



ACCOUNTABILTY REPORT 2018-19

Empowering a more accountable, effective
and innovative civil society



Contents

Opening Statement: ‘We must do more to respond to the global call for accountable and responsive institutions’	3
What drives CIVICUS’ work? How does the strategic planning translate into an organisation-wide accountability framework? How does CIVICUS monitor progress against set objectives and what are lessons learnt? (<i>Cluster A, A1-A4, B2, C1</i>)	5
How does CIVICUS identify and prioritise stakeholders? How does CIVICUS ensure its partnerships are effective – maximising coordination and avoiding duplication? (<i>Cluster B, D1-D3</i>)	8
How is stakeholder engagement reflected in CIVICUS’ decision-making and how does it contribute to change? (<i>Cluster A, B1, C1; Cluster B, E1-E3; Cluster C J4-J5</i>)	13
How does CIVICUS respond to stakeholder feedback? Which complaints did CIVICUS receive in 2018-2019 and how were these followed-up? (<i>Cluster B, E3; Cluster C, J3</i>).....	16
How is CIVICUS strengthening capacities that last beyond immediate interventions? (<i>Cluster B, E4</i>).....	17
How is CIVICUS ensuring diversity and inclusion in its Secretariat and programmes? (<i>Cluster A, C3-C4</i>)	19
How does CIVICUS improve its environmental footprint? (<i>Cluster A, B1, C5</i>)	21
How is CIVICUS’ advocacy work rooted in human rights and do-no-harm principles? How is it based on the views of the affected people? (<i>Cluster A, C2-C4; Cluster B, F1-F2</i>).....	23
How transparent is CIVICUS regarding its budgets, evaluations, policies, or remunerations? (<i>Cluster B, G1-G2</i>)	25
How does CIVICUS guarantee privacy rights and personal data of the people it works with? (<i>Cluster B, G3</i>).....	27
How fair and transparent are CIVICUS’ recruitment, employment and staff development processes? (<i>Cluster B, G2; Cluster C, H1-H3</i>)	27
How does CIVICUS ensure sustainable and diversified resourcing as well as resource allocation in line with strategic objectives? (<i>Cluster B, G4; Cluster C, I1-I2</i>).....	31
How does CIVICUS deal with anti-corruption and financial controls? (<i>Cluster C, I3</i>).....	32
What does CIVICUS’ governance structure look like and how does it work in practice? (<i>Cluster C, J1-J2</i>).....	34
How does CIVICUS ensure an independent and effective oversight of its strategic direction, legal compliance, risk, and performance? (<i>Cluster C, K1</i>).....	37
How does CIVICUS Board and SLT take responsibility to meet the 12 Accountability Commitments? (<i>Cluster C, K1-K2</i>).....	37
How is CIVICUS promoting the Accountability Commitments among staff and improving performance? (<i>Cluster C, K2-K3</i>).....	38
Final Conclusions on CIVICUS’ Accountability Reporting.....	39

Opening Statement: 'We must do more to respond to the global call for accountable and responsive institutions'



2019 is already being remembered as the year of protests. In diverse and multiple contexts – ranging from Sudan to Hong Kong, Chile to Lebanon – scores of people have demonstrated agency and urgency in their call for greater responsiveness and accountability from public institutions. As explained in our [State of Civil Society Report 2019](#), the worldwide surge in civic activism is a sure sign that governance institutions and processes are failing to meet the needs and expectations of the people they serve. More must be

done to 'shift the power' and transfer information, skills and resources to groups that have been systematically excluded from decision making.

In the context of civil society organisations, our alliance's effectiveness in calling for social, political and economic reforms is directly linked to our ability to integrate effective processes for disclosure, participation and accountability in all aspects of our own work. The importance of building a 'more accountable, effective and innovative' civil society is a fundamental part of CIVICUS' Strategic Plan 2017-2022. We are committed to growing ways in which we can achieve greater levels of public trust in civil society through being more accountable.

As detailed in the report that follows, our work in 2018-2019 focused on strengthening accountability in our programmes, with our constituents, and in how we structure our work:

- Through the [Resilient Roots](#) initiative, we were able to adopt and promote new civil society performance metrics for primary constituent accountability with 14 national civil society organisations to test and develop approaches to build long-term accountability and resilience mechanisms in restricted civic space contexts.
- Our [Annual Constituency Survey](#) of alliance members and partners continues to be an all-important source of feedback on the things we are doing well and what we need to change.
- The integration of mechanisms like the 'Net Promoter Score' in key programmes, including [International Civil Society Week](#), has helped us get better at listening to those we engage.
- Work done this year to activate the recently launched [AGNA transparency and accountability platform](#) is yet another example of how a networked approach to increasing trust in civil society is informing our core work.

More broadly, CIVICUS' [Accountability Framework](#), which was finalised last year, has been instrumental in helping us define accountability commitments, prioritise organisational learning, and structure our internal processes and workflows in ways that strengthened internal collaboration and accountability. Specifically, in January 2019, the CIVICUS Secretariat undertook an organisation-wide and collaborative planning and priority-setting for 2019-2020, which resulted in a composite summary of our annual priorities and targets that were also [published](#) on our website. In addition, the CIVICUS Board and Secretariat have together created a strategic reporting framework aimed at optimising learning and accountability mechanisms across the Alliance. Our refreshed Board Reporting Guidelines now include monthly updates to our membership, quarterly trend analysis reports from our online outcome tracking database DevResults, and opportunities for the Board, staff and members to address critical learning questions outlined in our Accountability Framework across the year.

Our [Mid-Term Strategy Review](#) has also been an important opportunity to apply the principles of accountability as a means for course correction. Led by a semi-independent evaluator and supported by a staff-based Task Team, the Review has provided an important opportunity to evaluate progress made in the first two years of our current strategic period, i.e. from July 2017 to June 2019. In doing so, it has also helped test assumptions and provide recommendations for what we need to change and the efforts we need to organise in the final two years of our Strategic Plan period. In line with CIVICUS' commitment to dynamic accountability, a key component of this process was the active engagement of stakeholders in providing feedback and identifying opportunities to strengthen our impact going forward. The outcomes of our mid-term strategy review will be available on the CIVICUS website in January 2020 and will actively inform planning and decision-making across the year.

In this context, we are excited by the prospect of another year of focused initiatives aimed at improving learning, impact and accountability related outcomes for CIVICUS and the alliance. This [eleventh edition](#) of our annual accountability report is an important step in this direction. We are grateful to our peers in the [Accountable Now platform](#) and to the Independent Review Panel's recommendations for steering this important effort and for the opportunity to participate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lysa John Berna', written in a cursive style.

Lysa John Berna
(Secretary General, CIVICUS)

[This foreword from Lysa John also suffices as the executive summary for the Accountability Report.]

What follows is CIVICUS' response to [Accountable Now's reporting questions](#), with a focus on areas identified by their Independent Review Panel in previous years. Please also find [Annex I](#) for CIVICUS' self-assessment based on the color-coded assessment levels identified in the [Accountable Now reporting guidelines](#) (pages 5/6).

What drives CIVICUS' work? How does the strategic planning translate into an organisation-wide accountability framework? How does CIVICUS monitor progress against set objectives and what are lessons learnt? (Cluster A, A1-A4, B2, C1)



CIVICUS STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2022



What drives CIVICUS' work?

CIVICUS' vision is "a worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity". Our mission is "to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world". Based on these fundamental values, our Strategic Goals for 2017-2022 are:

1. Defending Civic Freedoms & Democratic Freedoms
2. Strengthening the Power of People to Organise, Mobilise and Take Action
3. Empowering a More Accountable, Effective and Innovative Civil Society
4. Building a Fit-For-Purpose Organisation

You can read and download the full Strategic Plan in six languages and watch videos [here](#).

How does the strategic planning translate into an organisation-wide accountability framework?

CIVICUS' [Accountability Framework](#) was updated in November 2018 to help consistently and systematically track the organisation's progress and impact against the new Strategic Plan, meet accountability commitments and enable organisational learning. It is grounded in [Utilisation-focused Evaluation](#), recognising that in complex environments, where social change is difficult to measure and attribute to one single effort, evaluation needs to be purpose-driven. We developed and implemented an organisational-wide [Developmental Evaluation Framework](#) in May 2019 to complement implementation of this Strategic Plan.

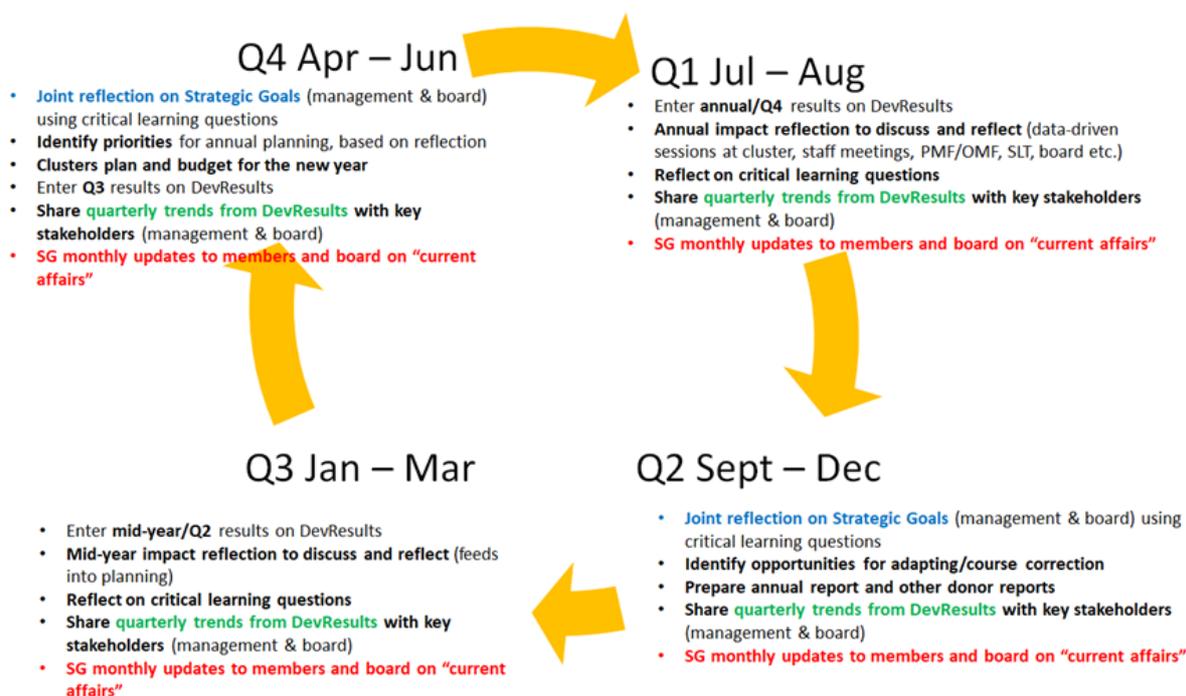
In order to help understand CIVICUS' contribution in the complex social environments within which the organisation works, CIVICUS' Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Impact & Accountability Cluster have developed a series of long-term critical learning questions to help staff understand the impact of its work under each of the Strategic Goals and to serve as a connection to the Accountability Framework. The intention is to understand, not only whether CIVICUS is progressing according to these plans, but also to understand what activities in which contexts are working well and where CIVICUS may need to change course and adapt. Insights from these processes are moreover reflected in summaries of Impact Reflections which happen



twice a year in August and February. Our Performance Story (*submitted to the Panel along with this report*) is revised regularly to reflect these learnings and DevResults updates (see more on DevResults further down).

In addition, CIVICUS revised its organisational-wide annual planning process for 2019-2020 so that six overarching priorities for the year were agreed upon by each team before these focused on their teams' annual plans and budgets aligned to this overarching focus (see [this annual planning flyer](#) as well as this [Secretariat summary narrative](#) for more details). Moreover, we regularly share learnings from these processes with our stakeholders (see this [blog](#) or [article on pages 76-81](#) as examples).

Finally, a new Board reporting process was agreed in June 2019, providing the CIVICUS Board with more systematic updates about progress against objectives. Among other things, two of the four Strategic Goals are subject for so-called Deep Dives at Board meetings every six months. A visualised overview of the above looks like this:



How does CIVICUS monitor progress against set objectives and what are lessons learnt?

CIVICUS' notable wins with regard to innovation, collaboration, and learning in 2018-2019 are outlined in the [Annual Report 2018-2019](#) which we suggest reading along with this report. We would like to highlight the following comprehensive successes and learnings from the reporting period:

- Strengthening 'the Power of Togetherness' with 594 members and partners of the alliance from 93 countries during International Civil Society Week (Serbia, April 2019), co-hosted by Civic Initiatives and the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (see more details in the [visualised evaluation of ICSW](#))
- Using a Primary Constituency approach in our Annual Constituency Survey (see blog and learnings [here](#))
- Launching of the [CIVICUS Solidarity Fund](#) in December 2018 (a member-led and member-resourced fund accessible to small formal and non-formal civil society organisations, individuals, and movements, that are contributing to transformational impact across the alliance) as a response to requests from the alliance

- Implementing a new annual planning process that includes member voices from the very start (see more details in the [narrative report](#))
- Improving our grant-making as part of the [Crisis Response Fund](#) (CRF) by simplifying the application process and making it available in all languages, and moving beyond a standardised reporting template towards more flexible options (*a summary of the CRF evaluation is shared with the Panel along with this report*)

LOOKING AHEAD:

From July to December 2019, CIVICUS is working with an external consultant to conduct a mid-term strategy review of its 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. While the final report will only be published along the time of this report submission, it can already be stated that the recommendations include five interdependent priorities going forwards: Coherence; Systems; Leadership; Simplicity; and Metamorphosis. A management response will be published in January 2020 and the next report will provide an update on the recommendations' uptake.

Finally, the European Commission evaluated our AGNA Global Learning Exchange programme in October 2018. Their recommendations included that CIVICUS analyse the causes of the existing under-spending and take measures to speed up the consumption of the available funds in order to ensure that the EU grant be utilised within the defined programme implementation period. A more ambitious activity plan is thus being implemented for 2019-2022. Moreover, the EC recommended that CIVICUS take specific measures to enhance the gender dimension of the programme. This was achieved by including a session about gender at the AGNA Annual General Meeting in June

2019 as well as conducting a workshop on diversity and inclusion issues with AGNA members in Cambodia in May 2019. (*The full EC evaluation is shared with the Independent Review Panel.*)



How does CIVICUS identify and prioritise stakeholders? How does CIVICUS ensure its partnerships are effective – maximising coordination and avoiding duplication? *(Cluster B, D1-D3)*

How does CIVICUS identify and prioritise stakeholders?

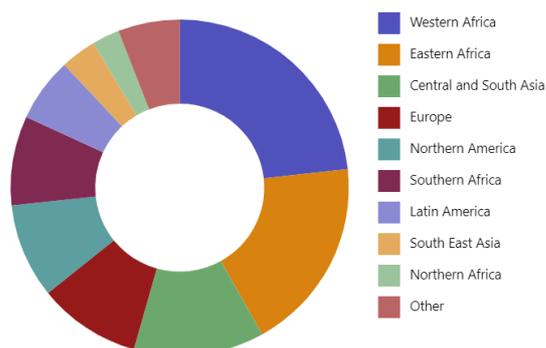
CIVICUS' primary mission is to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world. CIVICUS' definition of civil society is broad, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), activists, civil society coalitions and networks, protest and social movements, voluntary bodies, campaigning organisations, charities, faith-based groups, trade unions, and philanthropic foundations, among others. CIVICUS' membership is diverse, spanning a wide range of issues, sizes and organisation types.

CIVICUS is an open membership alliance which continuously grows and stands at 8,008 members in 175 countries as of 30 June 2019. The table below illustrates the current configuration of CIVICUS membership and changes since June 2016. The figures show a doubling of our overall membership over the last year, with a stable voting membership base (the drop in the number of voting members from 2017 to 2018 is due to changes in the membership policy and a more rigorous vetting process of members).

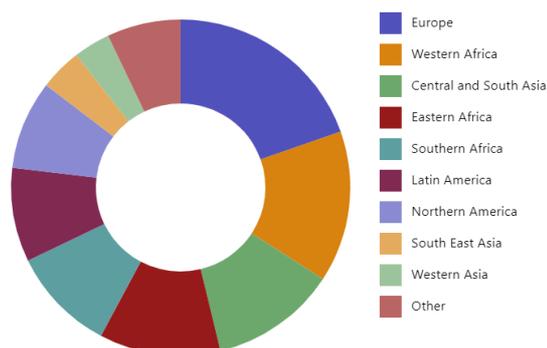
Membership categories	June 2016	June 2017	June 2018	June 2019
Total Voting:	217	172	105	206
Total Overall:	3,562	3,826	4,121	8,008
Countries covered:	176	172	167	175

Most of CIVICUS' membership is based in the Global South, with significant representation from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The charts below compare the proportions of total membership and voting members drawn from the various geographical regions.

CIVICUS Members by Sub-Region

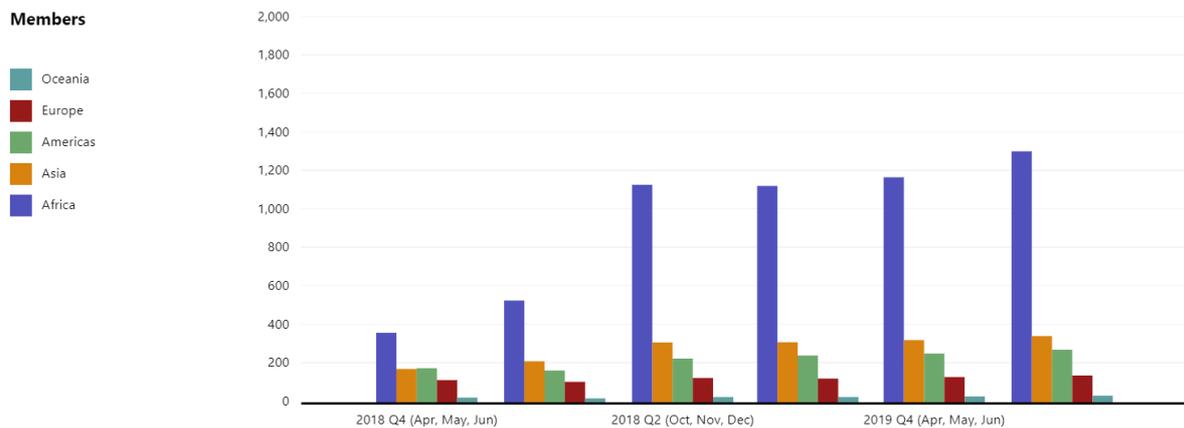


CIVICUS Voting Members by Sub-Region



The majority of members overall comes from Western and Eastern Africa; the majority of *voting* members comes from Europe. But while it remains an ongoing challenge that voting members are often from higher income countries not truly representing a global alliance, the new Member Engagement Strategy was able to address potential power imbalances and reduced this gap over the last year. As of June 2018, membership fees for voting members are optional for individuals and organisations with an income of less than US\$80,000.

Another aim was to increase the number of members under 30 years of age. In particular the [Goalkeeper Youth Action Accelerator programme](#) contributed to exceeding this target by far with lots of young individuals from the African continent joining CIVICUS:



Members meet once a year at CIVICUS' Annual General Meeting (AGM) which took place from 16th to 17th December 2018 (virtually and in Uruguay, see [agenda](#) and [outcomes](#)). The virtual AGM format was first tested in 2015 to be more inclusive of members across time zones and geographies who could not physically attend. However, while these efforts have enabled CIVICUS to engage more members, the quality of the engagement does not compare to a physical AGM. For this reason, CIVICUS utilised a hybrid format in 2018 that allowed both virtual and physical participation in a Board-led AGM. This proved to be successful and was iterated for the AGM in November 2019.

Members and other stakeholders also convene every 18 months as part of International Civil Society Week (ICSW) and aligned World Assembly. From 8th to 12th April 2019, 594 participants from 93 countries met in Belgrade, Serbia, to build connections for shared ideas, catalyse positive social change, exchange tools that enhance citizen action, and celebrate people power (read the [full summary report](#) for more details and outcomes and see a list of all [ICSW partners](#)).

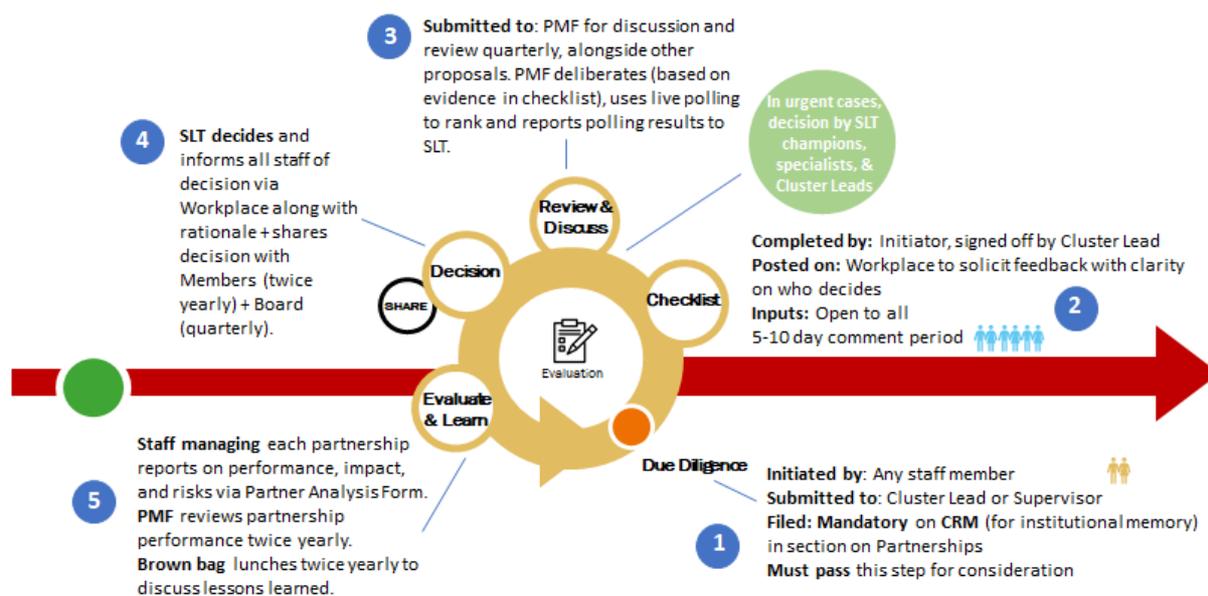


CIVICUS believes that the organisation and alliance are stronger when working towards the same goal together with other actors, whilst ensuring to not compete with or displace local partners. CIVICUS aims at supporting and complementing the work of local civil society through the organisation's resources and knowledge, regarding itself as a network and knowledge broker. CIVICUS continuously tries to bring local concerns and voices to a global level, as well as to bridge sectors and other differences to identify common goals and opportunities.

In terms of the selection of CIVICUS members, there are membership criteria (outlined in the renewed [Membership Policy](#)), a [Code of Conduct](#), and a verification process in place which ensure our accountability commitments. The process allows for individuals and registered and non-registered organisations to provide documentation that will help CIVICUS in assessing that they are real and credible actors (i.e. non-profit registration or audited financials) contributing to civic action and civil society strengthening in their respective contexts (i.e. an aligned vision to CIVICUS' Strategic Plan). The verification process also includes a standardised check form with referees and a review of the social media accounts (if applicable). During the reporting period only two applicants failed this verification process.

How does CIVICUS ensure its partnerships are effective – maximising coordination and avoiding duplication?

In terms of selection of participants and event partners, a checklist is in place which considers CIVICUS values, diversity and inclusion, potential for future collaboration, knowledge sharing, unique value-add of the partnership, and CIVICUS membership status. If CIVICUS offers financial support for participants, priority is given to voting members. Moreover, participants must have agreed to the CIVICUS convening principles and share the organisation's strategic vision. A new format is currently tested how the Programme Management Forum is involved in the selection of new partners as outlined below. Future reports will include an update on this implementation process. *(The Due Diligence Form and full Partner Checklist are shared with the Independent Review Panel along with this report submission.)*



CIVICUS works in partnership with multiple organisations and entities and these details have been published in previous Accountability Reports. This report would like to highlight the following global partnerships in 2018-2019 which are representative of the diversity of CIVICUS' partnerships and selected based on their relevance to the four Strategic Goals¹:

- Accountable Now – Founding and Board Member
- Action for Sustainable Development – Founding Member and Secretariat (which was handed over to Global Call to Action Against Poverty, GCAP)
- Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA) – Secretariat
- Bridge 47 – Board Member

¹ A full list of partnerships was created in January 2019 as part of a partnership mapping, including 27 key relationships, 25 external forums, and 20 internal forums. This also helps to maximise coordination with other actors operating in the same space as recommended by the Independent Review Panel on the 2016-2017 report.

- Civic Space Initiative with Article 19, ICNL and World Movement for Democracy – Implementing Partner
- Community of Democracies – Member, International Steering Committee
- Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations – Board Member
- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Dialogue and Dissent Program – Strategic Partner
- Fair Share of Women Leaders – Action Circle Member
- Fight Inequality Alliance – Founding Member
- Forum on Information & Democracy – Founding and Board Member
- Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data – Founding Partner
- Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund – Consortium Partner
- Multi-stakeholder Task Team for CSO Development Effectiveness & Enabling Environment – Member
- Open Government Partnership (OGP) – Various Initiatives
- Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) – [Network Partner for 2030 Agenda](#)
- UNCAC Coalition – Steering Committee Representative
- UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) – Advisory Board Member
- UN Development Cooperation Forum – Member, Advisory Group
- UN Economic and Social Council – General Consultative Status
- Vuka! Coalition for Civic Action – Secretariat and Ally
- World Economic Forum – Member of various initiatives
- Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support (WINGS) – Board Member

Examples of working in partnership

As part of the [Civic Space Initiative](#) (CSpl), CIVICUS, ARTICLE19, International Centre for Non-Profit Law (ICNL), and the World Movement for Democracy (WMD) continue to have a fruitful dialogue and exchange of information. In December 2018, the [UN Human Rights Committee decided to draft a General Comment on Article 21](#) (freedom of peaceful assembly) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Committee only looks at one article every two years so this is a very impactful outcome. Prior to that achievement, CSpl had hired a researcher at the University of East Anglia to develop the necessary legal reason for the need for this general comment to take place. In addition, CSpl partners successfully requested a private briefing with the Committee to which they invited Clement Voule (United Nations Special Rapporteur on Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association) to speak to the Committee while CSpl partners stated their case for the urgent need for this comment.

In addition to institutional partnerships, CIVICUS has also benefited from programmatic partnerships on accountability issues in 2018-2019. As part of the [Resilient Roots initiative](#), CIVICUS is testing how primary constituency accountability is leading to greater resilience of civil society organisations – together with Accountable Now, Keystone Accountability, Instituto de Comunicacion y Desarrollo, and 14 pilot organisations. Further, CIVICUS is conducting quarterly NPS surveys within this partnership; one is about the evaluation of this partnership, both within the core team and with pilots. For example, this NPS started from -27 and went up to 39 in the most recent survey.

LOOKING AHEAD:

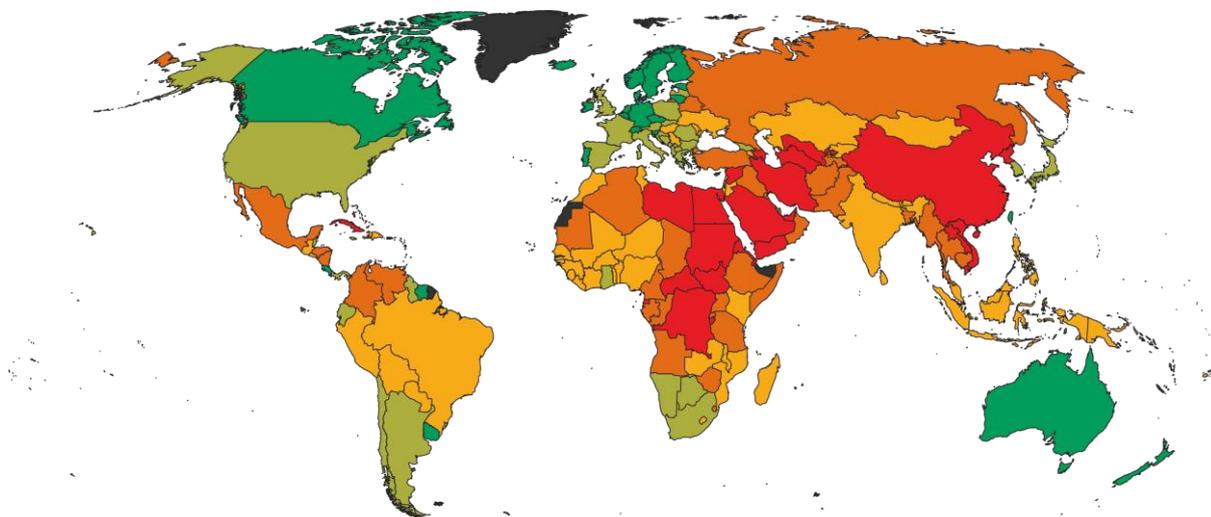
In 2017-2018, the Geneva team developed a strategy for Geneva engagement (outside of the United Nations Human Rights Council) for the interaction with CIVICUS members and partners within the framework of the new Strategic Plan. This allowed for more meaningful engagement as it goes beyond engaging on specific issues but looks at engagement through the lens of all CIVICUS’ Strategic Goals. This approach is now being extended towards a whole UN strategy including CIVICUS’ New York hub.

Stated reasons for this increase and the success of the partnership include: The co-design and the adaptive learning model the initiative followed, with lots of revisions, bespoke feedback, course correction, and the measurements partners did base-lining and end-lining to help partners and pilots assess their progress.

These are just two examples that helped CIVICUS to achieve progress on its current Strategic Plan and more partnership examples can be found throughout this report.

Amplifying partner voices

Throughout 2018-2019 CIVICUS worked to share knowledge, spark dialogue and provide spaces for the organisation's members' and partners' voices to be heard through a range of communication channels, including the e-CIVICUS, thematic newsletters, mailers, media and the CIVICUS website. Social media continues to be a key medium for connecting civil society and sharing information useful to our network.

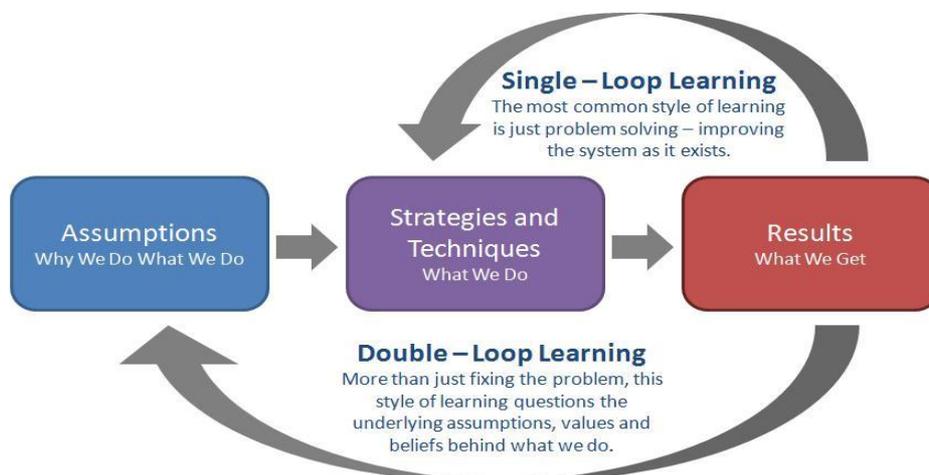


The [CIVICUS Monitor](#), a civic space tracking tool, was launched in October 2016. In April 2017, the Monitor expanded to full coverage of UN-recognised States, providing an assessment and rating of civic space conditions in 196 countries. By 30 June 2019, the Monitor had published a total of 1,175 civic space updates on over 150 countries. Updates, provided through a network of [20 regional research partners](#), reveal the current reality of civic space from the perspective of people based in the regions and countries where civic space is being contested. Regular workshops with these research partners take place which focus on research and writing skills as well as advocacy opportunities. However, the last one was only from 31 July to 1 August 2019 in Accra, Ghana, in collaboration with the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), so outside this reporting period. CIVICUS Monitor data is now routinely included in CIVICUS knowledge and analysis outputs, including [People Power Under Attack Report](#) (published for the first time in November 2018), State of Civil Society Reports and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submissions.

The [2018 State of Civil Society Report](#) was published in November 2018. This report kicked off a series of dialogues around 'Reimagining Democracy'; a synthesis of these dialogues is published in the report. In addition, since 2017, we implemented a monthly Year in Review which looks back at the key stories for civil society in the year; the major events that civil society was involved in, responded to and was impacted by. Other reports published on civil society conditions are listed in the Annual Report 2018-2019.

How is stakeholder engagement reflected in CIVICUS' decision-making and how does it contribute to change? (Cluster A, B1, C1; Cluster B, E1-E3; Cluster C J4-J5)

How is stakeholder engagement reflected in CIVICUS's decision-making? Based on CIVICUS' Utilisation-focused Evaluation approach and the organisation's Accountability Framework, impact reflections on the Strategic Plan 2017-2022 include a triple-feedback loop which involves "learning how to learn":



CIVICUS' commitments to closing feedback loops (see also a [video by Resilient Roots](#) on this issue) would, of course, not be possible without active stakeholder engagement.

Given CIVICUS' unique positioning as a membership association of CSOs and activists, CIVICUS seeks to initiate programmes and interventions that benefit the whole of civil society. Therefore, CIVICUS uses these six core principles to help ensure key stakeholder participation. These are:

- Working as an alliance in everything CIVICUS does
- Working as a network with multiple hubs and connections
- Taking a rights-based approach to citizen participation
- Working in partnership with others
- Connecting the local with the global
- Measuring and demonstrating impact

CIVICUS actively invites feedback from a multitude of stakeholders through various channels and at different moments. Internally, staff can raise concerns or feedback via the Whistle-blower Policy and Grievance Policy which have clearly laid out responsibilities, time frames and escalation steps (both are part of the Staff Handbook and available upon request for Accountable Now). As with all CIVICUS policies, these policies were opened for staff comments before presentation to the CIVICUS Board. Plans to amend both policies to allow for anonymity via submission of complaints on SharePoint (rather than in person or via email) were postponed as part of an overarching audit of all staff policies in 2018-2019. There were five formal grievances or complaints raised in 2018-2019 which were thoroughly investigated and dealt with according to

LOOKING AHEAD:

The Annual Constituency Survey (previously called Membership Satisfaction Survey) conducted in October 2019 showed a very good Net Promoter Score of 42 out of a representative sample of 705 responses. This points towards a satisfied membership (the second year in a row), at the mid-term of the Strategic Plan 2017-2022.

LOOKING AHEAD:

A mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2017-2022 was conducted from July to December 2019. Members had the possibility to shape the report design and content via the Annual Constituency Survey 2019, interviews and focus group discussions, and to provide feedback on the preliminary findings during a Strategy Workshop in Johannesburg (November 2019) as well as through the online AGM engagement. The final review report will be shared with all members and the public at the end of December 2019.

the processes outlined in the policies. Finally, staff can also seek advice and talk to members of the staff-led Diversity and Inclusion Group.

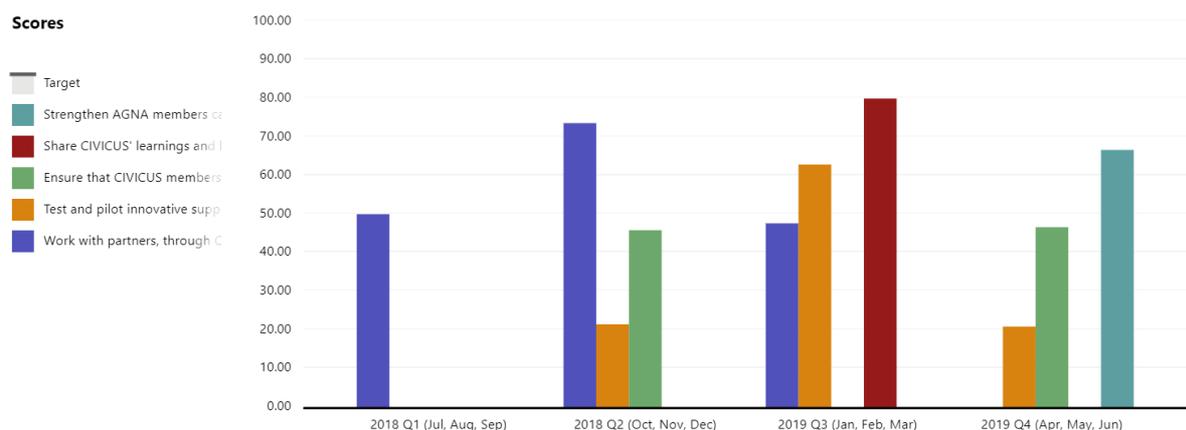
In terms of external feedback, nearly two years after the approval of the [Feedback Response Policy](#) by the CIVICUS Board in January 2018, we can now identify first trends with regard to the facilitation of external complaints from members, partners and the general public. These trends are elaborated on in the next section of this report. Generally, complaints can be filed [online](#) (ensuring anonymity if needed) or via feedback@civicus.org. Based on the feedback received, CIVICUS ensured easier ways to get in contact on the

CIVICUS website, now publishes salary levels with job advertisements, and reviewed the organisation's sub-granting procedures.

Members and partners are furthermore invited to provide regular inputs via the AGM, Annual Constituency Survey, post-event feedback forms, focus group discussions, project evaluations and the mid-term strategy review.

How does CIVICUS contribute to change?

An internal example of how staff shaped decision-making processes is reflected in the setup of the internal Failures Club which regularly shares lessons learnt among staff to improve CIVICUS' work – for example, applying the Net Promoter Score² (NPS) method among all event participation surveys. Below, you see a selection of NPS results from the 2018-2019 period, with particular high scores from a diversity and inclusion workshop (red bar), overall great satisfaction from SPEAK! event partners throughout the campaign phase (blue bars), and somewhat lower scores in the first and last Goalkeepers Youth Action Accelerator meetings (orange bars):



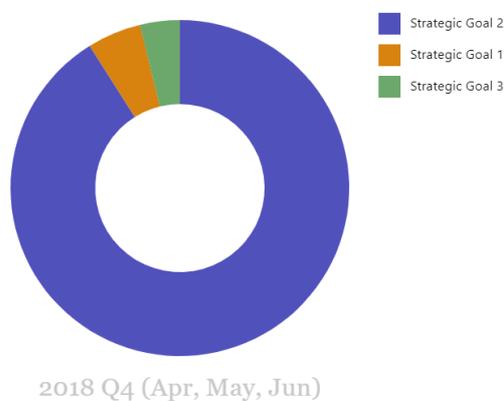
CIVICUS is confident that having well-designed and responsive mechanisms for handling external and internal feedback (including suggestions, complaints, or positive feedback) will improve the quality of its work, enhance trust and confidence of stakeholders, identify areas of work which need strengthening, and ensure that CIVICUS learns from feedback provided

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_Promoter

through such a process. Please see [Annex II](#) for a visual illustration of CIVICUS' various feedback procedures.

Member Engagement

The various ways how Members get engaged in CIVICUS activities can be accessed through our ["Members in Action" website](#) and the [new Membership Welcome Pack](#). Seven members cancelled their membership in the reporting period and CIVICUS terminated three memberships within that year. In addition, 340 members asked to be unsubscribed from the mailing list but remain members. The Membership and Networks team is investigating the reasons for this. While having increased from 30% to 45%, voting member participation at the AGM remains low, despite being a core responsibility for them. One of the primary motivations behind revisions to the membership structure was to convince long-standing partners to join the alliance as members so that our membership better reflects our mission, vision and strategy – and so that CIVICUS stakeholders have a greater say in the organisation's decision-making. One of the changes was to make some benefits accessible to members only (e.g. becoming part in the Resilient Roots or Goalkeepers Youth Action Accelerator initiatives).



A network analysis conducted in June 2018 pointed to the fact that the majority of engaged members come through established networks such as AGNA or Innovation for Change. Since CIVICUS' Strategic Goal 2 focuses on becoming a truly membership-driven alliance, it is not surprising that the majority of membership engagement happened under this Goal. However, in order to mainstream this approach, more initiatives have been created or deepened under Goal 1 and Goal 3 since and we see fruitful results, for example within the Resilient Roots project partners under Goal 3.

Through specific blogs from members, we aim to have members be the voice of CIVICUS more directly. Moreover, the Customer Relationship Management system (rolled out to all staff in July 2020) keeps track of relationships / engagements per CIVICUS constituent with the Secretariat so that we can draw conclusions and target engagement efforts accordingly.

Other examples of how CIVICUS constituents' feedback is captured during events include: (1) participatory facilitation methodologies that elicit member/partner perspectives, (2) ample time for sharing and reflection, and (3) formal and informal spaces for facilitated networking and knowledge-sharing. CIVICUS' constituents' interests and priorities were also used in February 2019 to shape the organisation's annual plan for 2019-2020 (see [blog post](#) on how we enable members to truly drive the CIVICUS alliance).

Although CIVICUS has mechanisms and processes in place for stakeholders to engage, the organisation is constantly working to ensure that these mechanisms are accessible to more diverse stakeholders, e.g. making feedback forms available in different languages or providing not only one communications vehicle (e.g. email) for people to engage but also using other safe means for stakeholders to provide input. CIVICUS continues to strive to ensure that un/underheard voices are amplified through these efforts.

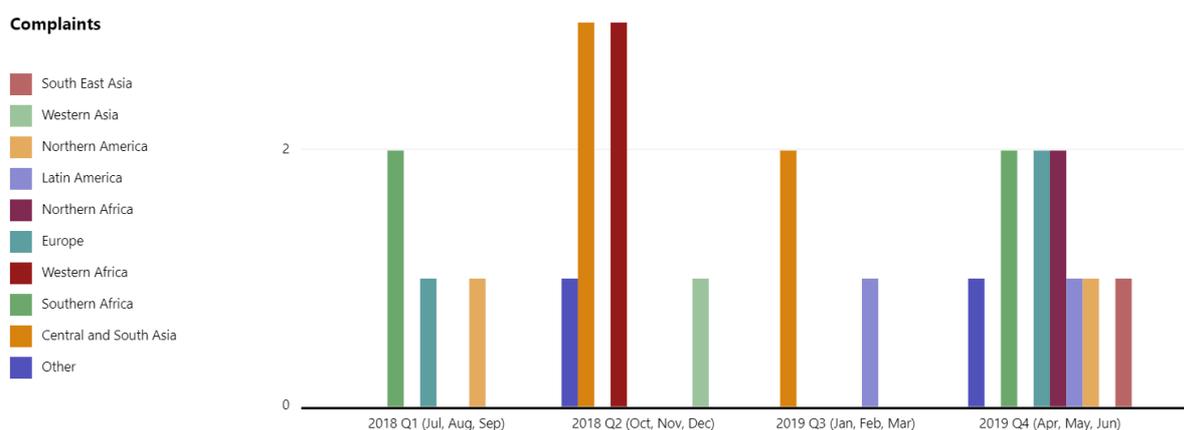
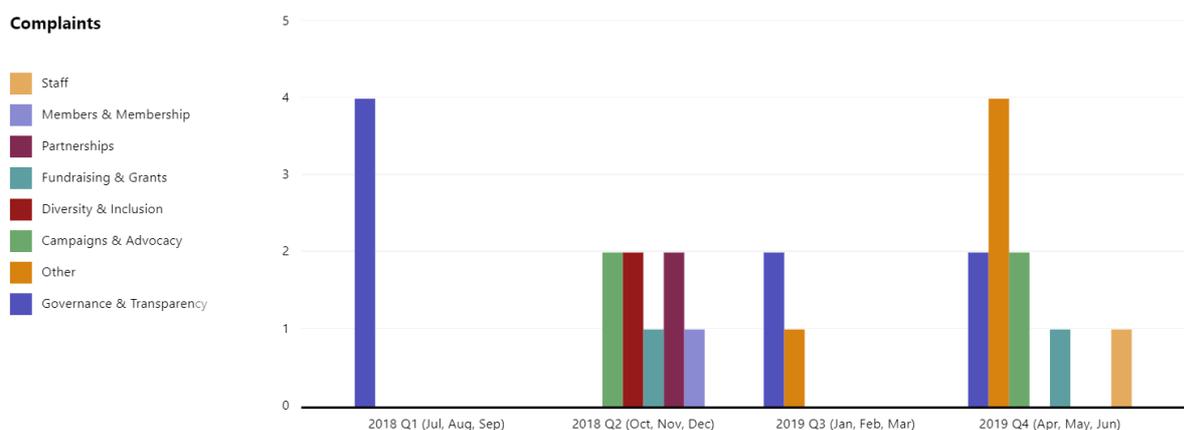
How does CIVICUS respond to stakeholder feedback? Which complaints did CIVICUS receive in 2018-2019 and how were these followed-up? *(Cluster B, E3; Cluster C, J3)*

How does CIVICUS respond to stakeholder feedback?

CIVICUS' [Feedback Response Policy](#) and [online submission form](#) were approved and implemented in early 2018. In 2018-2019 we received 25 complaints through this form or via email which were mostly on our transparency and governance or on our advocacy work and campaigns. Overall, the regions from where complaints were submitted are quite balanced across the globe.

Which complaints did CIVICUS receive in 2018-2019 and how were these followed up?

All complaints received were responded to within seven days, in line with our Feedback Response Policy and Internal Feedback Response Procedures. The average resolution rate in 2018-2019 was at 89%, bearing in mind that some submissions received were spam and/or inflammatory attacks.



Occasionally, critical comments were posted on Twitter or Facebook where CIVICUS' advocacy work and statements are shared. Those from "internet trolls" were disregarded and in other cases the Communications Cluster and Advocacy & Campaigns Cluster clarified the issue with the respective commentator.

Relatedly, CIVICUS participated in Accountable Now's Accountable Now challenge on improving its feedback and complaints mechanism. As a result, we conducted a tailored feedback training in February 2019 to Cluster Leads and colleagues responsible to handle feedback and complaints. This feedback training was later extended to Resilient Roots

partners and SPEAK! Champions in English, French, and Spanish. Moreover, we translated the Feedback Response Policy and online form into [French](#) and [Spanish](#) so that alliance members can submit feedback in other languages than English.

Closing the feedback loop

Staff and partners conduct post-evaluation surveys for all CIVICUS events and the post-event report or responses from those surveys and actions taken thereof are shared with participants. An example is the evaluation of International Civil Society Week that took place in April 2019. Recommendations included strengthening the ‘relationship building’ element in between ICSWs, making participation even more inclusive and diverse, or the need for stricter time management (a feedback area which CIVICUS which was commented on in previous meetings, too). In addition, CIVICUS is applying the Net Promoter Score (NPS) methodology to its events as explained earlier in this report and sharing results with respondents (e.g. results for the Annual Constituency Survey were shared on the website and with the alliance).

How is CIVICUS strengthening capacities that last beyond immediate interventions? *(Cluster B, E4)*

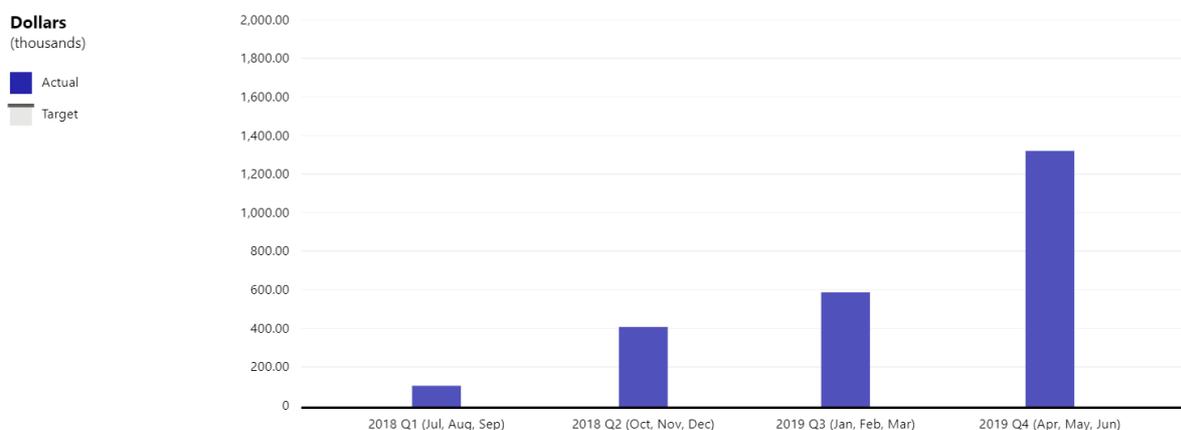
Good practice area in 2016-2017

For CIVICUS, strengthening people and partners capacities means developing self-efficacy and institutional strengths in a networked approach that last beyond an immediate intervention. In addition to the long-term capacity strengthening that occurs as a result of participation in the wider CIVICUS alliance, CIVICUS enables long-term capacity strengthening through sub-granting and supporting civil society resourcing.

“We have benefited a lot especially in crafting our progress tracking tools, the most powerful (...) but simple tool I have ever used in monitoring progress of my work.” *(Goalkeepers Advocate 2019)*

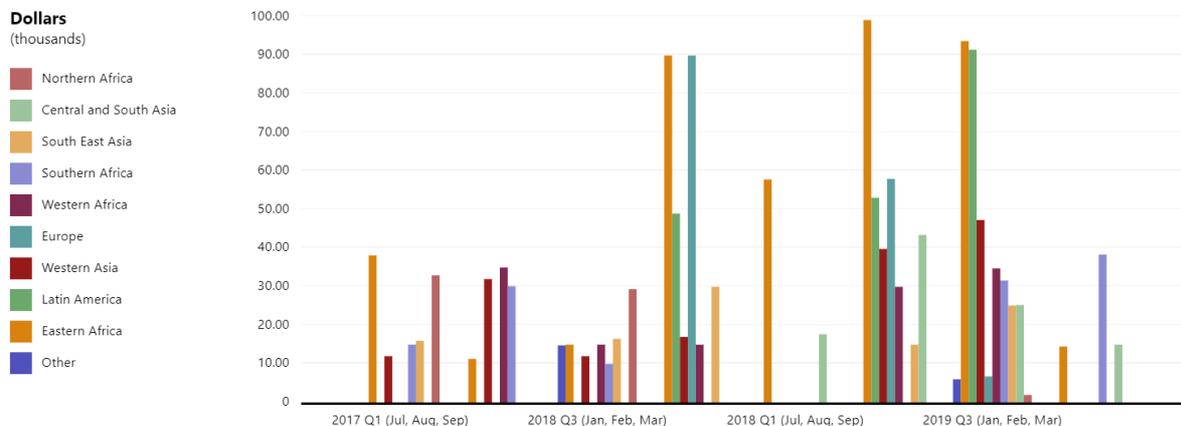
Sub-Granting and Civil Society Resourcing

CIVICUS’ programmatic work at the national and regional levels is primarily implemented by our members and partners, whom we support with financial and technical assistance. From July 2018 to June 2019, CIVICUS provided US\$1,326,199 in sub-grants to around 95 CSOs or activists around the world.

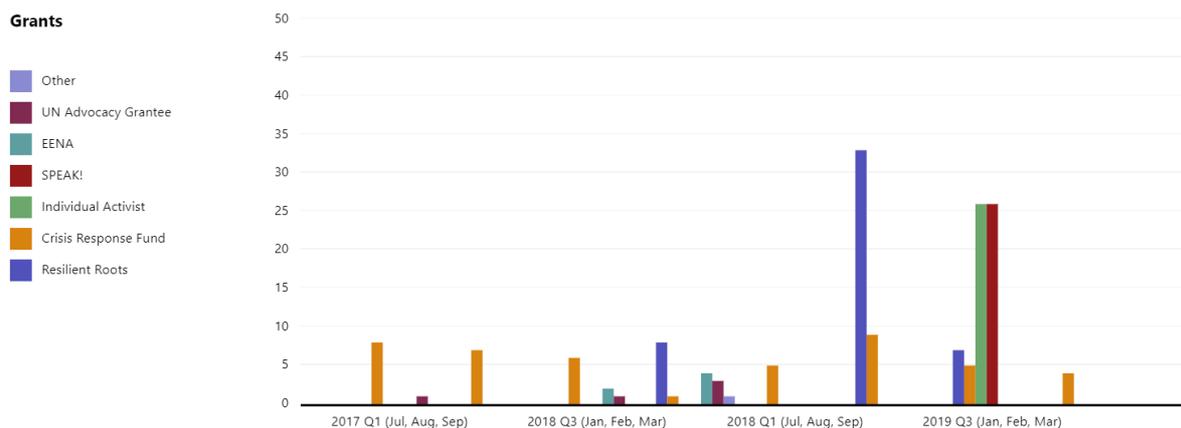


The chart below shows the regional distribution of our sub-grant disbursements. As one can see from this chart, the majority of funding went into Eastern Africa, followed by Western Africa, Western Asia and Latin America. While there was a focus on sub-grants to Asia and

the Middle East in 2016-2017 (Q1), initiatives like the Goalkeepers Youth Action Accelerator contributed to more funding in Africa in the past reporting period. More generally though, the change in funding patterns is a result of the changes in the larger environment. Looking ahead into 2019-2020, a new *Consortium to Promote Human Rights, Civic Freedoms and Media Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* was just funded by Swedish Sida and started in October 2019. This program will specifically work with media activists and journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa.



The majority of grants were provided within the Resilient Roots and Crisis Response Fund initiatives (plus Goalkeepers as included in the green 'Individual Activists' bar):



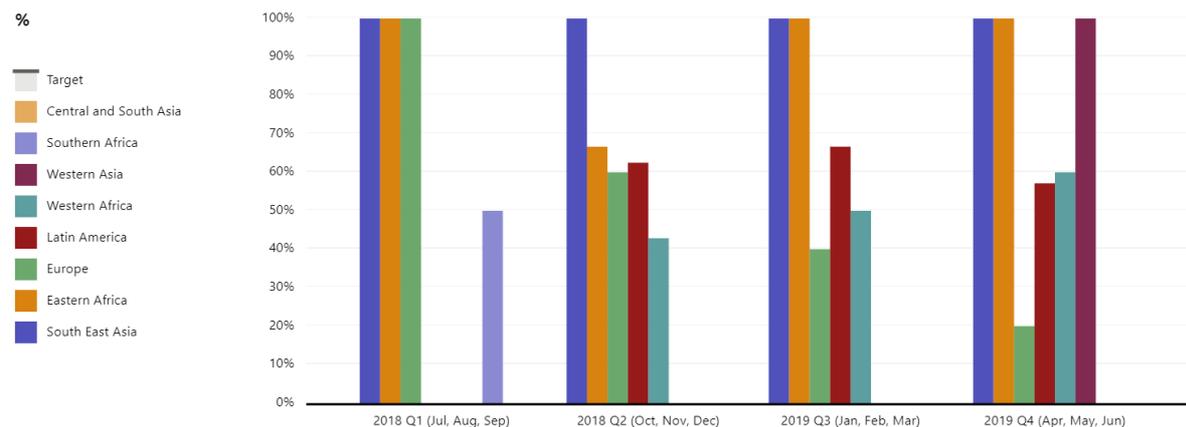
Capacity Strengthening

Generally, CIVICUS convenes and brings civil society together to learn from each other, network and build capacity. By doing this, CIVICUS does not aim to position itself as the “expert” rather acknowledges the immense knowledge situated within each CSO and the power of bringing diverse sets of knowledge and capacity together to collectively drive change across the sector.

During 2018, [DataShift](#) embedded its learnings about using the data process to strengthen relationship and trust into the global [SPEAK!](#) campaign designed to bring communities together across lines of division long term. The DataShift learnings included being mindful that data processes that do not include the communities from the beginning and through to action are often perceived negatively and as “[extractive](#)”. Therefore, the team developed the [SDG Indicator Participatory Workshop 16.7.2](#) on Inclusive and Responsive Decision-Making that supports citizens to both monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also to support their ability to use the data and take actions in their communities themselves. We also embedded [short participant surveys](#) to increase the amount of direct feedback from campaign events. In addition, we practiced “data minimalisation” and basic data and digital security to further implement our “do no harm” policy. In addition, many of the 2019 SPEAK! events

helped birth new local and national movements (e.g. in Nepal or Mexico). These and other outcomes and lessons learnt can be found in the [SPEAK! 2019 Highlights Report](#).

The above is a successful example of how one CIVICUS initiative developed into another one and how CIVICUS' work contributes to strengthening capacities beyond a project's lifespan. Another example (see also visualisation below) comes from the Resilient Roots initiative who tracked the percentage of project partners developing their capacities via Resilient Roots peer learning activities. As expected, capacity strengthening is particularly high in the beginning when new tools and skills are being shared, tested and applied. There is, however, a decrease over time (in particular in Europe where capacities might have been higher from the start) until most project partners identified more outcomes and increased capacities again towards the end of the project.



CS Resourcing

As part of CIVICUS' capacity strengthening approach, we also work to share various models and resourcing strategies that support resilience, especially in contexts with restricted civil society spaces. That is done through connecting CIVICUS members, especially those with little or no experience in resource mobilisation, with opportunities for dedicated training and coaching (see more details [here](#), as well as a recent CIVICUS reports [exploring aspects of the resourcing landscape for CSOs in Latin America](#) or [documenting how grassroots groups and activists based in the global south can mobilise adequate support](#)).

How is CIVICUS ensuring diversity and inclusion in its Secretariat and programmes? *(Cluster A, C3-C4)*



Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) has become a hot topic within civil society in recent years. Knowing there is no 'people power' without true principles of diversity of inclusion, many in the sector are taking a step back and evaluating how this core principle is being integrated into programmes and operations. The CIVICUS alliance sees the diversity and inclusion journey as one that civil society must embark on as a collective. CSOs and CIVICUS members may be at different stages but we must encourage each other to push forward and engage in Dynamic Accountability. This area of focus is forever expanding so there is no specific end point that

we are striving for. Instead, we must ensure that we go beyond surface level commitments to tackle institutional structures from all perspectives. Throughout the year, CIVICUS has also had many moments to learn and moments where we implemented previous learnings. Here are some of the highlights:

- CIVICUS launched the [Social Inclusion Toolkit](#) in 2018 to help members assess their work on social inclusion beyond gender and age.
- A delegation of CIVICUS members from across the globe convened in December 2018 in Montevideo, Uruguay, at the Global Learning Exchange to: i) discuss what diversity and inclusion mean within the civil society sector, ii) identify obstacles that organisations and individual activists face, and iii) share best practices and tips (see more details in [outcome document](#) including our definitions of diversity and inclusion).
- The CIVICUS Secretariat launched its own commitment to diversity and inclusion by publishing the [CIVICUS Diversity and Inclusion Statement](#) that went through each of the main functions of the Secretariat and articulated how that function would commit to ensure diversity and inclusion.
- CIVICUS' added programmatic value is the link between civic space and gender equality. As such, CIVICUS always works to strengthen the feminist movements' rights to speak up. In March 2019, CIVICUS' advocacy team published a [report with special focus on Women Human Rights Defenders \(WHRDs\)](#). CIVICUS also provided support to women human rights defenders to speak about civic space restrictions related to gender at the March 2019 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) meeting.
- CIVICUS members from the Global Learning Exchange, as well as interested members from ICSW and the [Youth Assembly](#), then took these conversations online and contributed to a brainstorm document. Using an online Google document, questions were posed on what kind of space was needed, what was the purpose, what were the long-term objectives, what is the best way to run such a space, is a structure necessary etc. Members then had the opportunity to enter their input and interact with each other's input to add on and track the progression of the conversation. These conversations led to launching an online platform in July 2019 (please see further below).
- In May 2019, CIVICUS facilitated a peer exchange learning experience in Cambodia for its AGNA members on incorporating diversity and inclusion within their organisation and networks. This workshop focused on unpacking concepts (e.g. diversity, inclusion, intersectionality and power), looked at the benefits of diversity and inclusion within civil society, analysed case studies within the sector, and worked on mapping the different areas within an organisation that could require a diversity and inclusion strategy.

Further, CIVICUS' internal Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG) collaborates in safe space to share ideas, concerns and recommendations, and brainstorm constructive solutions to pressing challenges around gender, diversity and inclusion. It is made up of 12 staff members representing different teams who meet every other week. In 2018-2019, the DIG focused on implementing the audit recommendations received in 2017 (including the hiring of a full-time D&I Coordinator), held focus group discussions to update some of the feedback surrounding the audit recommendations, and helped HR to update an organisational Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (*shared with the Independent Review Panel separately*) which includes explanations and

LOOKING AHEAD:

In July 2019, the [Diversity & Inclusion Group for Networking and Action \(DIGNA\)](#) was launched to bring together change-makers and thought leaders passionate about strengthening an inclusive and diverse civil society – including CIVICUS members, civil society organisations, groups, and activists, and their allies. This working group seeks to understand, conceptualise and identify innovative practices on what D&I can look like within different thematic areas and operating models.

examples of what does and does not constitute sexual harassment, consequences of unacceptable behaviour, and reporting procedures.

CIVICUS [Youth Action Team](#) is an action body of CIVICUS on youth and youth related issues. The purpose of the Youth Action Team, currently consisting of nine members who each serve for a three-year term, is to mainstream youth and youth issues into CIVICUS' programmes and activities and to champion youth engagement and civic space. Institutionally, the Youth Action Team will interface with CIVICUS Board on specific strategic questions, and be able to communicate via the Secretariat on any suggested youth programming or proposals that should be considered CIVICUS priorities.

Finally, in terms of internal processes that support diversity and inclusion, CIVICUS' Events Principles focus on issues such as gender balance, accessibility, awareness of religious holidays, or translations into multiple languages (e.g. via the app Interprefy which was successfully applied at the AGNA AGM in June 2018). In addition, disaggregations of nationality, age and gender of members, participants, authors, partners etc. are also mandatory requirements for CIVICUS' data collection on DevResults. This will help to build a more rigorous evidence base over time and to improve the diversity and inclusion of our programs.

How does CIVICUS improve its environmental footprint? *(Cluster A, B1, C5)*

Good practice area in 2016-2017



CIVICUS considers respect for the environment central to its ethos and has demonstrated this belief through several simple but practical steps in the Johannesburg office, such as:

- Recycling paper and sorting waste;
- Using motion detector lights in low traffic parts of the office;
- Using energy efficient bulbs, ensuring that lights are turned off when offices close;
- Purchasing strictly energy efficient appliances (e.g. a new eco-friendly low energy rating dishwasher) and being efficient in our use of water; and
- Using locally manufactured furniture

As per annual procedure, CIVICUS updated its [Environmental Policy](#) in June 2019. As a complement to that effort, a staff task force created additional guidelines on how to minimise our organisational environmental footprint. We seek to act as role models and lead the way

by encouraging greater environmental consciousness amongst our staff and within the wider alliance. Environmental awareness trainings are a core part of our Environmental Policy.

Events

Convening is a central component of CIVICUS' work, arranging for activities that bring together people from all over the world. CIVICUS' commitment to respecting the environment requires that staff and partners understand the impact of these events on the planet and take accompanying mitigating measures. Consequently, CIVICUS tries to hold alternative local and virtual events when possible, to keep meetings paperless (e.g. conference app instead of agendas or participants list, whiteboards instead of flip charts), and to contribute to carbon off-setting programmes, amongst other responses.

In addition, all CIVICUS-led events must adhere to a set of Event Principles, including sustainability, which means being environmentally conscious and minimising harm to the planet. CIVICUS does not carry out rigorous environmental assessments as part of the risk assessment for events and campaigns; however, greenhouse gas emissions related to flights or the availability of local resourcing are taken into consideration when searching for a location or venue.

Inclusion	Ensuring the people we serve are represented in our events
Equality	Reflecting gender equality and non-discrimination in our events
Diversity	Bringing together diverse perspectives to discuss complex problems
Participation	Providing space for event attendees to engage in meaningful dialogue
Transparency	Sharing our successes <i>and</i> failures so that we contribute to mutual learning
Sustainability	Being environmentally conscious and minimising harm to the planet

CO2 Emission Data (in metric tonnes)

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Air Travel ³	119,400		657,750	2369,015	2220,942	1234,930
Electricity consumption ⁴	39,500		77,630	180,012	223,656	193,380
Gas consumption	0,212					
Other	41,790					
TOTAL	200,902	526,200	735,380	2549,028	2444,598	1428,310

Since 2015-2016, CIVICUS is reporting more coherently (e.g. air travel including flights booked for partners and participants, not only for staff; electricity consumption in all CIVICUS offices, not only in Johannesburg, *see footnote references for more information*). 2017-2018 saw a particular peak due to International Civil Society Week happening in Fiji in December 2017 which caused high CO2 emissions in relations to long-distance flights to the Pacific.

CIVICUS' largest CO2 contributions continue to be related to flights which is unavoidable due to the global nature of CIVICUS' work. However, we were able to decrease our environmental footprint in 2018-2019 thanks to a new Travel Management System (Diversity Travel) and more considerations around long-distance travel for staff and partners.

³ 2016-17 data also includes air travel CIVICUS booked for its members and partners - not only for staff as in previous years.

⁴ CIVICUS includes data for employees based in the Johannesburg, DC, Geneva, London, and NYC offices based on an average electricity consumption per employee from online energy efficiency indicators and based on the maximum number of employees' consumption per year: <http://g20-energy-efficiency.enerdata.net/indicators/unit-electricity-consumption-of-services-per-employee.html>

How is CIVICUS' advocacy work rooted in human rights and do-no-harm principles? How is it based on the views of the affected people? (Cluster A, C2-C4; Cluster B, F1-F2)

Good practice area in 2016-2017

How is CIVICUS' advocacy work rooted in human rights and do-no-harm principles?

As a matter of practice, CIVICUS applies rigorous procedures to enable a thorough evidence base, grounded in local voices to inform the organisation's advocacy positions – e.g. meaningful stakeholder consultation and partner feedback, research, situation analyses, management monitoring, bi-annual reporting processes, publications, and corrective adjustments after external critique. All positions taken are grounded in CIVICUS' values. CIVICUS' advocacy work includes statements, papers, interviews as well as submissions as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. CIVICUS also enables national civil society representatives to participate in discussion at international and regional multilateral institutions. It is integral to CIVICUS' approach that all of this work is done jointly with members and local partners and CIVICUS' positions are always based on a "sense check" with voices on the ground. CIVICUS' advocacy work is thus co-created in partnerships and published with mutual consent. The intention is always to have the national member or partner's voice feature centrally. In addition, CIVICUS does not speak on other people's behalf. Wherever possible, civil society representatives are supported to speak for themselves. For example, when human rights defenders are invited to the UN Human Rights Council sessions or sessions of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, opportunities are enabled for them to have their own voices directly heard using CIVICUS' access.

How is it based on the views of the affected people?

TOP 10 GLOBAL CIVIC SPACE VIOLATIONS



Based on analysis of 1,433 civic space updates published on the CIVICUS Monitor since 24 October 2016. The numbers above represent the number of times this violation was referenced in one report. Based on this we see that attacks on journalists are referenced in over one quarter of all reports published on the CIVICUS Monitor in this period.

calls for action in the 111 countries, out of 196, that are seriously restricting people's fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, and also celebrates progress – in Ethiopia, where political prisoners have been released, restrictions lifted and legal reform processes begun, and in Canada, Ecuador and The Gambia.

In developing policy positions, CIVICUS will either proactively seek advice from a local partner on the political context or a partner will contact CIVICUS directly for support on a joint statement. The latter was the case with [Cambodian CSOs on the release of land activist and](#)

Findings from CIVICUS' main analysis tools – the annual [State of the Civil Society reports](#) and [CIVICUS Monitor](#) – are developed by seeking inputs from CSOs and networks working on the ground, e.g. via [Democracy Dialogues](#). They include quotes and data from partners where possible. In many instances, CIVICUS reaches out to national civil societies via umbrella organisations such as the AGNA network. In addition, Monitor research partners built on their research in 2018 to inform a report: [People Power Under Attack](#). The report makes

[human rights defender Tep Vanny](#) (August 2018). Moreover, CIVICUS conducts interviews with local civil society leaders to amplify their voices. Examples include an interview on the [mass protests against the Extradition Bill in Hong Kong](#) (with Wong Yik-mo, vice convener of the Civil Human Rights Front, June 2019) or on the [initiative to legalise abortion in Argentina](#) (with Edurne Cárdenas, a lawyer at Centre for Legal and Social Studies, January 2019).

In drafting Universal Periodic Review submissions, CIVICUS partners with local organisations to publish jointly. An example of such is the [Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review with the Ligue des Droits \(Democratic Republic of Congo\)](#) as part of the 33rd Session of the UPR Working Group (October 2018). However, sometimes partners do not want their name or logo on the joint paper because this might put them in danger, or they prefer an individual parallel submission for strategic reasons.

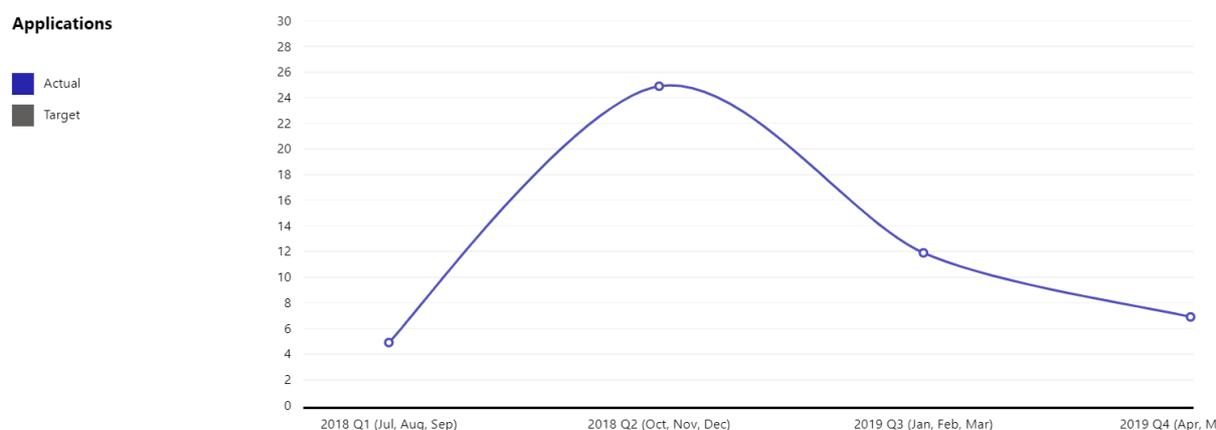
Do-no-harm is a priority within our partnerships and stakeholder engagements as well as advocacy and campaigning which is why CIVICUS goes to great lengths as elaborated above to seek local inputs. However, as part of the SPEAK! campaign 2019, one of the campaign partners in Tanzania was threatened due to this specific engagement and CIVICUS is thus currently reviewing our internal do-no-harm procedures to do better, which will also minimise negative impact on our stakeholders as suggested by the Independent Review Panel for the 2016-2017 report.

Further, all CIVICUS members are required to abide by the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Notably, CIVICUS uses the international human rights framework as a benchmark, e.g. when commenting on a new law that is not in line with those principles.

Occasionally, critical comments will be posted on Twitter or Facebook where CIVICUS' advocacy work and statements are shared. We have also received online feedback submissions asking CIVICUS to become more active on certain advocacy issues. Those comments from "internet trolls" are disregarded and in other cases the Advocacy Cluster will engage in a clarification or dialogue with the respective commentator or complainant.

Feedback

Generally, CIVICUS receives positive feedback on its research and advocacy work. For example, the German CSO Bread for the World uses CIVICUS Monitor data for their annual report on the state of global civil society. A variety of national-level, regional and international CSOs, as well as academic institutions and media outlets have referred to the Monitor website, with a peak in November 2018 around the time of the People Power Under Attack publication:



CIVICUS is also aware that a number of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), philanthropic organisations and donors also use the Monitor in their programming.



The CIVICUS alliance also supports each other where under threat. While 2018 marked the 20th anniversary of the UN’s declaration to protect human rights defenders, it also saw the highest ever number of human rights defenders killed – 321 in 27 countries. Many of them came from indigenous communities. In response to the killing of eight environmental defenders in Guatemala between January and August 2018 and at the request of CIVICUS members in Guatemala, CIVICUS and partners at the International Land Coalition and Front Line Defenders led a solidarity mission to Guatemala in August 2018 accompanied by Guatemalan CSOs. In addition to applying international pressure to protect environmental defenders, the mission’s purpose was to gather information to form recommendations on how best to protect defenders and advocate for Guatemala’s signature and ratification of the

Escazú Agreement (the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean). The Escazú Agreement, developed in partnership with civil society, is the first ever binding international instrument that includes commitments for the protection of environmental defenders, recognises the right to a healthy environment and establishes protections for individuals who work in defence of this right in Latin America and the Caribbean. Recommendations from the mission were captured in a report, *Losing One’s Life to Defend the Land*, and brought for discussion at a side event at the UNHRC in March 2019. CIVICUS and partners invited indigenous activist and environmental defender Leiria Vay Garcia to the UNHRC to lead and moderate the discussions. As a result, CIVICUS and partners, working together with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, have created a wider regional advocacy coalition which is continuing to promote attention on and support for the Escazú Agreement, including having done so during the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2019.

Triggered by the above example of environmental human rights defenders, we are re-thinking our decision-making framework in terms of advocacy work so that CIVICUS is not simply reactive but proactive. Specifically, we are focusing on how we can better align our advocacy to where the problems lies and where CIVICUS’ strengths and value-adds are. A successful example is CIVICUS’ outreach in the Pacific over the last two years where CIVICUS is one of the few organisations to document civic space issues in the Pacific (research, field visits, etc.) and where a growing database of Monitor data makes our recommendations stronger. Further updates will be published in future accountability reports.

How transparent is CIVICUS regarding its budgets, evaluations, policies, or remunerations? *(Cluster B, G1-G2)*

Transparency is a core value for CIVICUS (“we communicate with openness, honesty and transparency”) and it is embedded in the third Strategic Goal 2017-2022. The organisation aims to publish as much information as possible on its website and via social media – while striking the balance with regards to sensitive information and personal data as outlined in CIVICUS’ new Privacy Policy (more details in the next section).

Since 2010, CIVICUS' audited financial reports and budgets are published along with the Annual Report on the [CIVICUS website](#). The Feedback Response Policy, Environmental Policy, Event Principles, and the 2019-2020 annual plan are published on the organisation's [accountability page](#); the Membership Policy, Code of Conduct and Privacy Policy are available via the [membership application page](#). However, other policies on HR issues, Child Protection or IT are currently not published online. The general Policies and Procedures Manual is available upon request.

Project evaluations are shared with respective partners and stakeholders. While these have usually not been published online in the past, we have added more examples of organisational (Sida) and project evaluations (ICSW, SPEAK!) on the [accountability page](#). Overall though, the CIVICUS Secretariat is aware of the fact that we could publish more policies and evaluations to be accessed by a wider stakeholder group.

With regards to remunerations, CIVICUS conducts an annual gender pay gap and periodic salary benchmarking exercises. The gender pay gap by management level (*see graph below, percentages below 0% hint towards unequal pay with a disadvantage towards women*) shifted at senior level during 2018-2019 due to the change at the Secretary General level from a male to a female. The most recent benchmarking report was finalised in October 2019. The findings and information are shared with staff; however, not published externally. More information on staff salaries for 2018-2019 is included later in this report.



Beyond the Secretariat level, CIVICUS received a remuneration recommendation by the European Commission as part of their evaluation of the AGNA programme. We were asked to identify better ways for those CIVICUS members hosting AGNA programme fellows to deal with the imbalance of fellow remuneration (which is higher) than the salary levels of members' non-fellow staff. It is important for CIVICUS to balance that we are paying adequate salaries while not destroying local labour market structures. Solutions for this are currently being formulated.

How does CIVICUS guarantee privacy rights and personal data of the people it works with? *(Cluster B, G3)*

CIVICUS' [Privacy Policy](#) explains the collection, use, and disclosure of personal data when people use CIVICUS' services and the choices one has associated with that data, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A designated email address (privacy@civicus.org) for all matters in this regard is in place (e.g. requests to be removed from any email list that one may have subscribed to). Moreover, event participants must also indicate that they have read this Privacy Policy and whether or not they give their consent to receive emails from us, as well as whether they agree to the terms of our photo release form or not (e.g. if they do not want to be photographed or publicly shown in any event coverage). These are all efforts to enhance CIVICUS' accountability to its event participants and to help guarantee their privacy.



The protection of members, stakeholders, staff and activists is crucial to CIVICUS' accountability. In this regard, CIVICUS has also developed new internal guidelines to manage data and CIVICUS' new CRM is GDPR-compliant (e.g. only tracking information that is necessary).

As part of CIVICUS' capacity development activities, several digital security trainings were conducted with members and partners to help organisations become and remain safe online (see examples from the SPEAK! campaign earlier in this report). We started work in the reporting period with the Digital Security Lab Ukraine (and funded by the Stanford Digital Impact Grant) to create a [Digital Security Starter Course](#). The course was tested with various stakeholder groups and can now be accessed by the public for free until March 2020.

How fair and transparent are CIVICUS' recruitment, employment and staff development processes? *(Cluster B, G2; Cluster C, H1-H3)*

Overall, the Secretariat's streamlined structure enables fruitful collaboration, synchronised workflows and an engaged, driven workforce ready to move forward with the organisation's vision. CIVICUS continues to benefit from a highly-skilled Secretariat team and continually updates its internal processes and procedures to reflect the organisation's vision of best practice and innovation in all work streams and Clusters. Information captured on DevResults shows that cross-cluster initiatives are steadily increasing, demonstrating that the cluster-organised structure has improved collaboration. Throughout 2018-2019, CIVICUS invested in HR capacity to ensure that this function is fit for purpose to deliver on changed needs of a growing and more diverse staff. The new position of Head of People was created in September 2019 to support this work.

The Recruitment Policy was revised in 2018-2019 to ensure a fair and transparent process, to focus on local and multiple languages and ensure more diversity in the hiring process. This has been communicated to all staff. SLT and HR are also investigating automated and entrenched probation period reviews in light of the ongoing increase in staff numbers. It is concerning that South African work permits are becoming more difficult to obtain by CIVICUS'

workforce. This poses a challenge to the organisation's target to have the majority of staff based in Johannesburg and CIVICUS is working with legal advisors to find solutions for this. The work permit for the new Secretary General was successfully granted in November 2019 after 11 months.

With external consultancy support from OneHR, SLT was able to conclude a comprehensive and case-by-case review of all employment contracts in the last quarter of 2018-2019. This exercise included procuring and analysing the independently conducted 'Birches Benchmarking Study' on comparing and recommending a salary structure based on information obtained across the three geographies where CIVICUS has its hubs, namely South Africa, the United States, and Switzerland. In each of these locations, the roles that we employ were compared against a group of peer organisations to see how we are doing against the 50th percentile or mid-point of the job market in that location. The Birches report, which was completed in July 2019, indicates that while CIVICUS' pay-scales are significantly higher than the 50th percentile in South Africa, our salaries are well below range in comparison to pay scales at this level in the USA and Switzerland. The Birches report also provided specific recommendations on how we could address this disparity by working to move closer to the mid-point mark in and across these locations. Based on a detailed review of the options provided and in line with the international relevance and increasingly dispersed nature of our work, the agreement reached by SLT is for CIVICUS' salary structure be adapted to meet the 50th percentile of the USA job market as this would allow our pay-scales to be comparable and competitive across locations. As a significant number of roles across our system will need to be updated to meet this recommendation, we OneHR was requested to develop a brief on the costs and practical implications of implementation. Once agreed, it is the plan to budget for and implement the new pay structure as of 2020-2021. Progress will thus be reported on in future accountability reports.

In addition to benchmarking salaries, CIVICUS also undertook a detailed analysis of how the grading and location of roles is being determined across the system. In the interest of ensuring that all roles within the organisation are placed against an externally recognised and verifiable system of grading, we have agreed on the need to position *all* roles against the [Paterson grading scale](#). All employment contracts in 2020-2021 would therefore reflect a dual alignment with US 50th percentile benchmark and the location of the role within the prescribed levels of the Patterson system. However, a previous idea about a voluntary commitment to internal pay ratios is no longer pursued after discussions of the previous Secretary General with other civil society CEOs who identified some disadvantages such as driving outsourcing of the lowest-paid positions.

Once this process is finalised, we aim to publish the new salary scale transparently on the CIVICUS website. For now, the top five salaries of CIVICUS staff in 2018-2019 were:

1. Secretary General - US\$150,000
2. Chief Network Officer - US\$128,547
3. Chief Programmes Officer - US\$128,547
4. Chief Operations Officer - US\$121,333
5. Head of Geneva Office - US\$96,801

CIVICUS has grown significantly over the past year, both in headcount and in skills. Key staff were appointed to critical positions and steps taken towards transforming the Secretariat into a non-hierarchical learning organisation (see provided organogram in [Annex III](#)). Moreover, in pursuit of legal compliance and flexibility for staff to operate outside our official hubs, we have learnt that many organisations are grappling with compliance to local labour regulations in countries where they do not have a registered presence. This shared challenge provides an opportunity to connect, share experiences and lessons learnt and develop a system of exploring how employment contracts can be hosted by member or partner organisations in the relevant locations.

As for safety at work, SHIELD is the Health & Safety Committee of CIVICUS, primarily working to ensure the physical safety of staff and visitors at the Johannesburg Hub. SHIELD members have training in fire-fighting, as fire marshals, first aid and as SHE-rep's (safety, health and environmental hazards); this training is refreshed regularly. In addition, during South Africa's federal elections in May 2019, particular attention on staff safety was applied in the Johannesburg office.

While internal communication was made more effective since the roll-out of Workplace as CIVICUS' intranet, it still remains challenging for CIVICUS' globally dispersed set-up. Some colleagues working remotely on their own often feel left out of important processes which was also discussed at the staff retreat in November 2019. There were six internal promotions; and the turnover rate stood at 4% on 30 June 2019. CIVICUS, of course, adhered to labour law commitments in the different countries the organisation works in.

Employee statistics (as of 30 June 2019)

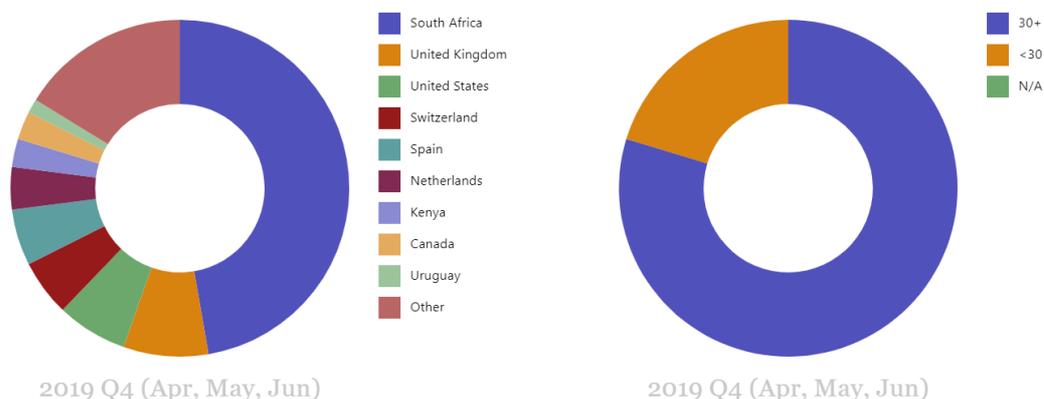
Nationality	Male	Female	Total
<i>Argentina</i>		2	2
<i>Armenia</i>		1	1
<i>Australia</i>		1	1
<i>Belgium</i>		1	1
<i>Botswana</i>		1	1
<i>Brazil</i>		1	1
<i>Cameroon</i>	1		1
<i>Canada</i>	2	1	3
<i>Colombia</i>		1	1
<i>Congo, Democratic Republic of the</i>		1	1
<i>France</i>		2	2
<i>Germany</i>		1	1
<i>Grenada</i>		1	1
<i>Hungary</i>		1	1
<i>India</i>	1	2	3
<i>Italy</i>		3	3
<i>Kenya</i>		1	1
<i>Lebanon</i>		1	1
<i>Malaysia</i>	1		1
<i>Morocco</i>		1	1
<i>Nicaragua</i>		1	1
<i>South Africa</i>	7	16	23
<i>Spain</i>		5	5
<i>Tunisia</i>		1	1
<i>Uganda</i>	1		1
<i>United Kingdom</i>	5	4	9
<i>United States</i>	1	2	3
<i>Zimbabwe</i>		3	3
Total	19	55	74

CIVICUS does not track the religion of staff or whether they have any physical or mental disabilities. While having slightly improved with regard to hiring staff which is from or based in

Asia, CIVICUS still acknowledges an underrepresentation with regards to location and nationality from Oceania and the Pacific region. Future reports will track progress in this regard.

In addition to a fulltime staff complement of 74, CIVICUS had 7 consultants in 2018-2019 performing specialised roles, spread across several countries. CIVICUS had 11 interns and 3 fellows in the reporting period.

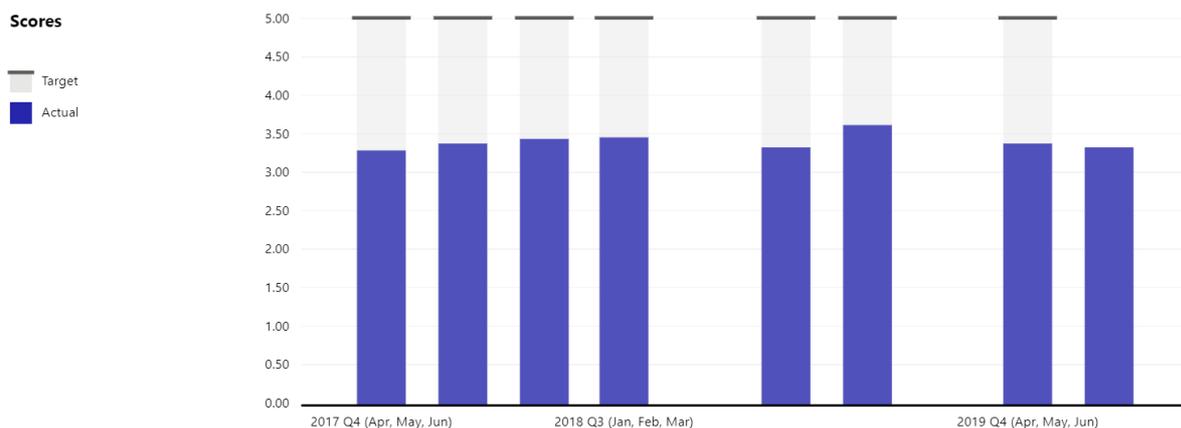
Staff breakdown by location and age (as of 30 June 2019)



Overall, 33.33% of staff members attended trainings in 2018-2019, among other topics on people management, participatory change management, risk management training, customer experience management, Outcome Mapping, communication or language skills:

An online learning management system (LMS) was launched in January 2017. As part of the LINGOS / Humentum community, this allows for a variety of practical training courses – some of them being a mandatory part of the induction process for new staff. However, 2 ½ years after the LMS implementation, uptake from staff is still limited despite targeted efforts from the Capacity Development Cluster to engage colleagues in online trainings. It was thus decided to cancel the LMS subscription by December 2019. Generally, training needs are identified as part of the quarterly performance reviews (either by the employee or the line manager) based on shortcomings in relation to the job description or based on new areas that a staff member would like to grow skills in.

CIVICUS conducts mandatory quarterly performance reviews with all staff; 100% of staff participated in these in 2018-2019. As shown in the table below, the average performance review score is steady across the years. In the past, CIVICUS applied a 360° approach; however, this approach was deemed too cumbersome for a relatively small organisation of 30-plus team members. Considering the recent restructuring and new HR structure, SLT is revisiting its performance management system.



A staff survey focusing on CIVICUS' work culture, diversity and inclusion was conducted in February 2018 and yielded a 60% response rate. Overall, staff seems to be satisfied working for CIVICUS based on the NPS of 38. However, similar to the 2016 survey, results are quite low for a) CIVICUS employees of diverse backgrounds are provided equal opportunities for success in the workplace (only 47% answered 'yes') and b) CIVICUS activity encourages the participation of employees with different backgrounds, viewpoints and experiences in all of its projects (only 52% answered 'yes'). The internal Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG) is actively encouraging HR to improve those areas by better induction and training on diversity and inclusion procedures and practices. The recent staff retreat in November 2019 (there was no staff retreat in the 2018-2019 reporting period) particularly looked at these areas.

How does CIVICUS ensure sustainable and diversified resourcing as well as resource allocation in line with strategic objectives? *(Cluster B, G4; Cluster C, I1-I2)*

CIVICUS is now in its fourth consecutive year of growth in funds and growth in the number of funding sources, and specifically in unrestricted resources, which includes yearly additions to unrestricted reserves. In 2018-2019, CIVICUS' income amounted to US\$10,579,998. There was no increase in Board reserves, and these still stand at a targeted US\$1m, intended to cover operating cost of three months or more in case of funding shortage or business interruption due to unforeseen circumstances.

CIVICUS's top five donors (out of 19 overall) and what percentage they contributed to total income are as follows:

1. Dutch MFA US\$2,848,878 (27%)
2. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency US\$2,140,962 (20%)
3. Ford Foundation US\$1,568,081 (15%)
4. European Commission US\$823,929 (8%)
5. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

As one can see, the majority of income in 2018-2019 came from development agencies, followed by private foundations / trusts. Expenditure rose substantially year-on-year which went hand in hand with new projects like Resilient Roots or the Goalkeepers Youth Action Accelerator. Salaries remain the biggest cost contributor throughout the year, followed by professional services, sub-grants, and partner travel / meeting costs. Please find more information and figures in [CIVICUS' audited financial statements for 2018-2019](#).

As part of the grant from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CIVICUS is required to report against the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard. The published reports for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 can be accessed [here](#).

In 2018-2019, the annual income from membership fees, around US\$110,046, amounted to roughly 1% of the Secretariat's annual budget. This is consistent with historical membership fee figures, and while minimal in the overall organisational accounting, membership fees are viewed as an indicator of member support, rather than an important income source, which is why fees are kept relatively low. On a yearly basis, the Secretariat grants 15 to 25 fee waivers (valued at +/- US\$ 1,000). As an innovation in 2018-2019, a new [Membership Solidarity Fund](#) was rolled out that is based on these membership fees. A Membership Advisory Group (MAG) consisting of alliance members decides how this fund is disbursed and reviews member applications. By doing so, CIVICUS actively involves members in decision-making processes of how money is spent – in addition to creating a greater sense of belonging and more solidarity across the alliance.

As part of the implementation of CIVICUS Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability Strategy, the Board discussed that while CIVICUS is in a comfortable financial situation with steady income growth over the last years (including 62% for core support), there is a further need to ensure diversity of funding sources.

CIVICUS has several procedures in place to ensure that its fundraising and marketing activities are in line with the organisation's five basic principles, South African law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This includes a Resource Mobilisation Policy, reflecting Ethical Fundraising Guidelines and the Accountability Commitments. CIVICUS did not receive any complaints for breaches of fundraising during 2018-2019.

CIVICUS has standing annual donor coordination meetings where the organisation engages with its donors to discuss CIVICUS' mission and activities, as well as ensures optimal coordination and strategic alignment among the differently funded projects and initiatives. This group consists of ten donor agencies. Donor Coordination Guidelines are also in place which outline efforts to harmonise different reporting formats, timelines, expectations etc. There were meetings in June 2018 and October 2019; however, none took place during this report's reporting period. However, bilateral meetings with CIVICUS' foundation partners (Open Society Foundations, Ford and CS Mott) as well as with an informal meeting with CIDA, Danida, Norad, and Sida, occurred during International Civil Society Week in Belgrade in April 2019.

LOOKING AHEAD:

A new and tailored accounting system was launched in November 2019 which will make the Secretariat's financial activities much more efficient and fit-for-purpose in light of the growth in income and the number of financial procedures.

How does CIVICUS deal with anti-corruption and financial controls? *(Cluster C, I3)*

CIVICUS has a comprehensive system of internal controls to manage risks and ensure that our financial resources are used in a regular, ethical, economical, effective and efficient manner towards the achievement of objectives.

Oversight (board and staff) – CIVICUS has an experienced Board that provides strategic thinking and general oversight. The day-to-day management of the organisation has been

delegated to the CIVICUS Secretary General and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who provide guidance and leadership in the implementation of CIVICUS programmes. Board and SLT profiles are provided in the supporting documentation.

Cash-flow and budget management – As part of the financial monitoring process monthly internal financial management reports are produced and circulated to all budget holders. This ensures that the budget holders are aware of any variances and take corrective action as required. Programmes are regularly reviewed and monitored in line with the organisational budget management processes. In addition, the Financial Manager monitors cash flow on a weekly basis, using electronic banking facilities, to ensure that there are sufficient funds in the organisational bank accounts to pay for operations and other running costs and that anticipated funds have been received. The Chief Operations Officer is immediately informed of anticipated cash flow difficulties and so that planned mitigation actions are taken. An example of this would be system challenges with the Swiss payroll for two months in 2018-2019 and a created solution of a more systematised payment release.

Audit processes – CIVICUS has statutory audits that are performed by external auditors. On an annual basis the auditors' review CIVICUS' internal control environment and provide assurance that the accounts prepared are true and fair. CIVICUS has always received an unqualified audit report. The proposed programme will be audited alongside CIVICUS' annual audit and a programme specific audited financial statement and report will be produced in addition to the organisation's annual audit.

Anti-corruption and bribery – CIVICUS' Fraud Prevention Policy "recognises the importance of protecting the organisation, its operations, its employees and its assets against financial risks, operational breaches and unethical activities". CIVICUS recognises a zero-tolerance policy regarding fraud and corruption. All matters raised by any source will be taken seriously and properly investigated. Definitions and types of fraud and corruption are outlined in the policy. CIVICUS has developed a Fraud Prevention Plan, consisting of Fraud Prevention, Fraud Response and Fraud Risk assessment are based on the high-risk areas identified through risk assessments. Any concerns should be reported in terms of the CIVICUS Fraud Response Plan. Moreover, all reports will be taken seriously and will be investigated by the SLT or designated investigation team. If deemed necessary, CIVICUS will notify and fully cooperate with the appropriate law enforcement agency. Any investigation resulting in the finding of fraud or corruption will be referred to the SLT for action. Fraudulent or corrupt activities that result in disciplinary action (in accordance with CIVICUS' Disciplinary Code and laws of the country) will be reported to the Board of Directors. Moreover, employees are asked to complete annual conflict of interest forms which are compiled by HR.

CIVICUS has established internal controls, policies and procedures to deter, prevent and detect fraud and corruption. All new employees, plus temporary and contract employees, are subject to background investigations including a criminal background check. CIVICUS will also verify all applicants' employment history, education and personal references prior to making an offer of employment. New employees receive training as part of orientation at the commencement of employment and all staff are regularly updated on the policy. Moreover, large posters of the policies were hung up in the Johannesburg office to ensure continuous awareness about the content and procedures.

CIVICUS' Anti-Bribery Compliance builds upon the U.K. Bribery Act, currently the most comprehensive act on this topic. This procedure focuses on the definition and types of bribery, key risk areas and penalties. CIVICUS' external auditors annually point out the latest fraud, corruption, and phishing schemes as well as discuss where CIVICUS' work might be exposed to corruption.

Whistleblowing – CIVICUS recognizes the need for and importance of whistleblowing as a means of ensuring that staff can raise issues of concern inside the organisation, and to

encourage staff members to raise genuine concerns about malpractice at an early stage. The Whistle-blower Policy aims to create a culture which will facilitate the disclosure of information by CIVICUS staff members relating to criminal conduct or conduct which violates any other CIVICUS Policy, Staff Handbook, or regulatory procedures; and to provide guidelines for the disclosure of such information and protection against any reprisals as a result of such disclosures. Any staff member wishing to raise any concern in a confidential manner should report the matter to the Chairperson of the CIVICUS Executive Board who will serve as the Appointed Officer. Due to the nature and type of concerns that may be raised through whistleblowing it is not possible to set definite time limits for the completion of investigations. However, the Appointed Officer will ensure that an initial investigation will start within five working days of any concern being reported. Feedback on how the matter has been addressed will be provided within five working days of the outcome of the investigation.

There were no reported corruption cases in 2018-2019; however, in case any incidents would ever occur, CIVICUS would strictly adhere to the outlined procedures. All documents mentioned above are submitted to the Panel along with this report (see Policies and Procedures Handbook).

Procurement – CIVICUS has a detailed Procurement Policy which is communicated to all staff and partners. Procurement trainings are conducted for staff regularly to keep them updated as well as to ensure that they are aware of any changes/amendments. The CIVICUS Procurement Policy is also shared with subgrantees as an annex to the sub partnership agreement. All vendors, contractors and suppliers must be active, in good standing and authorized to transact business in the country which CIVICUS operates from. Vendors, contractors and suppliers are subject to screening, including verification of the individual's or company's status as a debarred party.

Travel – According to CIVICUS' Travel Policy, all travel booked at CIVICUS' expense must be cost effective. In order to optimise cost savings for the organisation, employees are asked to make travel arrangements 7 or more days in advance of domestic travel and 14 or more days in advance of international travel where possible. Economy class is the in-policy booking class for all flights.

Sub-granting – The CIVICUS grant management manual guides CIVICUS' funding relationships with its partners. CIVICUS enters into sub-partnership agreements for the purpose of achieving its strategic goals and manages the funds disbursed according to these agreements. CIVICUS establishes partnerships with individuals and organisations based on a thorough assessment to ensure that the partnership does not compromise the integrity of CIVICUS and aligns with respective donor requirements. Organisations lacking the capacity to implement the project or to manage the funds shall not qualify for grants, unless arrangements are put in place to address such capacity gaps before the grant is given.

In 2018-2019, there was one case of a grantee misconduct with regard to its required reporting requirements and disrespectful communication to CIVICUS staff. After thorough deliberation, we decided that this behaviour is clearly outside of CIVICUS' values and we terminated the grantee relationship in October 2019.

What does CIVICUS' governance structure look like and how does it work in practice? *(Cluster C, J1-J2)*

What does CIVICUS' governance structure look like?

CIVICUS is a member organisation governed by US law and South African law. It has a two-tier governance structure: the AGM is held once year according to South African law and once every four years in accordance with US law. The Bylaws provide for the establishment of a Board of up to 15 members. The current Bylaws also make provision for various Board Committees and specifically require three committees, namely the Executive, Governance and Finance Committees.

The core roles of the Board identified in the Bylaws (*the CIVICUS By-Laws and the Boards ways of working document are shared with the Panel along with this report*) and adopted by Board members include:

- a) Strategic oversight and fiduciary responsibility
- b) Policy approvals and reviews
- c) Contributions as volunteers to the mission and purpose of the organisation.

How does it work in practice?

The Board, in its self-assessment of current practice, decided that it needs to play a policy and oversight-oriented role which provides space to the Secretary General to lead in the management of work and delivery of programmes. The shared leadership between Board and staff is one which strengthens the focus on mission, effectiveness and accountability.

Physically convening a geographically diverse Board is a challenge but the more interesting challenge is the growing diversity of the Board. For example, as CIVICUS' membership becomes more diverse, so does its Board, which means that there are more disparate perspectives. The current Board includes representatives of social enterprises, youth movements, national platforms, INGOs, private foundations, etc. Another potential challenge is the various 'advisory' and 'steering' committees that CIVICUS utilises for various programmes like the Monitor, AGNA and Innovation for Change, which in some ways create alternative power bases that also provide strategic direction.

CIVICUS Board elections take place when the second term of serving Board members is due to expire - every three years. It is a robust democratic process where the nominations process is open to both CIVICUS members and non-members. Selection criteria include results of the self-evaluation, specifically skills and experience as identified by the existing and outgoing members. Board members are elected by CIVICUS' voting members. A staggered rotation system for the election of the Board of Directors was introduced in early 2016, whereby two thirds of non-executive directors retire by rotation and are either re-elected if they have not served two consecutive terms or are replaced by newly elected Directors. This was implemented as a consequence of a previous Board self-evaluation. As expected, this new governance process is effective so far. It ensures continuity and retention of skills, and decreases delays caused by a complete overhaul of the Board. However, onboarding of new Board members takes time and requires more face-to-face time as a body than expected.

In April 2019, CIVICUS welcomed new Board Chair Julia Sanchez who replaced Anabel Cruz after six years in this role. Moreover, the alliance elected two new Board members: Betty Barkha and Serap Altinisik (who replaced outgoing Board members Oyebisi Babatunde Oluseyi and Anabel Cruz). The CIVICUS Board consisted of 14 members in 2018-2019 (see an overview [online](#)), of which nine were women (including the Board Chair – Julia Sanchez) and five men. Eight members were from the Global South and one was a youth representative, i.e. under the age of 30 years. There were no co-opted Directors in 2018-2019.

CIVICUS' Secretary General is an ex-officio Board member and the only paid member of the Board. All other Board Directors are unpaid, and work on a voluntary basis. CIVICUS provides no financial compensation for their Board Directors but does cover transport and logistics

LOOKING AHEAD:

The Board has formulated a new working structure including the following Board Committees for 2019-2020:

- Executive Committee: Board Chair as the Committee Chair
- Operations Committee: Board Treasurer as the Committee Chair
- Governance Committee: Board Secretary as the Committee Chair
- Membership Committee: Board Vice Chair as the Committee Chair

costs for meetings and events within reason (as outlined in the Board Reimbursement Policy). Board Directors and CIVICUS staff complete registers of interests at the beginning of each financial year as required by CIVICUS' Conflict of Interest Policy. Often CIVICUS' most active members in terms of programme delivery are nominated/elected to the Board, which makes the Conflict of Interest Policy very important. Following up on a recommendation from the Independent Review Panel, we now publish Board members' conflict of interest declarations [online](#).

New Board Members of CIVICUS receive a Board Induction Manual (*the 2019 version is shared with the Panel for further information; it is updated every year*) to provide them with information on the Bylaws, 3-year terms, duties, organisational background, the nominations process and so forth. This practice was a result of a previous self-evaluation. Another relevant guideline is on continued Board service after leaving a member organisation (which clarifies what happens when a Board member leaves a sponsor member organisation).

The Board meets physically at least twice a year – with ongoing Committee meetings in between. Regular attendance at the two annual Board meetings is of utmost importance – as clarified in the Attendance Policy. The Board met on 15-16 December 2018 (Montevideo, Uruguay) and 12-13 April 2019 (Belgrade, Serbia). There was an additional Board call on 25 June 2019. While outside the reporting period, there was a Board-staff-evening on 5 November 2019 in Johannesburg when everyone came to town for the Board meeting (3 November) and staff retreat. Staff engagement with the Board is considered a priority and there are other ways of engagement, e.g. by Board members' engagement in initiatives / work streams led by staff.

There are three main Board committees, namely Executive Committee, Operations Committee (which includes financial matters), and Governance and Membership Committee. In addition, there are special purpose committees for very specific issues, such as the Nominations Committee and the Search Committee set-up in May 2018 to lead the search and recruitment a new Secretary General. A Nominations Committee was moreover created to oversee the election of new Board members Finally, a Board working group for an updated Board reporting process was in place from March 2019 to June 2019. This was first tested at the Board meeting in November 2019, with two so-called deep dives into two of the four Strategic Goals.

Unfortunately, not all Board members have completed the self-evaluation exercise so far, but we are currently trying to optimise this process. The process itself and survey results will be discussed at the Executive Committee meeting in early 2020. New Board members will only evaluate their engagement and the overall Board's effectiveness in the second half of 2020.

In July and August 2019, the Board conducted a full 360° appraisal process of the Secretary General after six months' probation period, including a staff survey to evaluate the new Secretary General. Overall, the feedback provided has underscored expectations in relation to two aspects of her role: (1) Creating external impact through strategic relationships, positioning and partnerships, and (2) building internal engagement through trust, communication and clarity of purpose. In each area, a few key outcomes or priorities were

pointed out – along with actions that should be advanced through her role in order to achieve the same. Future reports will provide updates on the actions and progress thereof.

In addition, there are many other general measures in place to ensure good Secretary General accountability (e.g. clear job descriptions, Board terms of reference, regular chats between the Board Chair and the Secretary General, in-camera sessions with the Board and Secretary General to discuss any sensitive issues etc.).

How does CIVICUS ensure an independent and effective oversight of its strategic direction, legal compliance, risk, and performance? *(Cluster C, K1)*

As described above, there is a clear division of responsibilities between CIVICUS' Senior Leadership Team and the Board of Directors – with mutual support. The Secretary General provides an update to the Board at every Executive Committee meeting and at the two Board meetings. The Board provides its views and guidance as necessary. The Operations Committee receives a quarterly Board Health Dashboard with regards to the financial, HR and membership status of the organisation. This dashboard was extended into a wider Board reporting process consisting of monthly Secretary General updates, quarterly data trends from DevResults, and deep dives into two of the four Strategic Goals every six months. In addition, the SLT (acting as so-called Strategic Goal Champions for two goals each) meets monthly (plus additional ad hoc meetings when needed) to take decisions related to the structure, programme delivery, organisational resourcing, etc. Minutes of those meetings are shared with all staff on Workplace and during monthly staff meetings.

Another layer of independent oversight and legal compliance is added by external evaluations (mentioned earlier in this report), the financial audit, and Deloitte as CIVICUS' legal advisor in South Africa.

Procurement was split from Finance in 2016-2017, separating sourcing practices from financial transacting as a risk mitigation measure. Moreover, through a robust risk matrix, the top risk identified and monitored during 2018-2019 was on government legislation. Laws, including those that affect the ability of CSOs to receive funding, introduce burdensome registration requirements and constrain protests, are among the major pressures on civic space. These laws could have a significant impact on CIVICUS and our members and partners, and hence we could see impact after mitigation. There was an updated risk register presented to the Board in November 2019 which will be included in the next Accountability Report.

CIVICUS' effective anti-corruption measures are reported upon earlier in this report.

How does CIVICUS Board and SLT take responsibility to meet the 12 Accountability Commitments? *(Cluster C, K1-K2)*

CIVICUS has been a proud member of Accountable Now since 2007 and reports annually against the Accountability Commitments. Our latest interim report to Accountable Now was submitted in January 2019, then assessed by the Independent Review Panel and published in April 2019. Throughout the years, there have been close ties between the two organisations. Bettie van Straaten, then Alex Sardar, and now Amy Taylor serve(d) as a Board Directors on the Accountable Now Board and attend Board meetings.

Accountability is crucial for CIVICUS – as is highlighted in the fact that it constitutes the organisation’s third Strategic Goal for 2017 – 2022. As part of the restructuring, a new Cluster was created to deal specifically with CIVICUS’ monitoring, evaluation, learning, accountability and reporting issues: The Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Accountability (MELA) Cluster. This was renamed the Impact and Accountability (I&A) Cluster in November 2017. Two new staff members were recruited in 2017 and a third one in January 2019 to ensure that CIVICUS adheres to accountability standards and applies coherent monitoring and evaluation approaches throughout the different work streams. However, with Alex Sardar’s departure from CIVICUS in April 2019, less strategic attention was given to accountability issues at a senior leadership level for some time until a new reporting matrix was finalised. From September 2019 to February 2020, the I&A Cluster Lead was on maternity leave. While there was no maternity cover in place, additional external consultancy support from Data Innovator was ensured to fill that gap.

The main mechanism for members to hold the CIVICUS Secretariat accountable is the Annual General Meeting. Moreover, (dis)satisfaction is expressed in annual Membership and Constituents Surveys and there are many more informal ways of regular interaction and sharing feedback. Additionally, CIVICUS staff openly raises concerns with SLT when they encounter those. Examples are inputs from the Diversity and Inclusion Group on inclusive recruitment processes or fair representation on the Programme Management Forum (PMF). As of June 2018, external partners can hold CIVICUS staff (including SLT) and Board accountable via an [online feedback and complaints form](#).

As the Secretariat of AGNA, CIVICUS is also coordinating the work of AGNA’s Legitimacy



Transparency and Accountability (LTA) working group. Many LTA members are also engaged in the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#) (i.e. Balkan Civil Society Development Network, CCC Cambodia, Rendir Cuentas, and VANI India) so that good synergies are ensured among the different activities. This overlap also helps in strengthening the accountability agenda within the CIVICUS alliance. In November 2018, AGNA’s LTA members organised with other practitioners and CSOs the first full Global Accountability Week during which the group also launched a [public good LTA practice platform](#) with regular updates and additions from all regions of the world.

How is CIVICUS promoting the Accountability Commitments among staff and improving performance? *(Cluster C, K2-K3)*

Since late 2017, CIVICUS and Accountable Now (together with Keystone Accountability) have been testing within the [Resilient Roots initiative](#) whether organisations who are more accountable and responsive to their roots - namely, their primary constituencies - are more resilient against external threats. In 2018-2019, the Impact and Accountability Cluster was part of Accountable Now’s peer learning group on improving organisational feedback and complaints handling mechanisms.

CIVICUS staff is regularly engaged in Accountable Now issues – mainly via the Impact and Accountability Cluster which leads the organisation’s efforts in ensuring and promoting CIVICUS’ accountability commitments. Regular staff updates (via monthly staff meetings, the annual staff retreat, weekly Workplace posts etc.) ensure that colleagues are aware of current

challenges, for examples those identified by the Independent Review Panel or other evaluations, and are engaged in improving the organisation's performance thereof. Examples include staff follow-up on the Panel recommendations around more awareness on newly developed policies during staff meetings or a staff review of the new Secretary General. Moreover, this Accountability Report was developed in collaboration with different Clusters and management levels in order to reflect on CIVICUS Secretariat's overarching efforts in 2018-2019. Beyond staff input and recommendations from the Independent Review Panel, CIVICUS did not receive any formal input from members or external partners on the content of the Accountability Report; however, feedback from these stakeholders through other opportunities (e.g. post-event surveys or Annual Constituency Survey) is included in the report. The Senior Leadership Team regularly promoted the Accountable Now membership with staff, partners and donors.

CIVICUS is a supporter of the Global Standard for CSO Accountability and was consulted in the development of the 12 Accountability Commitments and reporting framework as part of its membership with Accountable Now. Within AGNA's LTA working group, CIVICUS has started to support the development of a new self-assessment app in June 2019 which is based on the Global Standard for CSO Accountability (i.e. [Rendir App](#)). The app is expected to be online in January 2020 for an initial testing phase with AGNA members before wider roll-out with other CIVICUS alliance members. CIVICUS itself completed the Rendir App with a result "between 54 and 72 out of 72 possible total points".

Finally, CIVICUS translated its [website on accountability](#) into French and Spanish to share its Accountability Framework, Developmental Evaluation Framework and other updates more pro-actively in other languages as well as inviting non-English speaking partners for feedback.

Final Conclusions on CIVICUS' Accountability Reporting

CIVICUS continues to prioritise and invest in strengthening its accountability to all its stakeholders. Accountability is firmly embedded in CIVICUS' Strategic Plan 2017-2022, together with our Accountability Framework which will help to consistently and systematically track progress and impact against CIVICUS' Strategic Goals, meet accountability commitments and enable organisational learning. The implementation of DevResults (see graphs throughout this report) and the new organisational-wide Developmental Evaluation Framework also deepen CIVICUS' culture of evidence based, data-driven decision making. CIVICUS looks forward to sharing new learnings and progress against the third year of the Strategic Plan in its next interim Accountability Report 2019-2020.

This report covers the period from 01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 – with some more current examples where clarified. It was submitted in December 2019. The report was compiled in a participatory process with involvement from all CIVICUS Clusters and representation from all management levels. For any questions or feedback on this report, please get in touch with the Impact & Accountability Cluster (Merle Rutz, merle.rutz@civicus.org) or via feedback@civicus.org.



AGNA LTA Working Group, Jordan, June 2019

HEADQUARTERS

25 Owl Street, 6th Floor
 Johannesburg,
 South Africa,
 2092
 Tel: +27 (0)11 833 5959
 Fax: +27 (0)11 833 7997

UN HUB: NEW YORK

205 East 42nd Street,
 17th Floor
 New York, New York
 United States
 10017

UN HUB: GENEVA

11 Avenue de la Paix
 Geneva
 Switzerland
 CH-1202
 Tel: +41 (0)22 733 3435