by the European integration process and especially by the DCFTA. Although Transnistrian businesses are generally interested in the DCFTA – with high shares of their exports going to the European market – the lack of mechanisms to harmonise legislation applicable to the Transnistrian

territory would place them under unfavourable conditions vis-à-vis businesses in the rest of Moldova.

The project

Based on initial discussions with the local partner East-Europe Foundation (EEF), INSPIRED was launched in Moldova as a vehicle for opening up the association negotiation process to those stakeholders that would be directly affected by its outcome. As the chair of the National Participation Council (NPC) – a consultative civil society platform created by the government – EEF had previously been involved in the elaboration of the Moldova 2020 National Development Strategy, which covers many sectors that would also be affected by Moldova's signing of a DCFTA with the EU. Yet contrary to the policy-making process on Moldova 2020, which was conducted by the government in a transparent manner and in cooperation with the NPC, DCFTA negotiations took place behind closed doors.

East Europe Foundation (EEF)

Inheriting Eurasia Foundation's rich legacy of promoting democracy, respect for human rights, and building a viable market economy, EEF dedicates its efforts to strengthen civil society, improve the quality of governance, and to build a better life for Moldovan citizens. EEF continues to work towards constructing democracy in Moldova, empowering citizens and fostering sustainable development through education, providing technical assistance, running grant programmes, promoting civil society development, strengthening the media, enhancing good governance, and building economic prosperity.

As the DCFTA negotiations were gaining momentum in late 2012, EEF launched an initial round of bilateral meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, think tanks and civil society organisations. Based on their input, INSPIRED focused on ensuring that the two processes (DCFTA adoption and implementation, along with Moldova 2020 implementation) were synchronised and run in a more transparent way.

Another objective was to involve those stakeholders in the DCFTA negotiations that would be affected by the agreement. To this end, a first workshop was organised, bringing together the representatives of 10 stakeholders that collectively assessed the possible implications of the DCFTA for the Moldovan economy based on an analysis that had been prepared beforehand by one the country's leading think tanks. In a separate working session, representatives of international donors and technical assistance projects mapped the current involvement of the international community in the related policy fields, allowing the EEF to detect possible synergies between INSPIRED and other relevant initiatives.

Everything was ready for the dialogue to start when Moldova entered into a political crisis that threatened the already frail consensus on EU integration. In March 2013, a deadly hunting accident involving politicians and high-level civil servants appointed by the governing parties triggered a protracted episode of political in-fighting and inter-party disputes.

While the details of what really happened during the hunting spree remained obscure, the political attacks and counter attacks that followed the event led to a no-confidence vote and the resignation of the government, under Prime Minister Vlad Filat. There was a real risk that the pro-EU coalition would break up, diverting the country from its EU integration course.

The EU halted the association negotiation process, as no government was formed with which to negotiate. Naturally, INSPIRED was brought to a halt as the project was intricately linked to the government-led negotiations with the EU. There was simply no point in continuing policy dialogue on the DCFTA and Moldova 2020 Strategy if one of the key interlocutors, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, was absorbed in a power struggle at the highest political level. All the EEF team could do was keep abreast of the political negotiations between the pro-European alliance partners and plan ahead.

In May 2014, the Alliance parties finally managed to agree on a new Prime Minister, eliminating the immediate threat of possible snap elections and a re-orientation of Moldova's European integration policy. The EEF stood ready to kick-start the dialogue. Aware of the time constraints imposed by the project, the EEF team chose to cooperate with existing consultation platforms, integrating the members of the EU-backed Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum National Platform of Moldova and the National Participation Council into the process.

Overall, over 50 organisations with a stake in the implementation of the soon-to-be-signed DFCTA and the Moldova 2020 Strategy participated in the INSPIRED policy dialogue, making it the widest and most representative platform on those topics. At a national conference that took place in September 2013, the EEF brought together seven state institutions, Moldova's six largest business associations, 17 civil society organisations and think tanks, nine donors and international actors active in DCFTA-related activities, including the EU, seven media outlets, three regional (sub-national) development agencies and two individuals representing the Transnistrian region.

Despite the high expectations and commitment of those stakeholders to the process, the EEF faced a number of challenges in facilitating an open and transparent dialogue. As such, representatives of the different ministries were not willing to discuss sensitive topics and provide detailed information on the on-going DCFTA negotiations, mainly due to their being under increasing political pressure in the run-up to the EU Eastern Partnership Summit that was to be held in Vilnius in November 2013.

There, the EU and Moldova planned to 'initialise' the Association Agreement. Moreover, events in Ukraine, one of the two other countries about to sign an Association Agreement with the EU, strongly influenced Moldova's association process. Shortly before the Vilnius Summit, Ukrainian President Yanukovych abandoned an agreement on a DCFTA with the EU in favour of closer co-operation with Russia, leading to country-wide protests by supporters of European integration and violent repression by the government. Although Yanukovych was eventually forced out of the country and a pro-EU interim government took over, Russia did not accept the new political realities in the country and refused to accept the new government. Needless to say, the EU was strongly involved in the crisis negotiations, trying to 'rein Russia in' and ensure that Ukraine would remain on the path towards European integration.

For INSPIRED, these external events led to significant delays, as the EU sent the Association Agenda (the 'action plan' related to the Association Agreement and DCFTA) to the Moldovan government only in May 2014, five months later than initially foreseen. While waiting to receive the document, the Moldovan government was not ready to engage with stakeholders during the spring of 2014, which had originally been foreseen as the main dialogue phase of INSPIRED.

As a result, EEF had to wait until May before it could organise the next multi-stakeholder meetings. Moreover, AEI's long-term stability remained in question. To minimise the risk of abruptly ending the dialogue in the case of government change, INSPIRED partner NIMD advised EEF to work towards building a broader political consensus on European integration, which would ideally also include the Communist Party.

To bring the Communist Party into the dialogue process, the EEF and the Club de Madrid organised a high-level mission in April 2014, led by three CdM members: Former Presidents Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Rexhep Qemal Meidani, and Boris Tadic, of Poland, Albania and Serbia respectively. During the mission, CdM members met with a number of key stakeholders including the President of the Republic, Nicolae Timofti, and the Prime Minister, Iurie Leanca. Meetings also took place with Igor Corman, President of the Moldovan Parliament, former Moldovan President Petru Lucinschi and civil society and political party representatives. During these meetings, the CdM members shared their respective experiences on EU accession and economic reform, while also 'checking the pulse' of the situation, by speaking to students from the faculty of political science, as well as participating in a TV programme and other media/press interviews.

The agenda also included a meeting with Vladimir Voronin, First Secretary of the Communist Party and former President of Moldova. Mr Voronin expressed the view that his party theoretically supported Moldova's path towards closer political and economic ties with the EU. However, he duly noted that the non-transparent manner in which the Association Agreement was being negotiated was one of the main reasons for his party's outright refusal of the document. According to the First Secretary, another reason for the Communist Party's reluctance to endorse the Association Agreement and DCFTA was the country's close economic ties with Russia through the Commonwealth of Independent States Free Trade Area (CISFTA). Nevertheless, in May 2014, Mr Voronin publicly announced that he supported the EU Association Agreement, a declaration that split the Communist Party in two, with several key figures abandoning in refusal to accept this change of direction. While it is not possible to prove with absolute certainty that the CdM delegation triggered this re-thinking inside the Communist Party, it is safe to assume that the conversations had an influence on the repositioning of the Communist Party leadership.

In light of the events in Ukraine described above, the EU decided to step up its negotiations with Moldova. Thus, a process that was initially expected to take about a year was finalised within less than three months, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration set June 27 as its target for signing the Association Agreement, including the DCFTA.

Speeding things up even further, the Ministry also wanted to have a National Action Plan for the implementation of the Agreement ready by that date. The ministry approached the EEF as a widely respected actor within Moldovan civil society with a proposal to jointly organise three days of public consultations on the Association Agreement. One of the three days would be reserved for consultations with civil society and think tanks on the DCFTA.

It became clear that the CdM members' mission had provided the necessary visibility for the work of INSPIRED and fostered EEF's relations with the ministry. More specifically, the mission's call on the officials in charge of the association dossier to bring more transparency to the process was considered a key driver. The presence of EEF in the consultation process ensured that all chapters of the Association Agreement were publicly debated with civil society representatives, many of which had previously been identified by EEF as key stakeholders in the implementation of the DCFTA and Moldova 2020 Strategy.

A final report commissioned by EEF showed that over two-thirds of the recommendations made by the stakeholders present at the consultation meeting found their way into the National Action Plan adopted by the government on 25 June 2014. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration agreed that following the ratification of the Association Agreement, it would consult the INSPIRED stakeholders on specific elements of the Action Plan.

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About INSPIRED

This Handbook was produced in the framework of the EU-funded
programme INSPIRED – Integrated Support Programme for Inclusive
Reform and Democratic Dialogue.

The programme operated at two levels of intervention:
In Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tunisia, national dialogue projects
promoted cooperation between the key stakeholders on a collectively
identified policy issue. At the global level, INSPIRED aggregated and
coordinated the outcomes of these projects with a view to developing an
operational model for facilitating inclusive policy dialogue processes in
contexts of democratic transition.

INSPIRED was implemented by the European Partnership for Democracy
in collaboration with seven partner organisations:

Club de Madrid
Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
Institute of Economic Affairs, Ghana
East Europe Foundation, Moldova
Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains, Morocco
Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales, Tunisia
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