

Response by CISU to the Draft Strategic Framework for Denmark's Partnership with Ukraine 2025-2028

Civil Society in Development (CISU), as Denmark's largest network of organisations engaged in global civil society initiatives, welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Strategic Framework for Denmark's partnership with Ukraine. Representing a diverse membership committed to empowering civil society organisations, CISU emphasises the centrality of an inclusive, people-centred approach to achieving the framework's ambitious goals. We applaud and support Denmark's robust commitment to Ukraine's recovery and EU accession journey.

Below we highlight areas a number of recommendations to further strengthen the framework.

General observations:

1. Commitment to civil society:

- The draft recognises the pivotal role of civil society in humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, and ensuring transparency. CISU strongly supports this emphasis but recommends further prioritisation of funding and capacity building for Ukrainian civil society organisations. Such support is crucial for fostering resilience, due diligence measures, and enabling local communities to take ownership of development processes.

2. Holistic HDP nexus approach:

- The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP) approach is commendable. However, its successful implementation will require close integration of civil society initiatives to ensure that interventions address not only immediate needs but also systemic vulnerabilities and social cohesion challenges.

Key recommendations:

1. Enhanced support for civil society participation:

- While civil society is acknowledged in the framework, the scope for their involvement in decision-making processes at local, regional, and national levels should be expanded. Mechanisms to ensure meaningful consultation with civil society organisations, including women's groups, youth networks, and organisations representing marginalised populations, should be institutionalised within the framework.

2. Capacity building for accountability and transparency:

- CISU endorses Denmark's focus on transparency in reconstruction efforts. A key enabler of this is the empowerment of local civil society actors to act as watchdogs. Capacity building initiatives should be expanded to equip these organisations with the skills and tools needed to monitor and report on the use of reconstruction funds effectively.

3. Focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups and gender equality:

- The framework acknowledges the heightened vulnerabilities faced by women, children, people traumatised by war, and people with disabilities. CISU suggests that explicit targets and indicators be integrated into the monitoring framework to track progress in addressing the needs of these groups. Partnerships with Danish and Ukrainian civil society organisations focused on gender equality and inclusion of vulnerable groups can significantly amplify these efforts.

4. Strengthened coordination and synergy:

- The framework's emphasis on coordination through the Ukrainian-Danish Steering Group is vital. CISU proposes that this group include representation from civil society networks to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives in decision-making and strategy adjustments.

5. Long-term support for the strengthening of civil society:

- Ukrainian civil society has demonstrated extraordinary resilience during the ongoing conflict. However, the sustainability of these organisations depends on predictable and flexible funding. Denmark should prioritise long-term multi-year funding commitments to civil society initiatives aligned with the framework's strategic goals.

6. The capacity to work in networks and partnerships to adjust and align in a volatile context:

- Ukraine's volatile context with high complexity requires agile, context-sensitive partnerships. Strategic partnerships between civil society organisations in Ukraine and Denmark in various constellations, alliances and networks can respond to shifting realities allowing civil society organisations to adjust strategies based on real-time feedback from local partners, ensuring effectiveness and relevance. CISU has established partnership with the Ukrainian civil society umbrella organisation, Isar Ednannia, with whom we can facilitate these processes and interventions.

Conclusion: CISU commends Denmark's comprehensive and forward-looking approach to its partnership with Ukraine. By placing civil society at the heart of its efforts, Denmark can ensure that its interventions are deeply rooted in local contexts and capable of delivering lasting, transformative impacts. We look forward to continued collaboration and stand ready to support the implementation of this ambitious framework.