

**ENoP Best Practices Compilation**

# **Sustainable Development**

# The Work of Political Foundations in the Area of Sustainable Development

A Compilation of Best Practices by ENoP Members

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## FOREWORD

Sustainable development and pursuing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become critical obligations in today's global landscape. As we face pressing challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequality, it is imperative that we forge collaborative efforts to create a sustainable future for all. In this publication, we explore the invaluable work of European political foundations in advancing sustainable development and the SDGs, specifically focusing on their capacity-building, advocacy, and research initiatives. We also delve into the pivotal role of the European Union (EU) in promoting sustainable development and the SDGs in third countries.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a guiding framework to address pressing issues and promote a more inclusive and just future for all. By committing to the SDGs, nations, organisations, and individuals pledge to build a more prosperous, resilient, and just society for present and future generations. Among the many actors committed to achieving these goals, the European Union (EU) has emerged as a prominent advocate for sustainable development and a leader in promoting its implementation. The EU's commitment to sustainable development also extends beyond its borders.

European political foundations have emerged as vital players in fostering sustainable development by empowering local actors, promoting democratic values, and facilitating knowledge exchange. Sustainable development requires a multi-faceted approach transcending borders, sectors, and ideologies. It necessitates the active engagement of diverse stakeholders who bring unique perspectives, expertise, and resources to the table. The work of European political foundations exemplifies the power of partnerships and inclusive dialogue in driving sustainable change.

One of the key contributions of European political foundations lies in their capacity-building efforts. They recognise that sustainable development requires the active participation and leadership of local stakeholders. Through their capacity-building programs, these foundations equip political parties, civil society organisations, and decision-makers on several continents with the necessary skills and expertise to drive sustainable development agendas in different countries. By providing training, mentoring, and resources, they empower individuals and organisations to take ownership of sustainable development initiatives, thereby strengthening local institutions and fostering long-term sustainability.

Moreover, European political foundations actively engage in advocacy efforts to ensure that sustainable development remains at the forefront of political agendas. They work tirelessly to raise awareness about the urgent need for sustainable development, both at the national and international levels. Through strategic partnerships and collaborations, these foundations advocate for policies that promote renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem preservation, and inclusive governance. By amplifying the voices of communities affected by environmental challenges, they reinforce the importance of addressing their needs within sustainable development frameworks.

Research is another crucial domain where European political foundations contribute significantly. Through studies and evidence- and experience-based analyses, they provide invaluable insights into the complexities of sustainable development and help shape policies and strategies that drive positive change. By fostering research collaborations, they support research projects that explore innovative solutions, promote sustainable technologies, and generate data-driven evidence to inform decision-making processes.

Through this comprehensive compilation of best practices and in-depth case studies, our primary aim is to ignite a collective sense of responsibility in policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and individuals towards sustainable development. By delving into the remarkable experiences and remarkable successes achieved by European political foundations, we seek to inspire a new wave of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation that will enable us to overcome the critical challenges we face.

ENoP has highlighted the limited contribution of current EU thematic programmes to the capacity-building of CSOs and their interaction with political institutions. Criticism has been directed towards the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, as it fails to explicitly recognise the central role of political parties

in national power structures and public participation and neglects to prioritise dialogue.

As we navigate the challenges of our time, we must remember that sustainable development is not an individual endeavour but a shared responsibility. By joining forces, pooling our expertise, and embracing the principles of sustainable development and the SDGs, we can create a world that is ecologically balanced, socially just, and economically inclusive. Let this publication be a catalyst for action—a roadmap towards a better future that we can collectively build and proudly pass on to future generations.

European political foundations, with their extensive experience in implementing cooperation projects, have the potential to serve as valuable assets in the EU's efforts to support sustainability abroad. These foundations have field offices across the globe and possess a wealth of expertise in working within local contexts, collaborating with various stakeholders, including CSOs, governments, local authorities, parliaments, grassroots activists, media outlets, political parties, trade unions, and other relevant actors. Their experience enables effective knowledge and skills transfer, facilitating sustainable development efforts.

Regrettably, support for political parties is an area that many believe the EU overlooks in its external action. Therefore, this publication aims to address this gap by exploring the work of European political foundations and how they implement sustainability projects both within Europe and internationally. While this study reveals that technical and financial obstacles pose significant challenges for political foundations engaged in sustainable development work, it also emphasises that tangible results can be achieved with limited resources.

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## INTRODUCTION

### The EU's commitment to sustainable development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established in 2015 by the international community as part of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (and as a continuation of the UN's objectives set through the "Millennium Development Goals, MDGs"). Most targets set by the 17 interlinked objectives are to be achieved by 2030, and the European Union (EU) has committed itself to implementing the SDGs in all its policies, encouraging EU countries to do the same.

Yet, the latest Europe Sustainable Development Report highlights how the continent is significantly off-track to achieving most of these goals.<sup>1</sup> Even before the Covid-19 pandemic struck, progress towards the SDGs was slow and uneven, both worldwide and in Europe. Since 2020 it has stalled, and today the global ramifications of the war in Ukraine are likely to even undo the progress achieved so far.

It has been highlighted that the EU should lead international efforts to accelerate SDG progress through multiple alliances and partnerships. This would be in line with SDG 17, which recognises that sustainable development is often most effective when applying a multi-stakeholder approach, setting among its targets the goal to *"enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries."*

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1 Sustainable Development Solutions Network. (2022) Europe Sustainable Development Report <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopmentreport/2022/europe-sustainable-development-report-2022.pdf>



In relation to sustainability, in 2020, the European Commission approved the European Green Deal, a set of policy initiatives with the overarching aim of making the EU climate neutral in 2050. The European Green Deal has strong external ramifications, stemming from the fact the EU has a disproportionate global ecological footprint through carbon-intensive imports, making it imperative to support partner countries in transitioning to clean energies and decoupling economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions. However, such ramifications have largely remained under the radar.

Indeed, SDG Watch Europe, an alliance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from development, environment, social, human rights, and other sectors, has remarked that current SGD indicators ignore some key sustainability challenges. For instance, while the SDGs call for decent work and sustainable consumption and production, no indicator looks into the sustainability of the EU's global supply chains. Furthermore, the SDG advancement in partner countries should also be measured through the lens of the EU's Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), which ensures the “do no harm” effect of other EU policies on its external cooperation in development.

### **The role of civil society in Europe and beyond**

Engagement with civil society, the private sector, and other actors is one of the key strands of the EU approach to implementing the SDGs. For example, as part of the European Green Deal, the Commission launched the European Climate Pact, which is an initiative gathering different stakeholders with the aim of committing them to action for the climate, environment, and sustainability. It also promoted the Conference on the Future of Europe, a major pan-European democratic forum for debate with citizens about a number of key priorities and challenges, including the implementation of the SDGs.

This approach is backed by a wealth of comparative research showing that democratic systems offer better conditions for sustainable development than hybrid regimes or non-democracies do. As stressed by an EU communication<sup>2</sup> on *The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development*, synergies between democracies and civil society organisations (CSOs) can contribute to the promotion of

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2 European Commission. (2012) The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0492&from=EN>

sustainable development and are key to ensuring inclusive and effective policies. Moreover, democratisation processes are rendered sustainable not only by relying on support from state institutions or civil society but also when political parties are fully integrated into this process.

Reflecting on the role of the EU's external action, the European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP), together with the European Partnership for Democracy and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, have underlined the enabling role of democratic governance for the achievement of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, calling on the EU to support this democracy vision worldwide with adequate financial instruments.<sup>3</sup>

Responding to this and similar prompts, a recent analysis<sup>4</sup> conducted for the EU Directorate-General for External Policies recognised the increased need for involving CSOs in countries' SDG implementation processes, highlighting how such actors can hold their governments accountable and secure realistic reporting of SGD implementation status. Echoing the philosophy of SDG 17, the publication went on to stress how a successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society, inviting the EU to strengthen its support for CSOs in third countries with the aim of strengthening SDG implementation processes abroad.

### **EU support in third countries**

Today the EU contributes to raising awareness of the negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on human rights, from health and food security to housing and education. Through participation in international cooperation and partnerships, the EU specifically wants to bring about the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. At the same time, and while recognising a pushback at the global level, the EU highlights how democracy sits at the core

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3 European Network of Political Foundations – ENoP. (2019) Joint statement on the role of democracy support in EU external action and recommendations for NDICI 2021–2027. [https://www.enop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ENoP\\_Joint-Statement\\_Role-of-Democracy-Support-in-EU-External-Action-and-Recommendations-for-NDICI-2021-2027\\_Jan-2020.pdf](https://www.enop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ENoP_Joint-Statement_Role-of-Democracy-Support-in-EU-External-Action-and-Recommendations-for-NDICI-2021-2027_Jan-2020.pdf)

4 Policy Department for External Relations Directorate General for External Policies of the Union. (2023) Achieving the UN Agenda 2030: Overall actions for the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals before and after the 2030 deadline. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2022/702576/EXPO\\_IDA\(2022\)702576\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2022/702576/EXPO_IDA(2022)702576_EN.pdf)

of its external actions. Over the last few years, the EU has increased its efforts to reinforce economic, social, and cultural rights while strengthening the link between human rights and the environment in its external actions.

This connection is present in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the 2020–2024 period, which lists among its key goals contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.<sup>5</sup> As earlier highlighted, it is recognised that development efforts are more sustainable when channelled through democratic processes and inclusive and accountable institutions in partner countries, and a critical aspect of the Action Plan is that it encourages recognition of and support for the essential role that civil society plays in the delivery of the SDGs.

Indeed, the above-mentioned Europe Sustainable Development Report has stressed how global alliances for the SDGs cannot be forged solely from within the EU and the G7, calling for a more proactive and SDG-oriented foreign and security policy. It invited the EU to develop and lead multilateral SDG and Green Deal diplomacy through multiple alliances and coalitions, cooperating with emerging economies while investing in facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues on the 2030 Agenda to promote joint learning and accountability. For instance, the publication included fostering youth network cooperation in Europe and abroad for sustainable development among ten ideas for strengthening the EU's SDGs leadership.

Notwithstanding the EU's recognition that good governance cannot be realised without a strong and independent civil society, these days, the majority of the EU's development aid in this regard is channelled directly to state institutions.<sup>6</sup> This reflects the fact that the EU's good governance agenda is primarily concerned with improving the efficiency and capacity of state bodies and government decision-making rather than with the democratic elements of governance.

In the 2014 to 2020 period, the most direct political stream of funding for civil society came through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which was also open to political foundations. The EIDHR supported

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5 European External Action Service. (2020) EU Action Plan on human rights and democracy 2020–2024. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu\\_action\\_plan\\_on\\_human\\_rights\\_and\\_democracy\\_2020-2024.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_action_plan_on_human_rights_and_democracy_2020-2024.pdf)

6 Hanns Seidel Foundation. (2022) EU Support to civil society and good governance. [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/AA\\_92\\_EU-Unterstuetzung\\_englisch.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/AA_92_EU-Unterstuetzung_englisch.pdf)

CSOs from non-EU states in over 100 countries. It was the main tool of support for both local and international organisations promoting human rights through country-based programmes and theme-based global calls for projects. Importantly, the EIDHR was able to fund CSOs without host-government approval.

The other main source of civil society support in third countries was the civil society organisations and local authorities (CSO-LA) thematic programme. Operating under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the programme had a particularly strong focus on strengthening CSOs and local authorities to support internationally agreed development goals. Like the EIDHR, the CSO-LA programme could also be used to fund CSOs in states in which the EU did not have a formal development programme and without government approval.

The EU's new 2021 to 2027 budget, or multiannual financial framework (MFF), includes a modest increase in human rights and democracy funds. Under the new MFF, the EIDHR ceases to exist as a separate instrument. Instead, funding for human rights and democracy is made available as part of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe). This has been allocated EUR 1.36 billion for the 2021 to 2027 period, a slight increase from the 1.30 billion euros allocated to the EIDHR for 2014 to 2020. This also entails the DEAR (Development Education and Awareness Raising) programme, which focuses on European citizens' awareness of sustainable development, with actions in the EU, candidate, and potential candidate countries.

In addition, an additional CSO thematic programme has been endowed with EUR 1.36 billion, slightly less than the EUR 1.4 billion allocated to the CSO-LA funding instrument for 2014 to 2020. Only part of the CSO programme is meant for projects related to human rights and democracy. The provision for funding to not need to be approved by third-country governments has been extended to all CSO support under the new thematic programmes.

The first overarching priority of the programme at both global and country level is *an inclusive, participatory, empowered, and independent civil society and democratic space in partner countries; and an inclusive and open dialogue with and between civil society organisations*. The second overarching priority is *a better-informed and more inclusive society with a developed sense of co-responsibility for sustainable development, including addressing global challenges (notably global inequalities and ecological crises)*.

### SGDs and political foundations

When, in September 2021, the EU announced the Global Gateway initiative for investing in infrastructure projects and establishing economic partnerships, it highlighted how this was in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is significant that the Global Gateway project is intended to be driven by democratic values and recognises how these contribute to the whole SDG framework, especially SDGs 5, 8, 10, 16, and 17.<sup>7</sup>

In the same year, the EU's commitment to advancing the SDGs was also highlighted in the Thematic Programme for Civil Society Organisations Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027,<sup>8</sup> which stressed how CSOs' participation in dialogue and policymaking is key to bringing expertise from the ground up and devising policies that meet people's needs, and thus vital to fulfilling the central commitment of the 2030 Agenda. More explicitly, civil society is described as essential for the achievement of the SDGs and is particularly relevant for the success of SDGs 16 and 17, which call for peaceful and inclusive societies as well as a revitalised global partnership for sustainable development.

Notwithstanding EU statements of commitment, actors such as SDG Watch Europe have called for the EU to revitalise civil society and local authorities' engagement on the SDGs,<sup>9</sup> while other networks like ENoP have noted how current thematic programmes provide only a small contribution to the capacity building of CSOs and their interaction with political institutions,<sup>10</sup> while criticising the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2020–2024 for not explicitly mentioning the central role that political parties play in national

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7 European External Action Service. (2022) International cooperation & partnership [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/international-cooperation-partnership\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/international-cooperation-partnership_en)

8 Directorate-General for International Partnerships. (2021) [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9158-civil-society-organisations-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9158-civil-society-organisations-annex_en.pdf)

9 SDG Watch Europe (2021). <https://sdgwatcheurope.org/documents/2021/02/this-is-not-enough-reaffirming-our-call-for-ambitious-eu-policies-on-the-sdgs.pdf/>

10 European Network of Political Foundations – ENoP. (2022) EU Team Europe approach – Improving effectiveness and impact of worldwide democracy support. [https://www.enop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENoP\\_Recommendation-Paper\\_EU-Team-Europe-Approach-Improving-Effectiveness-and-Impact-of-Worldwide-Democracy-Support\\_Jun-2022.pdf](https://www.enop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ENoP_Recommendation-Paper_EU-Team-Europe-Approach-Improving-Effectiveness-and-Impact-of-Worldwide-Democracy-Support_Jun-2022.pdf)

power structures and public participation, nor clearly stating that dialogue should be among its priorities.<sup>11</sup>

In effect, European political foundations have long-standing experience in the implementation of cooperation projects and should be made eligible as applicants for NDICI Global funding.<sup>12</sup> Several of them have field offices all over the world, a potential asset for EU action related to the support of sustainability abroad. European political foundations can act as bridge builders between different actors on the ground, thanks to their experience of working in the local context and with local actors, including CSOs, governments, local authorities, parliaments, grassroots activists, media, political parties, trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders. Such expertise is valuable to enable knowledge and skills transfer, including from European local authorities to local authorities in partner countries.

While support for political parties is a topic that many feel the EU overlooks in relation to its external actions,<sup>13</sup> this publication wants to contribute to the understanding of the work of European political foundations, exploring how they implement sustainability projects both in Europe and in the rest of the world.

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- 11 European Network of Political Foundations - ENoP (2020). Joint Communication on the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024 <https://www.enop.eu/publications/eu-action-plan-on-human-rights-and-democracy-2020-2024/>
  - 12 European Network of Political Foundations - ENoP (2021). ENoP Position Paper on a Strong Multi-actor Approach in the NDICI Programming [https://www.enop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ENoP\\_Position-Paper\\_Strong-Multi-actor-Approach-in-NDICI-Programming\\_Jul-2021.pdf](https://www.enop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ENoP_Position-Paper_Strong-Multi-actor-Approach-in-NDICI-Programming_Jul-2021.pdf)
  - 13 Hanns Seidel Foundation (2022). EU Support to Civil Society and Good Governance [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/AA\\_92\\_EU-Unterstuetzung\\_englisch.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/AA_92_EU-Unterstuetzung_englisch.pdf)

## METHODOLOGY

This study was developed by employing a combination of secondary and primary research.

### Primary research

Primary research was conducted in the form of a written questionnaire compiled online by ENoP member organisations, as well as video interviews. Members organisations interviewed were:

- The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF)
- The Green Forum Sweden
- The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF)

The questionnaire used during the interview aimed at providing information related to the following points:

- A description of the best practice model, highlighting innovative elements; rationale of the project; objectives; results; relevance; status; history and context; costs; financial support; and technical expertise required, among others.
- An overview of the design and implementation of the best practice model, highlighting actors involved in the creation of the project; driving forces; the evolution of the project; the role and attitudes of local authorities; a description of the implementation process; the involvement of civil society and media; inputs from international, national, and local experts; types of activities implemented; as well as related documentation, monitoring, and reporting processes, among others.

- Evaluation of the good practice model, including information related to its sustainability; success factors; key obstacles and strengths; replicability; lessons learned and recommendations that can be extracted from, among others.

Good practices related to the work of political foundations in the area of sustainable development were categorised among the following key types of models:

- Research and studies
- Training and capacity building
- Advocacy and awareness raising

While a degree of intersectionality exists, the targets for primary research were selected with the objective of providing one example of good practices for each of the three key types of sustainable development models.

ENoP assisted with the selection of the three case studies covered by the publication. Other criteria used for the selection included:

- The good practice model has innovative elements;
- The good practice model has achieved and recorded concrete results;
- The achieved results are relevant to the people in the target country/region/organisation;
- The good practice model is sustainable and replicable to other regions/countries/ organisations and different levels of government;

### **Secondary Research**

Interviews were integrated with desk research. The expert reviewed existing academic literature and relevant publications related to the area of the work of political foundations in the context of sustainable development projects. The desk review included, without being exhaustive:

- The latest publications by EU institutions such as the European Parliament and the European Commission, their departments and executive agencies, including DG INTPA;
- The latest publications by the United Nations and other international institutions working in the area of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);



- Relevant indexes such as those provided by the Europe Sustainable Development Report of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Europe;
- Academic/research articles related to the area of the work of political foundations in the context of sustainable development projects;
- Other relevant publications issued by ENoP or its members.

## MODELS OF WORK OF POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS IN THE AREA OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**T**he mission of European political foundations has evolved continuously over time. Today, several of them have operations in countries outside of Europe, offering support to like-minded parties and NGOs.<sup>14</sup>

Even if a certain degree of overlap certainly exists, the work of political foundations in the area of sustainability can be categorized across the following key types of models:<sup>15</sup>

1. Research and studies
2. Training and capacity-building
3. Advocacy and awareness raising

While the following paragraphs aim at defining the characteristics of each of the main sustainability models, the next chapters offer examples of the work of political foundations across these areas.

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14 Mohr, A. (2010) The German political foundations as actors in democracy assistance, & Konrad Adenauer Foundation. (2020). Political foundations: Models for the case of Kosovo. <https://www.kas.de/documents/286052/0/Publication+20-09-21+Political+Foundations+Models+for+the+Case+of+Kosovo+%28ENG%29.pdf/ce9eec9c-4cb3-95af-50e7-58707cd59a10?version=1.0&t=1609930531312>

15 Netherlands Institute of International Relations - Clingendael Institute. (2005) Mapping European democracy assistance: Tracing the activities and financial flows of political foundations. [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2016-02/20051200\\_cru\\_working\\_paper\\_36.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2016-02/20051200_cru_working_paper_36.pdf)

### **Research and studies**

A key model of the work of political foundations is represented by conducting research and studies related to sustainability topics. Such efforts are sometimes carried out in cooperation with other research institutes and universities, as well as with individual experts with knowledge of a specific sustainability issue. Publications, one of the main activities of political foundations, are normally made available online and translated into several languages.

The main objective of research and studies is to stimulate citizens' engagement with current sustainability challenges while promoting and deepening their political commitment by providing political education. This work is also relevant for leaders and members of political parties, who constantly face new issues and questions and take positions in view of current sustainability challenges. In addition, research and studies contribute to the elaboration of position papers that define a foundation's political views with regard to certain sustainability policies.

Because of their educational purposes, it is also important to highlight that research and studies have a strong link with training and capacity-building activities. In effect, the former are often presented in the context of workshops and training sessions to illustrate a specific sustainability issue and thus educate the audience. Some political foundations have created education centres and/or academies that carry out training and capacity-building activities.

### **Training and capacity-building**

The qualification of the individual qualifies the organisation, and therefore providing the tools to act in the area of sustainability is considered a priority for political foundations, which are provided through education and capacity-building activities.

Sustainability-related education and capacity-building activities target a wide range of beneficiaries, including (but not limited to) two key groups. The first consists of members (and especially younger and new party members) of a political party who, faced with complex sustainability issues, need in-depth knowledge on a vast range of sustainability topics. In effect, the need for sustainability education applies not only to a democratic civil society in general but also to the political parties themselves, which must ensure that their members are given the opportunity for continuous qualification and further training. The second

group is represented by functionaries and public officials, who are trained on a broad spectrum of topics, including sustainability policies.

### **Advocacy and awareness-raising**

The final key model of the work of political foundations in the context of sustainability is represented by advocacy and awareness activities, which are conducted in order to increase the engagement of citizens and local communities with specific topics and mobilise the public.

Advocacy and awareness-raising sustainability campaigns can be carried out at both national and subnational levels, mobilising and building partnerships with different local stakeholders. They provide evidence to back messages and arguments regarding sustainability, and their effectiveness is enhanced by collaborations with universities and research institutes to gather the necessary evidence.

While it is crucial that advocacy and awareness activities are tailored to the local culture and history, they require a constant link to the media, either traditional or social media platforms, for direct communication with citizens.



## **BEST PRACTICES OF THE HANNS SEIDEL FOUNDATION (HSF)**

**T**he Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), founded in 1967, is a German political foundation engaged in supporting democracy and sustainable development worldwide. HSF is politically aligned with the Christian Social Union (CSU) and shares its values. It is headquartered in Munich, and it is a member of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, the official foundation and think tank of the European People's Party. The foundation receives funding from the German federal government, the state of Bavaria, and other actors.

The focus of HSF's work in Germany and around the world lies on education, dialogue and exchange, strengthening civil society and the participation of women and youth, promoting the rule of law, raising environmental awareness, undertaking research, and advising decision-makers in politics, business and administration. With around 90 projects in over 70 countries worldwide, HSF has developed extensive experience in international cooperation, cooperating with local partners in all its activities.

### **Values**

HSF is named after the CSU politician Hanns Seidel, sharing his Christian idea of man and humanistic values of promoting citizens' engagement in democracy, the rule of law, and the concept of a social market economy.

The association's core belief is that democracy can survive only with a democratically-minded population, linking its mission to the lessons learned from the shortcomings of the first German republic, the Weimar Republic. The foundation sees itself as a core actor in fostering democratic awareness among citizens, both in Germany and abroad. The educational work of the foundation is based on the human ideal of personal development and autonomy, as well as social responsibility and solidarity. Its educational programmes extend beyond party boundaries and are open to all interested citizens.

### **Activities**

The work of the foundation is primarily concentrated in five departments supported by the central services.

- The Academy for Politics and Current Affairs focuses on current socio-political trends and scholarly research. The Academy describes itself as a think tank and brainstorming forum for politics and society. Its work aims to formulate problem-solving strategies and offer practical policy solutions. Policy advice and policy analysis are done in dialogue; policymakers discuss current issues with leaders from academia, the business world, society, culture and the media.
- The Institute for Political Education organises seminars and conferences on a number of different topics. Such activities are mainly designed for citizens who want to improve their political skills. Political education also aims to provide people with qualifications for political engagement, strengthening democratic awareness, and providing tools for volunteering. Topics are diverse, ranging from migration and the resulting refugee issue to questions of successfully managing the energy transition.
- The Institute for Scholarship Programmes runs programmes that benefit talented, socially committed academics. More than 1,000 fellows receive a scholarship consisting of both financial and conceptual support, the latter meaning courses aimed at enabling fellows to critically and constructively contribute to the development of the democratic rule of law. The goal is to contribute to the education of young academics and to reward outstanding scholarly achievements in doctoral programmes.

- The Institute for International Cooperation operates and evaluates development cooperation projects. The main focus is good governance, democracy-building, self-help, and sustainable development. The aim of this international engagement, which is based on Christian social ideals, is to promote humane living conditions and to contribute to sustainable development by strengthening peace, democracy, and social market economies.
- The Institute for European and Transatlantic Dialogue sees itself as a bridge-builder and mediator within Europe and with the USA and Canada. The primary goal of the Institute is to create mutual understanding and trust through dialogue measures, such as expert meetings, delegation trips, workshops, panel discussions and conferences in order to develop common positions and compromises on content.

## **Example of training and capacity-building: TH!NK Namibia**

### **Country context and rationale**

Since Namibia gained its independence in 1990, the country has enjoyed remarkable economic success. This can be attributed to the fact that Namibia has a good physical infrastructure, a functioning market economy, a strong government, and is endowed with abundant resources.

Notwithstanding what HSF describes as an excellent legislative and policy backdrop for environmental protection and sustainable resource management, the German foundation highlights how Namibia is highly dependent on natural resources, including its agricultural land and forests, which are already impacted by climate change as droughts and extreme weather are experienced more frequently.

In effect, climate change is predicted to strongly affect Namibia's economic and social development, further compromising water availability, food, and livelihood security. Temperatures in Namibia are set to rise much more rapidly than the global average. As an arid country with a hot climate, it is estimated that a 1.5 degrees Celsius increase at the global level will mean an increase of 2 degrees Celsius for Namibia.

HSF's Namibian office was established in 1978 and has been supporting the Namibian government in consolidating democratic values, economic

advancement, accountability, transparency, and environmental action as part of the Namibian development plan. Importantly, HSF Namibia lists among its key objectives *to contribute to environmental sustainability and the usage of renewable energy through awareness-raising on environmental protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation.*

### **The project**

In 2015, HSF commenced a partnership with the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) in order to launch a project named THINK Namibia with the goal of contributing to environmental sustainability through awareness-raising on environmental protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The project was designed to support the guiding principles of Namibia's National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), which aims at enabling sustainable access to water, food security, facilities for human health and well-being, and access to fisheries and forest and marine resources.

THINK Namibia is being developed in incremental phases, with the first focusing on promoting environmental awareness and information relating to climate change from a broader angle and the second advocating and raising awareness about renewable energies and resource efficiency. In 2020, the third and fourth phases of the initiative were launched, both with a marked training and capacity-building component.

### **Aquaponics Project**

The third phase of THINK Namibia was named THINK Namibia Aquaponics and was incorporated in the Aquaponics Project ('Contributing to Food Security in Namibia using Aquaponics-Systems in a Pilot Project Approach'). It ran from 2020 to 2022 and explored climate-smart agriculture, promoting the establishment of aquaponic systems in Namibia, which offer a sustainable method for farming fish while growing vegetables.

The Aquaponics Project was designed as a solution to the problem that over three-fifths of people in Namibia are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture as their main source of sustenance, income, or other form of material support. In particular, those living in communal areas are particularly reliant on subsistence farming. Agricultural dependence is further exacerbated by the fact that most rural communities face high levels of unemployment. Recently, the fragile economic picture of Namibian rural communities was shaken by



economic downturns and devastating periods of drought, as well as the adverse consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The initiative was funded by the Embassy of Finland and focused on improving local knowledge, training skills, and human capacity development for climate-resilient aquaponics. Its key objective was promoting food security while creating new livelihood opportunities in rural Namibia, targeting schools and any individual with an interest in taking part in the training.

The initiative succeeded in launching an aquaponics system at Aris Primary School 25km south of Windhoek, later handing system operations over to the school and the wider community. The public boarding school, which is itself a separate social initiative, provides education to around 180 children between the first and seventh grades, providing accommodation to teachers and learners. A local company, Eco Smart Water Technologies Namibia CC, was contracted to construct and install a pilot aquaponics system for training purposes, and learners were trained on aquaponics during a workshop.

The project also produced training material and knowledge outputs. For instance, it collaborated with a group of students from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in the USA to design five educational fact sheets and one poster illustrating the benefits of aquaponics systems and how to effectively use and maintain them. The WPI students also launched a blog to document their work on aquaponics. In addition, the project created three short educational videos introducing the concept of aquaponics and how such a system can be constructed.

Based on the experiences of the pilot system at Aris Primary School, the Aquaponics Project duplicated this approach and set up further aquaponics systems at the Rundu Vocational Centre, the Theresia Orphanage close to Rundu, and the Katima Mulilo Campus of the University of Namibia.

### **Namibia Sustainable Forest Management (NSFM) Project**

The fourth phase of THINK Namibia was the Namibia Sustainable Forest Management (NSFM) Project ('Promoting Sustainable Forest Management in the Kavango-Zambezi Region in Namibia'), promoting the concept and advantages of sustainable forest management (SFM). The lifespan of the initiative is 2020 to 2023.

The project intended to respond to the fact that profits from Namibia's yearly timber harvest have been low compared to international market trends, despite

the fact that Namibia's north and north-eastern regions, including the KAZA area, possess large hardwood forests, with exports of such timber to Asian markets having experienced significant growth over the past decade. Namibia's infrastructure is still considered inadequate for an efficient timber value chain, and hardwood is mostly exported as raw material instead of being processed, which would allow for higher profits. In addition, Namibia's current harvesting processes are unsustainable and are depleting Namibia's hardwood resources before they are able to offer their full potential. Unsustainable logging has also exacerbated the widespread problem of soil degradation, adversely affecting domestic food security and rural development in general.

The NSFM project is the result of a collaboration between HSF and the DRFN, which joined forces to support the Namibian government in its campaign against the environmental and economic threats posed by unsustainable harvesting and uncontrolled deforestation. The project has been funded by the European Union and aims to raise awareness as well as build capacities on SFM among various stakeholders from nature and environmental organisations and other civil society groups, political and traditional decision-makers, administrative representatives, local leaders, and youth representatives. Its aim is to provide stakeholders with a platform to engage in an active multi-stakeholder dialogue on SFM to contribute to an improved implementation of this concept in the affected regions. SFM aims to balance the various uses of forests while ensuring their ecological functioning and the provision of benefits and functions in the future.

The project's main activities included educational programming, public dialogue events, conferences, and study trips. Local newspapers have reported how excursions organised by the initiative contributed to educational exchange among community forest members, while educational activities such as workshops, seminars, and conferences contributed to a strengthening of capacity in Windhoek as well as the Kavango and Zambezi regions.

For instance, in June 2022, the project organised an SFM seminar that was attended by civil society and international organisations as well as local teachers aimed at informing decision-makers of the school curriculum and educational programmes on SFM and its importance for Namibia. Among the other training conducted in the context of this initiative, a workshop held in the target regions in May 2022 provided insights into the basics of SFM, harvesting methods, forest laws and policies and permits, as well as illegal fencing. Further training conducted towards the end of 2022 also discussed the causes and effects of

deforestation, fire management, and agroforestry, among other topics, and benefited from the participation of Namibia's Legal Assistance Centre. In 2023, the NSFM project also organised a parliamentary public engagement with members of the Parliament of Namibia and experts from the International University of Management, the Namibia University of Science and Technology, and the Ghana Forestry Commission, where it was illustrated how the country would benefit from having a national forestry inventory.

Among the knowledge output created and disseminated by the NSFM project are eight factsheets illustrating the basics of SFM, ranging from afforestation and reforestation techniques to an overview of the legal framework of forest management in Namibia. The series was made available in the most commonly spoken local languages of the projects' target regions, namely Rukwangali, Rumanyo and Silozi, as well as in English. The project later produced short educational video clips and podcasts based on the factsheets.

### **Achievements and lessons learned**

Following the successful implementation of the Aquaponics Project, a baseline study was conducted to evaluate the potential for further implementation sites in the Zambezi Region. The positive response from the pilot project at the Aris Primary School also led to the decision to build further systems and conduct related workshops in other rural secondary schools.

Another study produced in June 2022 as part of the NSFM project highlighted how the lack of skills and resources in the forestry sector was a major obstacle to the initiative. No updated forest map according to FAO classifications has been made for Namibia since independence, nor has a national forest inventory. The study outlined the need to invest considerable resources to assist in drafting management plans and monitoring annual allowable harvest guidelines. Limited technical resources were a key constraint that also impacted the design phase of the project. For example, it has been highlighted how during the literature research, it was very challenging to find information specifically dealing with forestry in Namibia. Awareness of SFM among stakeholders was generally low at the beginning of the project but was significantly improved through the information campaign.

Effective communication proved to be crucial for the successful implementation of the components of the THINK Namibia project. Stakeholders from the KAZA regions recognised the importance of translation as an important tool for local

communities to access and understand technical information. Apart from translating educational material into the local language, the initiative made large use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for didactical purposes and for communicating key achievements. Short videos, which were also uploaded on THINK Namibia's YouTube channel, were also important in making knowledge accessible to the wider public. A related key achievement of the initiative was to reach over 10,000 social media followers.

Although the initiative was constrained by the relatively low scarcity of local experts with adequate technical skills, both the Aquaponics and NSFm Project could rely on local partners with extensive on-the-ground knowledge of Namibia and its challenges. This factor also represented a crucial enabler of success.



## BEST PRACTICES OF THE GREEN FORUM SWEDEN

**T**he Stockholm-based Green Forum Sweden is a political foundation whose stated mission is to accelerate the transition to sustainable democratic societies. The foundation was founded in 1995 and has since supported green political parties aiming to increase their influence, resources, and support from voters. It is affiliated with the Green Party in Sweden.

Green Forum Sweden believes that current dominant economic models do not encompass the relationship between humans and nature, with unsustainable production and consumption patterns having depleted and polluted the environment on an unprecedented global scale. The foundation highlights that while participatory democracies are key in the fight against climate change and social injustices, the majority of the world's population lives in countries with undemocratic regimes where governments are failing to guarantee sustainable societies. In this context, Green Forum Sweden frames its mission of supporting green parties as doubly important for promoting sustainability and advancing democracy.

### Values

Green Forum Sweden sees a deep connection between green policies and inclusivity, highlighting the interdependency observable in any elements of

environmental systems. The foundation consequently stresses how one issue never exists independently from others: current economic, social and environmental challenges are interconnected as they share systemic roots.

Threats to economic, social and environmental well-being are part of the same problem since they share systemic roots. Hence, it is not possible to solve one of these threats without tackling the others. The foundation offers one example to illustrate this point: as the most vulnerable people are disproportionately impacted by the adverse effects of climate change, any effort to promote environmental protection should include considerations of social justice in order to achieve a holistic view of sustainability.

Green Forum Sweden sees the following principles as the foundation of green policies:

- Sustainability: the foundation defines sustainability as the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. At the global level, sustainability means ensuring the needs of present and future generations within the finite resources of the planet and reconnecting human activities with the natural systems they rely on.
- Social justice: this principle is formulated as the equitable distribution of social and natural resources to meet human needs unconditionally, guaranteeing that all citizens have the opportunity for personal and social development. Green Forum Sweden stresses that it is not possible to achieve social justice without environmental justice and vice versa.
- Ecological wisdom: this stems from the recognition that human beings are part of the natural world and that human society depends on natural resources. Ecological wisdom ensures the integrity of ecosystems and the resilience of life-supporting systems.
- Participatory democracy: this principle, to be realised at every level of society, is seen as a crucial factor for inclusive decision-making. Green Forum Sweden believes that people have a fundamental right to express their views and that power and responsibility should be concentrated in local and regional communities and transferred to higher levels of governance only when essential.

## Models of work of political foundations in the area of sustainable development

- Non-violence: Green Forum Sweden frames non-violence as the solution to handling conflicts. It calls for security not to rest mainly on military strength but on cooperation, sound economic and social development, environmental safety, and respect for human rights.
- Respect for diversity: the foundation believes that current social systems are founded on politics of privilege and are therefore not just nor sustainable. Respect for diversity can be realised only after removing structural barriers, empowering minorities and eliminating any discrimination.

### Activities

Green Forum Sweden believes that while individual contributions are praiseworthy, they are not sufficient for advancing sustainability. Consequently, politics is identified as the key to achieving substantial changes in society. For this reason, since its foundation Green Forum Sweden has supported green parties and organisations in more than 25 countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa. It reports having engaged with over 2,500 participants in capacity development initiatives and having supported 17 partner organisations counting more than 50 elected green seats.

In its mission to accelerate the transition to sustainable democratic societies, Green Forum Sweden conducts three main types of work:

- Amplifying green political organisations. Green Forum supports individuals and parties working in green politics.
- Strengthening green principles in political systems. The foundation conducts training and capacity-building activities for political actors to enhance the skills and experience needed to successfully fulfil their roles.
- Abiding by and upholding green principles. Green Forum Sweden is committed to growing a worldwide network of innovative green actors to engage in debates and knowledge-sharing events.

## Example of advocacy and awareness raising: Science Meets Politics

### Country context and rationale

In explaining the context behind its intervention, Green Forum Sweden highlighted how institutions in Kenya have largely remained non-inclusive since the country's independence, and the same applies to Kenya's models of political and economic governance. In effect, the political landscape has been described as highly tribal and based on ethnicity. Consequently, unaccountability characterises Kenya's political leadership and governance, with high corruption levels. It is telling that Kenya was ranked 124<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2020, and the position further worsened in 2021.

Green Forum Sweden is partnering with United Green Movement (UGM), a Kenyan political party whose mission is to contribute *“to establish a united, peaceful & prosperous nation in which all citizens enjoy social, economic and democratic rights, living in dignity and harmony with their environment.”* The party was registered in 2019 and has quickly grown to be significant in the Kenyan political landscape. Together with UGM, Green Forum Sweden concluded that Kenya has been lacking a more developed and varied environmental agenda at the political level, with few strategic environmental assessments and green actors capable of informing the country's development and infrastructure plans.

UGM and Green Forum saw the need for a more innovative approach that takes into account local cultures, political models, and specific historical backgrounds while making the most of the opportunities offered by new channels of communication to stimulate a deeper and wider engagement.

### The project

Green Forum Sweden and UGM recognised that a green agenda in tune with scientific research is key to progress in politics in Kenya. The two actors decided to collaborate with the aim of advancing the green agenda in Kenya, promoting the active engagement of national and regional actors in the fight against injustice and environmental degradation, including climate change. Specifically, Green Forum Sweden aimed at supporting UGM becoming more visible in Kenya while also contributing to strengthening and institutionalising the party's growing



organisation and its policy development. Green Forum also had the additional goal of strengthening political ecology as a central and trans-party issue.

The Science Meets Politics Conferences (SMP) project has been a tool and an instrument in the collaboration. The first conference took place at the University of Nairobi's Chandaria Center for Performing Arts and explored the intersection between green issues and politics in Kenya.

In the words of Green Forum Sweden, the SMP was designed to be a platform for participation in the global effort aiming at responding to climate change in a constructive manner. Given the global dimension of climate change and its related challenges, which affect people regardless of their political orientation, the event wanted to gather political actors from the broadest possible spectrum. The format of SMP also reflected the key advocacy and awareness-raising goal of bridging the gap between knowledge producers, political parties, and the public at large. The event wanted attendees to experience environmental issues, not just to understand them from a technical point of view. As put by a representative from Green Forum Sweden, the event was designed to also be simple, entertaining, and funny.

The conference was attended by representatives from civil society organisations and NGOs, activists, students, young scientists and researchers, as well as artists and comedians. Political parties also attended the conference, and apart from UGM representatives, politicians from other Kenyan parties were present, including the United Green Movement Party, the Democratic Action Party, the National Rainbow Coalition, the United Democratic Alliance, and the Green Congress of Kenya. The conference offered an insight into the place of green issues in their respective political manifestos and practical ways to tackle green issues in Kenya.

In the course of an interview with a representative from Green Forum Sweden conducted for the purpose of this study, it was highlighted how the conference has a TED Talks-like format and that visual productions from artists were also displayed for the purpose of communicating environmental and sustainability issues utilising different ways of communication. SMP was also broadcasted by traditional media, such as local TV channel NTV Kenya, and was made available on social media platforms like Facebook and non-traditional channels like YouTube.

During the panel discussion, several key issues were illustrated by scientists, including Prof Francis Mulaa, whose speech was centred on the growing need to protect and restore nature through green bio-innovation, Dr Bessy Kathambi, who stressed the importance of environmental consciousness in Kenya at a time of high population growth and urbanisation rates, and Mr Stephen Maribe, who highlighted the need of issue-based politics in Kenya, emphasising the role that political parties and citizens play in policy development.

All actors involved in the conference came to the conclusion that data, science, technologies, and solutions for transitioning modern societies to sustainable ones are already available. At the same time, it was recognised that it is political will that is lagging in Kenyan politics, a factor that plays a crucial role in crafting, voting, implementing, and enforcing the required solutions and legislation. At a broader level, such a stumbling block was identified as one of the most important to solve for humanity to tackle the pressing socioeconomic, humanitarian, and ecological challenges brought about by climate change.

### **Achievements and lessons learned**

By collaborating with Green Forum Sweden, UGM managed to increase its media reach in both traditional and social media. They have trained over 1,000 members in green ideology and external communication. Thanks to this partnership, UGM also developed a party manifesto for the 2022 Kenyan general elections and produced a party handbook for its candidates.

With relation to SMP, the first achievement reached by the conference was to bring scientists, politicians and the public together to discuss green issues. Importantly, Green Forum Sweden highlighted how the conference managed to position green issues on the political agenda as a common core issue for all parties involved. It was also one of the first events in Kenya where different political parties came together to debate green issues. The response from the general public was also positive, as the event registered over 11,300 online viewers on social media platforms, while in-person attendance was reported to have surpassed initial expectations, leading the event to last from the originally planned one and a half hours to four hours of debates with scientists, comedians, and political parties on stage.

Local engagement of actors, scientists, party members, and other stakeholders has been identified as one of the main factors of the success of the project. Local partners, in this case, UGM representatives, were key partners from the very

beginning of the project. Kenyan stakeholders were engaged in the co-elaboration of activities and the larger planning phase. SMP aimed at exploring non-mainstream approaches, and therefore most of the experts that attended the event came from Kenya or the region.

Another important element that contributed to the positive outcome of the project was the careful planning for the preparation of the event. This involved frequent in-person meetings, recruiting diverse participants and a detailed designing phase, with contributions from local partners, which were again deemed to be critical.

Focusing on proper planning together with local partners and other stakeholders is the key recommendation that the interviewee from Green Forum Sweden gave to potential stakeholders and donors wishing to undertake similar work with political parties and civil society.

While the lack of more substantial levels of funding, together with the relatively low level of technical expertise available locally, have been pointed out as being among the major obstacles that the project had to face, this event demonstrated that it is possible to achieve substantial impact with low resources. The project was estimated to cost around EUR 15,000, with the large majority of expenses borne by Green Forum Sweden through funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. This included renting and buying materials and venues, catering, accommodation and transport, as well as contracting experts.

A final recommendation made by Green Forum Sweden relates to the need to gather data and monitor all activities for subsequent review and evaluation, with the view of improving any following edition.



## **BEST PRACTICES OF THE FRIEDRICH NAUMANN FOUNDATION FOR FREEDOM (FNF)**

**T**he Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) is a German foundation for liberal politics linked to the Free Democratic Party. FNF is partly funded by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and partly by the Federal Foreign Office. It was established in 1958 by the first president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Theodor Heuss, and promotes individual freedom, classical liberalism, democracy, human rights, pluralism, tolerance, curbing climate change, an open and digital society, a social market economy, and the rule of law.

Its headquarters are in Potsdam, and the foundation has offices throughout Germany as well as in over 60 countries around the world. FNF focuses on offering political education. Its stated goal is to help people to become actively involved in political affairs through its events and publications.

### **Values**

The foundation follows the ideals of Friedrich Naumann, a leading German thinker and politician who believed in the idea that civic education and politically informed and educated citizens are a prerequisite for a functioning democracy.

Today, FNF continues to advance the idea that only when individuals take part in the political process does a liberal society grow and flourish. The foundation, therefore, states the following key values and missions:

- Interest has to be formed through political education. FNF sees understanding as an essential requirement for political participation. Political education is a tool used to make liberalism comprehensible and closer to the people.
- Experience is irreplaceable but exchangeable with political dialogue. The foundation promotes the exchange of ideas, experiences, and opinions from well-known economic experts to yet unknown young politicians working on new solutions and promoting liberal ideas.
- Policy advice serves to promote solutions for political, economic, and social problems. FNF supports its liberal partners abroad in a variety of ways, for example, by strengthening organised liberalism and by developing and building constitutional structures.
- Investing in the future. The foundation is committed to supporting liberal young talent all around the world, not only materially but also through seminars and extensive further training.

### **Activities**

Based on the principles of liberalism, FNF offers political education, both in Germany and abroad. Its events and publications are aimed at supporting people to become actively involved in political affairs. Its main activities include:

- Scholarship support. FNF collaborates with other foundations of different philosophical, political and ideological orientations and the German National Academic Foundation in promoting tertiary education through a scholarship system funded by the Federal Government. The scholarship aims to support German students, EU and non-EU students willing to study for a Master's degree or PhD degree in any field at German universities in Germany. The foundation presently supports over 850 university students and doctoral candidates from Germany and abroad. Scholarships are granted after a competitive multi-stage admission process.

- FNF provides political education to almost 5,000 guests per year through its Theodor Heuss Academy, which organises seminars, conferences and training sessions with participants from Germany, Europe, and other parts of the world. Guests are invited to learn the basics of liberal theory and politics and discuss German and international politics as well as critical issues of democracy and political culture with recognised experts. While most of its educational offering is aimed at adults, FNF also offers seminars for school groups. The foundation reports that it conducts approximately 140 political education seminars every year.
- FNF develops innovative political ideas, impulses and solutions with the work of its think tank, called the Liberal Institute. The think tank is tasked with taking a position on current issues, formulating analyses and policy advice that further develop the political model of liberalism, and presenting them for public discussion.

## **Example of research and studies: 4liberty.eu Review**

### **Country context and rationale**

In 2004 the European Union enlarged with the approval of Central European and Baltic countries as new members. While following the collapse of the Soviet Union, these countries saw the creation of democratic, pluralistic, and free market-oriented institutions, their achievements have been endangered by nationalistic and populist tendencies.

In order to strengthen political and intellectual liberal forces in the region, FNF contributed to the launch of the 4liberty.eu Portal, which is coordinated and managed by the Polish foundation Fundacja Liberté!. This intends to be a platform for liberal experts and opinion-makers from Central and Eastern Europe to share their views and ideas. 4liberty.eu contributors develop reform concepts and policy papers that are relevant for national as well as European policymakers and aim at fostering free and open societies.

An additional reason for the launch of the 4liberty.eu Portal is represented by the fact that experts, intellectuals, and researchers from the Western world who are interested in Central and Eastern European issues often find it challenging to access information and comments from representatives of the countries in

question. The 4liberty.eu Portal hence aims to fill this gap by providing high-quality commentaries and analyses written by local professionals, featured on one accessible webpage with content exclusively in English.

Today, representatives of 17 think tanks from countries including Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, and Germany regularly publish comments, analyses, and policy papers encompassing political, economic, social, and cultural life, as well as subjects of debate in the media, shown from a Central European perspective.

The platform publishes the 4liberty.eu Review, a half-yearly journal. Its issues are available for free both in print and in an online version. Each volume is devoted to one key topic that is analysed from various perspectives by 4liberty.eu contributors.

The first edition appeared in 2014, discussing the destiny of Ukraine in the face of the military power of Russia, while the most recent one, as of April 2023, was published in October 2022. Ranking as edition number 17, it discussed the future of the Central and Eastern European region in light of the challenges related to its energy transformation.

### **The project**

The seventeenth issue of the 4liberty.eu Review focused on the topics of sustainability as it aimed to describe the intended and unintended consequences of the Green Deal policy on the economies of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It was titled *Green Development: An Opportunity for CEE?*

In effect, the February 2022 Russian aggression in Ukraine caused fossil fuel prices to rise and brought the issue of security to the fore due to the high dependence on imports from Russia. Although resolving this issue requires replacing imports of these fuels from other countries, the European Union also called for stricter emission targets and the accelerated introduction of emission-free energy sources. 4liberty.eu Review argued that these steps were taken without any real assessment of the impact on the economies of individual countries.

The seventeenth issue of the 4liberty.eu Review's target audience included policymakers (nationally and in the EU institutions), researchers, entrepreneurs, journalists, opinion makers, and academics. In the call for articles, it was specified that articles should focus on the economic and strategic impact of the Green Deal and

the tightening of emission limits on individual member states, assessing whether these countries were ready for the accelerated use of non-fossil resources.

The call for articles offered a series of possible topics to explore, ranging from the identification of opportunities for Green Deal implementation in CEE economies to the analysis of CEE member states' infrastructure for the energy transition. It also established guidelines and deadlines, calling for "light" analytical, data-based, and sourced articles written in a journalistic style. The indicative length per article was set as follows: 10–12 pages or 24,000–28,000 characters (Times New Roman size 12, single-spaced, justified) for a total of 9–10 articles and 152 pages. The fee offered was EUR 250 per published article (gross amount). Other costs came close to EUR 10,000 and were supported by FNF. These included compensation for the editor-in-chief, content editor, a native English proofreader, artwork, a graphic designer for preparing the layout of the print and the online versions, printing costs, and shipment of copies to member organizations in CEE.

The resulting publication consisted of an introduction written by Dr Olga Łaben-dowicz, editor-in-chief of 4liberty.eu Review, as well as the following nine articles written by experts recruited through members of the 4liberty.eu network:

1. *Transforming the Green Deal: How to Bring Sustainability Requirements Closer to Reality?*, written by Filip Blaha, an analyst at CETA – the Centre for Economic and Market Analysis and the Chairman of Czech Students for Liberty;
2. *Taxing Global Warming: Externalities and Dealing with Them*, written by Tomasz Kasprowicz, vice-president of the Res Publica Foundation and editor at Liberte! and Res Publica Nowa;
3. *Emission Reduction and Slovak Industry*, written by Martin Vlachynský, an analyst at the INESS - Institute of Economic and Social Studies;
4. *Fossil-Fueled Politics: The Multidimensional Energy Dependency of Orbán's Hungary*, written by Márton Schlanger, researcher at the Republikon Institute;
5. *The Green Development Needs Significant Developments in Reducing Bureaucracy: A Case Study of Lithuania*, written by Karolina Mickutė, a senior expert at the Lithuanian Free Market Institute;



6. *Balancing Between a Green Future and Energy Security: The Difficult Path the Czech Republic Has to Consider in Light of Russian Aggression in Ukraine*, written by Christopher Strong, an intern at the Institute for Politics and Society in Prague;
7. *Deal or No Deal: Possible Hurdles for the European Green Deal*, written by Máté Hajba, director of the Free Market Foundation, an independent think tank in Hungary focusing on free market economics, the rule of law, civic liberties, and tolerance;
8. *The Importance of Iberian Energy to the Future of European Union and Central and Eastern Europe*, written by Ricardo Silvestre, an international officer of the Movimento Liberal Social, a think tank based in Portugal, and associate fellow and the host of the Liberal Europe podcast at the European Liberal Forum;
9. *Ambitions of Green Deal May Hinder Its Achievement*, written by Radovan Āurana, a founding member of the INESS - Institute of Economic and Social Studies.

### **Achievements and lessons learned**

The *Green Development: An Opportunity for CEE?* was not a one-off project but a piece of a larger initiative launched back in 2014. Its relatively long history allowed for the development of processes that were adjusted over time, becoming consolidated by the time of the seventeenth issue of the 4liberty.eu Review. Also worth highlighting is that the editor-in-chief of the publication possessed a background spanning from linguistics to arts and journalism and could thus supervise all of the various aspects of the publication.

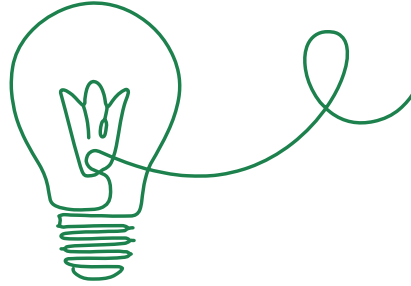
As was part of the established procedures that were followed for the development of the seventeenth issue of the 4liberty.eu Review, activities were documented, monitored, and reported on. The Liberte! Foundation was in charge of monitoring the publication's key metrics, tracking the number of downloads of the online version, as well as the reach of related social media publications. These statistics were later shared and presented to members of the 4liberty.eu network for analysis during the biannual meeting held in Prague.

Crucially, while each publication of 4liberty.eu Review addresses a different issue, ranging from fiscal policies to disinformation practices, the choice of the topic of sustainability and green development was identified as a key success factor for sparking readers' interest. In effect, the print edition of the seventeenth issue of the 4liberty.eu Review reached close to 1,000 copies distributed to member organizations to be promoted at their own events and among their partners. Moreover, statistics that were made available for the sake of this study revealed that the online version of the *Green Development: An Opportunity for CEE?* achieved over 1,300 downloads in just a month. This indicated that the audience had a strong interest in the topic, especially when comparing this result with those achieved over a 7-month period by previous editions of the 4liberty.eu Review, which registered: around 4,600 downloads for edition number 16 on the future of the European project; just over 2,600 downloads for edition number 15 on the viability of autarkic policies in CEE countries; and approximately 3,700 downloads for edition number 14 on how the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people work in the CEE region.

If limited funds and increasing printing costs were identified as the major obstacles and challenges for the design and implementation of the project, an important reason for the success of the seventeenth edition of the 4liberty.eu Review was possibly the reliance on a large network of experts from the CEE region. While this partially represented a challenge because of the complexity of coordinating a large number of experts with different backgrounds and even dissimilar political views, this was identified as a key factor for success, as the intended goal of the 4liberty.eu Portal is to meet the demand for easier access to high-quality analyses elaborated by professionals from Central and Eastern European countries. The fact that the publication was made available at no cost also was seen as an enabler for wider circulation.

In terms of style, it was indicated as beneficial to present expert analyses in a light journalistic form, coupled with infographics as well as original artwork making the publication more appealing to a broader public not necessarily familiar with the technicalities of the issues discussed.

A further element that contributed to the success of the wide circulation of the seventeenth issue of the 4liberty.eu Review was the effective promotion of the publication on various channels, ranging from newsletters and the 4liberty.eu website, to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. This was also facilitated by the expertise of Liberté! Foundation, which operates partly as a media outlet based in Poland.



## HOW TO ASSESS GOVERNANCE AND CLIMATE ACTION

**A**s highlighted in the introductory chapter of this report, a wealth of research illustrates how democratic societies foster better conditions for sustainable development than hybrid regimes or non-democracies do. These findings are also echoed by various EU actors. For instance, the EU communication *The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development* stresses that synergies between democracies and CSOs can contribute to the promotion of sustainable development thanks to the action of political parties and the support offered by state institutions and civil society. In addition, a separate study carried out for the EU Directorate-General for External Policies recognised the increased need for involving CSOs in countries' SDG implementation processes, emphasising how such actors can hold their governments accountable and secure realistic reporting of SGD implementation status.

But in practical terms, how can the nexus between governance and climate action be assessed? ENoP and the German political foundation Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) developed a model to evaluate how different types of political regimes address the challenges of climate mitigation.

This framework aims to illustrate, through case studies and comparisons, the strengths and weaknesses of how democracies and other types of regimes

develop and implement climate mitigation strategies. Moreover, the model allows for the identification of lessons which can improve decision-making across a range of political structures. This should include the following:

- Identifying how democratic processes can be better used to ensure timely and effective decision-making; and
- Identifying how polities with weaker or less firmly embedded democratic structures can address climate challenges by strengthening those structures.

### **The structure of the country assessment template**

The country assessment template developed by ENoP and KAS consists of the following six main parts:

1. *Governance and political structures.* This is a description of the governance and political structures of the country, highlighting the strength or weakness of democratic structures, the rule of law, the role of civil society organisations, and the inclusion of environmental issues in a country's constitution or international commitments. Suggested indicators include The Economist Democracy Index, government sources, observations of international bodies and NGOs, academic literature, and print media. Other issues can be analysed depending on their specific relevance, for example, a country characterised by a highly devolved or federal decision-making system.
2. *National climate policymaking.* This consists of an analysis of the operation of political structures in the development and implementation of climate policy, paying attention to both stated national ambitions and the effectiveness of mechanisms used to deliver such ambitions. The template focuses on a country's participation in the UNFCCC and related protocols and agreements, especially the Paris Agreement. Other points to highlight include the identification of the main sectors relevant to climate emissions in the target country, as well as the extent of public and civil society engagement in climate policymaking.

3. The template then includes three detailed case studies in the format of a short description of the overall policy context, followed by one or more specific examples of projects in the relevant policy area. Case studies should also identify successes or stumbling blocks in delivering climate mitigation.
4. *Case study: transport infrastructure development.* The objective of this section is to analyse, based on examples, how a country's approach to transport planning and investment contributes to its climate policy objectives. The case study should include current relevant national policy statements, whether the public and civil society are included in the consultation on major infrastructure investments, and an assessment of the speed with which infrastructure plans are implemented. It should also indicate if infrastructure investments require an environmental impact assessment in the target country and provide a specific example of a major infrastructure project that can be illustrative of these points.
5. *Case study: renewable energy infrastructure development.* This case study has the goal of providing examples of the extent to which a country's approach to renewable energy infrastructure development contributes to its climate policy objectives. It should cover current national policy statements on energy and or renewable energy, assessing the extent to which they address climate mitigation issues and if they are consistent with national climate objectives. It should also include a description of the extent to which the country has invested in renewable energy in recent years and indicate if large-scale renewable energy infrastructure investments require an environmental impact assessment. The case study should also assess the speed with which infrastructure plans are implemented and provide at least one example of a key infrastructure project which can be regarded as a good illustration of the points listed above.

**6. Case study: energy efficiency/access to energy in residential buildings.**

This chapter aims to investigate government action on energy supply in the domestic housing sector. Depending on the nature of and state of development of the economy, this may focus on energy efficiency in respect of existing supply, replacement and renewal of existing supply, the energy efficiency of new builds, or efforts to ensure energy supply to rural or marginalised communities. This section should therefore provide an account of existing national policy statements on energy in the domestic housing sector, highlighting whether climate issues are addressed. It should also give information on any specific campaigns or initiatives to improve energy supply and on the extent to which those initiatives or campaigns have been adjusted or improved as a result of public consultation, stakeholder engagement, or public opinion.

**7. Summary.** The concluding chapter summarises the main findings, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the national system in addressing climate change. It should provide final considerations on how the political structure of the target country affects the development and implementation of climate policy and the extent to which the three case studies can illustrate this point. The summary should also highlight examples of positive influence in terms of improved climate ambition for infrastructure and other projects and include suggestions for how civil society can maximise its impact on climate ambition and delivery in the current political structure of the target country.

## LEADER PROFILE I

### BERTHA ZUÑIGA



**M**eet Bertha Zuñiga, an environmental activist who fights for the rights of indigenous people in her home country, Honduras. She is the daughter of Berta Cáceres, an award-winning environmentalist who was assassinated for her activism.

Bertha is the leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), which was funded with the help of her mother and whose goal is to promote

civil and indigenous rights in Honduras. In particular, the mission of COPINH is to protect and defend the traditions, culture, health, and environmental rights of the Lenca people. Thanks to the hard work of the organisation, more than 50 logging projects have been stopped.

One of the greatest successes of COPING under Bertha's leadership was to fight against the construction of the Agua Zarca dam on behalf of the Lenca community and their sacred territories. The Agua Zarca project is just one of the various hydroelectric plans granted after 2009 when a military coup occurred

in Honduras.<sup>16</sup> When the construction company, DESA (Desarrollos Energéticos) forced its way towards the river with machinery and equipment, the Lenca community has not been informed what was happening. In other words, when the Agua Zarca project was approved, the local community, which did not want a dam to be built on its land, had not been consulted. In any event, the project was illegal since it was authorised during the 2009 coup.

In 2013, the Lenca community protested by blocking streets to stop the machinery from passing. That year was characterised by violence and conflicts between the indigenous Lenca people and DESA. The construction company even involved the military and other security forces, which was seen as a form of repression from and towards COPINH.

Eventually, after many obstacles and challenges, COPINH, under Bertha's leadership, managed to expel the construction team from where the dam was to be built. Bertha has also promised to fight against other threats faced by the Lenca community, like illegal deforestation, racism, misogyny, and land rights.

Bertha is aware that occupying a leadership position at COPINH, which her mother herself once assumed, is a huge responsibility and risk. When her mother was assassinated, she suspended her university studies to focus on discovering the truth behind this crime. Shortly after, she and two of her colleagues suffered an attack carried out by four men armed with machetes and stones who wanted to throw their vehicle off a precipice.

Challenges remain serious and dangerous for those fighting for environmental and indigenous rights in Honduras, but Bertha Zuñiga has no intention of stopping her fight to bring well-being to all Hondurans.

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16 Camilla Soldati. (2016) Bertha Isabel Zúniga Cáceres. I'll continue fighting with Honduras' indigenous people, in my mother's name. Retrieved from Lifegate Daily: <https://www.lifegate.com/berta-caceres-daughter-honduras-interview>



## LEADER PROFILE II

### MARIE CHRISTINA KOLO

**M**eeet Marie Christina Kolo, a passionate young eco-feminist and founder of Green’N’Kool, a social enterprise whose goal is leading ecological initiatives and building communities in rural areas in Madagascar. For Marie, who graduated in 1989, the inspiration to be an environmental activist came when she was only eight years old. That was the year the first textile factories of major international brands settled in Madagascar and began to contaminate the water used for drinking and agricultural purposes.



Marie, who was at the time living with her parents and younger sister in a village just 120 kilometres away from Antananarivo, recalled that farmers were not able to grow vegetables and rice anymore. Every week the river and the lands in the proximity of her village were dyed in different colours, testifying to the environmental pollution from the textile factories.

This event pushed her to fund Green’N’Kool in 2016, which educates communities through activities focused on sustainable development and waste management, as well as building sustainable playgrounds for local public orphanages and schools and distributing recycled products. For example, since the start of

the Covid-19 pandemic, Green’N’Kool has distributed eco-friendly supplies to health centres, orphanages, and hospitals.

Nowadays, Green’N’Kool consists of more than 50 people and aspires to work in favour of a “greener, friendlier and more committed youth,” as stated in the principles that are summarized on the official website. Moreover, the organization has started to develop research on the impacts of climate change on gender and human rights. For example, in Madagascar, drought frequently leads to famine and extreme situations that can lead men to exercise physical and sexual violence against women, a state of affairs Marie denounces.

In 2015, Marie co-founded the Indian Ocean Climate Network, which promotes and supports youth initiatives about climate change in Madagascar, Comoros Islands, and La Reunion. In 2020, she was awarded the international Martine Anstett Human Rights Prize as recognition of her work for climate justice. In 2021, she became one of the first youth delegates from Madagascar included in international climate negotiations within Madagascar’s national delegation at COP21.

In Marie’s words, the climate crisis is a global issue that can only be solved with global cooperation and engagement from all levels. Marie is convinced that, in order to succeed, local communities must be engaged and empowered in the process.

## LEADER PROFILE III

### JOHN PAUL JOSE



One of the most vulnerable groups that are particularly affected by climate change and extreme weather events are communities living in coastal regions. John Paul Jose is a climate activist from Kerala, a coastal state in India. His work in climate action started when he was only ten years old. He grew up in a family whose revenues came from agriculture and farming, spending his time observing rains, waterfalls, and local animal species.

When he moved to the city for higher studies, he started to miss his connection with nature. This is why he started volunteering with various NGOs, founding a civic group which planted trees and conducted various other campaigns. However, when he returned to his village during a vacation, John witnessed the ecological destruction occurring right where he was born. He realized that environmental degradation was not limited only to cities but was also causing great destruction in rural areas. For example, deforestation made flooding events more common, with the monsoon season becoming the “flood season,” causing shockwaves of fear in the local population.

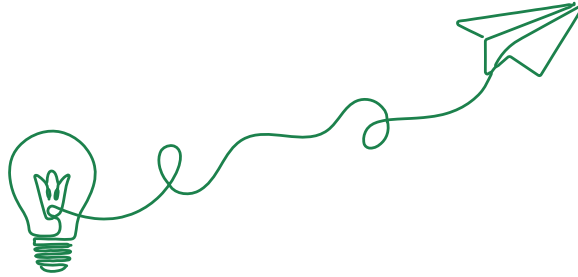
Around this time, John started to learn more about climate change, learning that even the smallest actions taken at the local level can have global impacts. He decided to take action, starting to volunteer with Greenpeace while working

with the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). These were great opportunities to bring local issues to a global public. John also organized climate strikes, inspiring many and sparking conversation on India's stand on climate action. His work within climate activism allowed him to collaborate with TED Countdown, becoming a High Seas Youth Ambassador focusing on the Ocean Conservation Treaty. Other accomplishments he is proud of include supporting the conservation of local invertebrate species and working on the draft of the Coastal Management Plan for the city of Goa.

John believes that young generations must be involved in all democratic processes to guarantee a future that can sustain them as adults as well as their future generations. He hopes that future COPs will be inclusive and that the resolutions from the summits will bring well-being to the most vulnerable communities across the globe.

Coming from a rural family that directly relies on the ecosystem to survive, John has personally experienced the impacts of climate change and ecological destruction. This inspired him to work with different entities to address global warming, such as the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

“We have to explore ways we can bring tangible results on the ground. In the current scenario, young people are the best communicators of climate science,” according to John. “Collaboration is one of the key things we need now.”



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**T**his study identified three main types of models of work carried out by political foundations in the area of sustainable development, namely research and studies, training and capacity-building, and advocacy and awareness-raising.

By employing a mix of primary and secondary research, this report aimed to analyse each of the key models of work. Case studies were selected from the projects of leading European political foundations such as the Hanns Seidel Foundation, Green Forum Sweden, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. The projects selected for case studies were chosen because of their innovative characteristics, the achievement of tangible and measurable results, their relevance, as well as for the contribution they made to the fight for a sustainable society. In addition, these foundations have undertaken projects beyond Europe, allowing for a more global dimension of the findings of this study.

EU Institutions and other relevant stakeholders that want to support political foundations and improve their collaboration are advised to take into account the following key recommendations that emerge from the case studies featured in this publication:

**1. *Sustainable development projects should have a strong rationale and understanding of the specific context in the country of intervention.***

In effect, each of the initiatives discussed in this report was grounded in a deep understanding of the characteristics and needs of the territories they targeted. Specifically, the Hanns Seidel Foundation could identify the need for Namibia to strengthen its capacity for sustainable forest management thanks to its long presence in the country, dating back to 1978. Green Forum Sweden linked its advocacy and awareness-raising intervention in Kenya to the country's relatively poor performance in international rankings such as Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index and its fast-rising temperatures, while the project co-led by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom was launched together with local think tanks that wanted to combat nationalistic and populist tendencies in Central European and Baltic countries.

**2. *Local partners should be included at any stage of the design and implementation of sustainability initiatives.***

This is linked to the point outlined just above, as the involvement of local actors leads to a stronger understanding of an area's specific needs and can also help political foundations navigate through the challenges arising during the implementation phase of their projects thanks to their on-the-ground knowledge. It is telling that all the initiatives analysed in this study saw the involvement of local actors: the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia was involved in the THINK Namibia project; the Science Meets Politics initiative saw the participation of the Kenyan political party United Green Movement; and the seventeenth edition of the 4liberty.eu Review benefitted from inputs from researchers from Central and Eastern Europe.

**3. *The pilot and planning phases are crucial aspects of any initiative and deserve special attention.***

This point emerged in the course of the interviews realised for this study, where all three political foundations highlighted the importance of careful planning and piloting to ensure positive outcomes. In particular, THINK Namibia employed pilot projects to gauge the response to its phases, while Green Forum Sweden stressed that the Science Meets Politics initiative required detailed planning with frequent in-person meetings throughout one year. Moreover, for articles featured in the seventeenth edition of the 4liberty.eu Review, specific guidelines were given in advance in terms of length and the style to be used.

**4.** *Innovative approaches lead to positive results and should therefore be encouraged.* Some innovative elements that were indicated as important factors for the projects undertaken by the political foundations studied in this report include TH!NK Namibia’s development of podcasts and video clips aimed at educating the public about the benefits of aquaponics and sustainable forest management, the involvement of artists and comedians for ensuring a more entertaining angle of the Science Meets Politics initiative, as well as the inclusion of artwork in the seventeenth edition of the 4liberty.eu Review.

**5.** *Effective and context-based communication is a must for the positive outcome of sustainable development projects.* This recommendation was made several times by the political foundations interviewed in the context of this report. In effect, it was seen as crucial that the knowledge material developed for the TH!NK Namibia project was made available in the local languages of the Kavango-Zambezi Region, namely Rukwangali, Rumanyo and Silozi. Communication was a natural focus of an advocacy and awareness-raising initiative such as Science Meets Politics, and the event was designed to be not only informative but also simple, entertaining, and funny in a TED Talks-like format. The 4liberty.eu Review considered a light, analytical, and journalistic style as the most appropriate for reaching a wide audience. It is also worth noting that all the initiatives made use of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote themselves among the public. However, one should acknowledge that certain projects take place in sensitive contexts where too much publicity about the project could pose a danger to the integrity and well-being of project members. Therefore, communication needs to be tailored to the specific country context.

**6.** *Initiatives focusing on sustainability should have a quantifiable impact, which is important to track in order to highlight results.* In line with this, the video produced in the context of the TH!NK Namibia initiative reached over 10,000 social media followers; Science Meets Politics registered over 11,300 online viewers on social media platforms and trained over 1,000 members in green ideology and external communication; and the *Green Development: An Opportunity for CEE?* publication achieved the distribution of 1,000 hard copies and 1,300 downloads of the digital edition in just one month, highlighting the interest sparked by the topic of sustainability.

**7.** On the other hand, it is also important that EU Institutions and other stakeholders aiming to support sustainable projects undertaken by political foundations are aware that technical and financial obstacles were identified as key stumbling blocks by all the actors interviewed in the course of this study. Specifically, TH!NK Namibia listed the scarcity of local experts with adequate technical skills as well as the lack of an updated forest map, according to FAO classifications, as the most important obstacles for the project. Increasing printing costs, together with limited funds, were cited as the most important hindrances for the publication *Green Development: An Opportunity for CEE?*, an issue that was also brought up by Green Forum Sweden. However, the Swedish political foundation also highlighted that a high budget is not always required, and it is possible to achieve a substantial impact with relatively modest resources.



## CONCLUSION

**T**he European Union committed itself to implementing the SDGs, and in 2020 the Commission approved the European Green Deal, a set of initiatives with the overarching aim of making the EU climate neutral in 2050. Yet, the latest Europe Sustainable Development Report highlights how Europe and the world are significantly off-track for achieving most of these sustainability goals.

The European Network of Political Foundations (ENoP) has underlined the enabling role of democratic governance for the achievement of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, calling on the EU to provide support with adequate financial instruments. Similarly, a recent analysis conducted for the EU Directorate-General for External Policies recognised the increased need for involving CSOs in countries' SDG implementation processes, stressing how such actors can hold their governments accountable and secure realistic reporting of SGD implementation status. This approach is backed by a wealth of comparative research showing that democratic systems offer better conditions for sustainable development than hybrid regimes or non-democracies do.

The EU, as part of its participation in international cooperation, wants to be committed to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. However, it has been highlighted how alliances between SDGs cannot be forged solely from within the EU and the G7. Instead, it is necessary to form multiple alliances and coalitions.

Notwithstanding the EU's recognition that good governance cannot be realised without a strong and independent civil society, today, the majority of the EU's development aid in this regard is channelled directly to state institutions. This reflects the fact that the EU's good governance agenda is primarily concerned

with improving the efficiency and capacity of state bodies and government decision-making rather than with the democratic elements of governance.

ENoP highlighted how current EU thematic programmes provide only a small contribution to the capacity building of CSOs and their interaction with political institutions, criticising the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2020–2024 for not explicitly mentioning the central role that political parties play in national power structures and public participation, nor clearly stating that dialogue should be among its priorities.

In effect, European political foundations have long-standing experience in the implementation of cooperation projects. Several of them have field offices all over the world, a potential asset for the EU action related to the support of sustainability abroad. Importantly, the European political foundation can act as a bridge between different actors on the ground thanks to their experience of working in the local context and with local actors, including CSOs, governments, local authorities, parliaments, grassroots activists, media, political parties, trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders. Such expertise is valuable to enable knowledge and skills transfer, including from European local authorities to local authorities in partner countries.

Support for political parties is a topic that many feel the EU overlooks in relation to its external action. This publication aimed to contribute to the understanding of the work of European political foundations, exploring how they implement sustainability projects, including both CSOs and political actors in Europe and in the rest of the world. Political foundations are strong advocates in favour of a multi-actor approach in sustainable development and democracy, as they see the importance of building inclusive and, thus, resilient societies.

The compilation was developed by employing a mix of secondary and primary research, conducted in the form of a written questionnaire compiled online by ENoP member organisations, as well as video interviews.

Good practices related to the work of political foundations in the area of sustainable development were categorised among the following key types of models:

1. Research and studies
2. Training and capacity-building
3. Advocacy and awareness-raising

Three ENoP members were selected for interviews, namely: the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), Green Forum Sweden, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF). These political foundations were chosen in order to provide one example of good practices for each of the three key types of sustainable development models.

Interviews were integrated with desk research consisting of a review of the existing academic literature and relevant publications related to the area of the work of political foundations in the context of sustainable development projects.

By analysing European political foundations' sustainability work, both in Europe and in other areas of the world, this study formulated the following recommendations, which are specifically designed for EU Institutions and other relevant stakeholders that want to support their projects:

- 1. Sustainable development projects should have a strong rationale and understanding of the specific context in the country of intervention.*
- 2. Local partners need to be included in any sustainability initiative from its conception through its planning, implementation and evaluation.*
- 3. The pilot and planning phases are crucial aspects of any initiative and deserve special attention.*
- 4. Innovative approaches lead to positive results and should therefore be encouraged.*
- 5. Effective communication is a must for the positive outcome of sustainable development projects.*
- 6. Initiatives focusing on sustainability should have a quantifiable impact, which is important to track in order to highlight results.*
- 7. The EU should encourage a multi-actor approach that provides for inclusivity in its external actions.*

On the other hand, this study found that technical and financial obstacles are key stumbling blocks for political foundations working in the area of sustainable development. However, it also emerged that a high budget is not always required, and it is possible to achieve tangible results with relatively modest resources.

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## ABOUT

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## ABOUT ENoP

**The European Network of Political Foundations - ENoP** serves as an umbrella network and information hub for political foundations on topics related to democracy and development cooperation. ENoP brings together 46 political foundations from 19 European countries, active in Europe and with over 130 local offices in partner countries. Although independent in nature, ENoP is a cross-party network, and its broad spectrum of affiliation corresponds to the political representation in the European Parliament. As such, the Network reflects the political diversity of the European democratic landscape and gives ENoP a unique approach.

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This comprehensive compilation showcases the capacity-building programs, advocacy efforts, and groundbreaking research initiatives of European political foundations in driving sustainable development worldwide. Learn how these foundations strategically collaborate with diverse partners to advocate for renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem preservation. Explore how European political foundations serve as valuable assets in supporting sustainability abroad and inspiring positive change. This publication aims to unveil a roadmap towards a better future, where shared responsibility and collaborative action can overcome critical global challenges.



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