

European Investment Bank's engagement with civil society **2022 highlights**

The European Investment Bank values its engagement with civil society. We believe that being open improves the quality and sustainability of our policies and of the projects we finance. Being open also increases our accountability to society. To this end, we actively share information and engage in constructive dialogue and partnerships with civil society.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) engages with its civil society stakeholders in a variety of ways:

- We invite civil society partners to an annual seminar with the EIB's Board of Directors.
- We organise public consultations on our key policies.
- We host events to discuss what we are doing, explore emerging issues and benefit from the feedback and ideas of civil society.
- We respond to requests for information from civil society.
- We partner with civil society on topics of mutual interest.

This document provides highlights of the Bank's engagement with civil society with examples of the work undertaken in 2022.

It is organised into thematic sections:

- Environment and climate change
- Governance
- Social development
- Cross-cutting issues

Environment and climate change

Civil society-EIB partnership on removing obsolete barriers to restore free-flowing rivers in Europe

As part of the EIB's contribution to achieving the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 target of removing obsolete barriers on 25 000 km of rivers in Europe, the Bank has created a partnership with the World Fish Migration Foundation to sponsor the Dam Removal Europe Award.

The award was organised by a civil society coalition including the World Fish Migration Foundation, Rewilding Europe, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the European Rivers Network, The Nature Conservancy, and Wetlands International. It shines a spotlight on innovative projects by communities, river users, barrier removal specialists and local authorities to remove obsolete barriers, with a view to encouraging similar initiatives to restore free-flowing rivers across Europe.

An international jury, which included an EIB representative, shortlisted **five projects** from across the European Union that successfully removed obsolete barriers from rivers. The **winner** was announced at an **international dam removal seminar** in Portugal in May 2022, at which the EIB presented the winning project with a cash prize of €10 000 to be reinvested in scaling up the removal of obsolete barriers.

The EIB participated in several follow-up events on free-flowing rivers organised by WWF and the World Fish Migration Foundation, including at the European Parliament in September and at the International River Symposium in November 2022. Collaborating with civil society on obsolete barrier removal enabled the Bank to develop awareness at the EIB and externally about the impact of removing obsolete barriers and the need for strategies to restore the connectivity of Europe's rivers.

Partnership with the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre on assessing nature risks

The EIB created a partnership with the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) to test a nature risk screening methodology for assessing how the Bank's loans and investments affect — and depend on — biodiversity, ecosystems and their services, with a view to managing such risks in its portfolio.

The activities of financial institutions such as the EIB can have a major impact, both negative and positive, on nature. While many institutions, including the EIB, already calculate their carbon footprint, tools for nature-related screening and measuring are still under development.

Through this partnership, UNEP-WCMC will apply the **ENCORE** screening tool to the EIB's direct lending portfolio to calculate the nature-related impacts and dependencies of EIB-financed loans and investments. The partnership will deliver an assessment of the EIB's exposure to the most material nature-related dependencies and impacts by sector and sub-sector, to enable the Bank to consider these in investment decisions. The EIB also plans to carry out a nature stress test in 2023 to assess the exposure of the Bank's investment and loan portfolio to biodiversity risk in a number of plausible short-, medium- and long-term scenarios.

Nature-based solutions for flood risk reduction in Greece: Partnership with Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund Greece

The EIB has a partnership with WWF Greece and **Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation** (GIB), a foundation promoting sustainable and resilient infrastructure. The partnership focuses on accelerating the uptake of nature-based solutions for flood mitigation and climate resilience in the Thessaly region of Greece, which has suffered heavily from repeated flooding in urban and non-urban environments. In June 2022, the first phase of this partnership concluded with a workshop on the pre-feasibility study, based on fieldwork in Thessaly carried out by GIB and WWF Greece (other participants in the study included The Nature Conservancy, the National Technical University of Athens, Swiss Re and Icatelist).

In September 2022, the second phase of the partnership kicked off to engage with local and regional authorities on co-designing specific nature-positive flood mitigation measures in selected sub-basins. This phase will also deliver a set of biodiversity indicators and monitoring programme requirements to track improvements to the ecosystem's health and integrity, and a methodology for engaging local authorities and communities designing and implementing nature-based solutions.

The **International Institute for Sustainable Development** is partnering with the project to provide a comprehensive **analysis** of the full life-cycle costs of flood reduction infrastructure options, taking into consideration environmental, social, economic and governance risks. In 2023, the partnership will focus on the replicability of the Thessaly case study in similar contexts in Europe. The goal is to design a nature-based project for flood risk reduction in Thessaly that is bankable enough for the EIB to co-finance.

Cooperating with civil society to scale up support for healthy and sustainable oceans

The EIB held talks with civil society in 2022 on how the Bank could scale up its investments in fishery sustainability, coastal protection and ecosystem restoration, as well as in blue, nature-positive projects under the **EIB Blue Sustainable Ocean Strategy**¹ and the **Clean Oceans Initiative**. The Bank has made €2.5 billion available from 2019 to 2023 for investment in projects that improve and protect the health of the oceans and the sustainable exploitation of their resources. However, developing a pipeline of projects has been challenging due to:

- difficulties in demonstrating the full range of costs and benefits;
- the need for extensive coordination and consultation with partners;
- the distinctive needs of projects for which standard financing models are not easily adaptable;
- the need to identify grant sources to increase financial viability;
- the challenge of finding partners with project pipelines, relevant experience and networks on the ground.

A series of meetings was organised with civil society organisations working on healthy and sustainable oceans, to learn from their experience in these areas. These included:

- the **International Union for Conservation of Nature's Blue Natural Capital Financing Facility**, which has gained significant experience in supporting blue natural capital projects across a range of coastal and marine ecosystems and industries;
- **Finance Earth** and **WWF**, which have developed an innovative model that aims to channel more private sector finance into fishery improvement projects, a proven approach to increase the sustainability of commercial fisheries;
- **Global Climate Forum** and **Delft University**, which have world-leading expertise on coastal adaptation and nature-positive coastal flood protection;
- **Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC)**, which manages the Knowledge Hub on Sea Level Rise that provides assessments of knowledge on the drivers and impacts of sea level rise, and policy options for each of the major ocean basins around Europe.

The EIB will continue working with civil society in 2023 to support pipeline development investment under the EIB Blue Sustainable Ocean Strategy.

Food and water security: Cooperation with the World Resources Institute

The EIB held a series of meetings with the **World Resources Institute (WRI)** this year, leading to the Bank's official endorsement of the **African Cities Water Adaptation (ACWA) Fund** at COP27. The ACWA Fund is a blended finance instrument set up by the World Resources Institute and partners to help African cities scale up and accelerate investments in locally led climate adaptation solutions in the water sector. The fund is supported by commitments by more than 22 institutions to provide technical assistance and knowledge building to accelerate the development of bankable projects in cities.

In its first phase (2020-2022), the fund delivered \$3 million in grants to six cities in Africa (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa in Ethiopia, Kigali and Musanze in Rwanda, and Johannesburg and Gqeberha in South Africa) to develop water resilience action plans at a city-region scale through robust analysis and a multi-partner planning process. In its second phase (2022-2023), the fund is supporting the identification and development of a pipeline of priority projects for implementation and investment. The focus of the EIB's engagement with the World Resources Institute on the ACWA Fund is now on turning the endorsement into action.

The EIB and the World Resources Institute also organised a joint event at COP27 on food security challenges in the face of climate change and other compounding crises. Food insecurity and instability are affecting vulnerable countries and households that are already on the frontlines of climate change. This crisis is compounded by supply chain disruptions brought about by the Ukraine conflict, land degradation and declining biodiversity. Nowhere has this been more evident than on the African continent.

The joint event, with a keynote speech by the governor of Marsabit County in Kenya, brought together representatives from the Africa Food Security Fund, the World Resources Institute Africa, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Food Programme and the Danish Red Cross. It sought to address how the EIB, other multilateral development banks and the international community could support vulnerable communities in developing their own strategies to address the challenges of food security and environmental protection and provide a livelihood for farmers, balancing short- and long-term needs and trends.

1. The four eligible sectors under the EIB's Blue Sustainable Ocean Strategy are sustainable coastal flood protection and ecosystem restoration, sustainable seafood production, green shipping and blue research, and development and innovation activities.

Sustainable finance: International Association for Impact Assessment event in Croatia

The EIB worked with the Croatian Association of Experts in Nature and Environmental Protection (HUSZPO) to organise a European conference, [Environmental Assessments and the European Green Deal '22](#). Conference participants discussed the role of sustainable finance in reorienting investments towards more sustainable techniques and technologies and sustainable long-term development activities.

Over 300 people from professional associations, civil society organisations and academia, as well as representatives of public authorities and financial and business sectors, participated in the conference and discussed the implementation of the “substantial contribution” and “do no significant harm” concepts under the EU Taxonomy Regulation. Through several panel discussions and workshops, participants examined the integration of environmental considerations into the investment decision-making process and the use of impact assessment processes as a key tool for the application of the “do no significant harm” principle.

EIB support for the Carbon Disclosure Project

The [Carbon Disclosure Project \(CDP\)](#) and the EIB have a long history of dialogue and exchange. In 2021, this relationship grew stronger when the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund, which together make up the EIB Group, decided to support the [CDP Investor Signatory Initiative](#), the goal of which is to improve companies’ disclosure of their environmental data.

As a result, the Carbon Disclosure Project sends its annual request for environmental data, which targets more than 9 600 companies, on behalf of the EIB Group as well, along with the other investor signatories. The EIB also uses the data collected by projects under the initiative, in particular when evaluating the alignment of its counterparties with the Paris Agreement — the international treaty on climate change.

Within the Investor Signatory Initiative, the EIB joined the [2022 CDP Science-Based Targets campaign](#). Under this campaign, the EIB, together with more than 300 financial institutions and multinational firms with a total of \$37 trillion in assets and spending power, are calling on over 1 000 of the world’s most impactful businesses to set emissions goals in line with the Paris Agreement’s goal to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Governance

Answering requests for information from civil society

As part of the [EIB Group Transparency Policy](#), the Bank has committed to regularly publish accurate information about its role, policies and operations. For example, the [public register](#) provides access to the Bank’s key project-related environmental and social documents and some key environmental policy documents.

The policy also determines how the Bank discloses information and documents² upon request. Although the borrower undertakes to carry out the project in accordance with the EIB’s environmental and social standards, processing requests for information provides the Bank with further opportunities to exchange with the promoter at the project level and receive first-hand information from affected communities. The [Report on the implementation of the EIB Group Transparency Policy](#) provides an overview of the requests processed by the Civil Society Division each year.

Requesting information from the EIB allows clients and partners to get a better understanding of the Bank’s roles and responsibilities. The Bank values and encourages these exchanges and facilitates informal meetings with its relevant services on topics of interest or on specific projects. Topics discussed this year have included the Bank’s approach to human rights and to fragility and conflict.

2. See Chapter 5 “Disclosure of information” in the EIB Group Transparency Policy.

EIB Board of Directors seminar with civil society representatives

In February 2022, representatives from a very large mix of civil society organisations, including international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), think tanks, research and academic institutions and trade unions, participated in the second [online annual seminar](#) with the EIB Board of Directors.

The seminar dedicated two sessions to themes selected in collaboration with civil society organisations. During the first session, participants discussed the EIB's strengthening of its sustainability framework, with a particular focus on the Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework, the Paris Alignment for Counterparties Framework and the Bank's first

Climate Adaptation Plan. The discussion then turned towards integrity and proactive fraud and corruption detection activities.

Finally, the policy dialogue session, opened by EIB President Werner Hoyer, reflected the diversity of civil society organisations in the room. Board members discussed participants' suggestions and answered questions on topics ranging from the Paris Agreement alignment of non-ruminant livestock projects, to the Bank's support for financial literacy. However, most of the conversation focused on [EIB Global](#), the Bank's recently launched arm dealing with projects beyond Europe.

Social development

Strengthening civil society's role in supporting the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Greece

The EIB has created a partnership with six Greek NGOs to establish a network of civil society organisations providing psychological and social support to asylum seekers and refugees to help them integrate in Greece. The partnership's ultimate goal is to improve communication between the Bank, the Greek government and civil society organisations regarding the portfolio of investments available for migration and the health sector.

Civil society organisations in Greece play a crucial role in protecting and promoting positive mental health and care for asylum seekers and refugees. However, they face several challenges, including a lack of coordination and collaboration among themselves, and few opportunities for dialogue and exchange with the government on how to improve psychosocial support services for asylum seekers and refugees in the country.

This initiative will strengthen cooperation among civil society organisations through the development of a common strategy and a network committed to addressing challenges linked with the reception and integration of immigrants. The initiative will contribute to a more effective multisectoral and multilayered support system focusing on the social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees.

Dialogue and collaboration with leading civil society organisations on social housing

Housing affordability is one of the biggest problems faced by many Europeans. It predominantly affects vulnerable groups and people who move to large cities in search of better work opportunities. The EIB has financed a large number of social and affordable housing projects throughout Europe. Between 2017 and 2021, it provided €6.9 billion, which enabled the construction or renovation of 807 000 housing units.

Since the social and affordable housing sector is not uniform in all European countries, the Bank has been engaging with leading NGOs to help develop the sector.

[Housing Europe](#) is a European association of national social, affordable and cooperative housing provider associations. The Bank regularly consults Housing Europe on ways to strengthen the development of social and affordable housing in the European Union.

[Habitat for Humanity](#) is a leading global NGO specialising in housing. In Europe, Habitat is active in promoting housing provision and energy efficiency for low-income households. The EIB has been in talks with Habitat on developing innovative financing mechanisms for housing for low-income households. The Bank contributed to Habitat's main European housing event, the [Europe Housing Forum](#), which took place simultaneously in Brussels and Warsaw from 16 to 20 November 2022.

Cross-cutting issues

EIB supports ICLEI's Transformative Action Award

The Transformative Action Award is an annual prize organised by the civil society organisation [ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability](#). It rewards current or past initiatives

organised by regions, cities or NGOs that use the pathways of the [Basque Declaration](#) on sustainable development for sociocultural, socioeconomic or technological transformation.

The EIB supported the award ceremony in Brussels in December 2022 and was part of the jury alongside the ENVE Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy, UNESCO Etxea (Spain), the city of Aalborg (Denmark), and ICLEI Europe.

The Engaged Jiu Valley, a civil society coalition based in Petrila, Romania, was the laureate in 2021 with a **transformative action** aiming to reinvent the Jiu Valley. With a bottom-up approach based on collaborative work, the coalition is transforming the valley, formerly the largest coal-mining region in Romania, into a sustainable, smart and inclusive area.

Łódź (Poland) and **Caldes de Montbui (Spain)** were runners-up for the award. Łódź's initiative focused on citizen involvement to design and implement a sustainable city development strategy, and Caldes de Montbui's project focused on the energy transition, encouraging people to switch to photovoltaic energy.

A special mention was also given to **Barcelona (Spain)** for its Young People Tackling the Climate Emergency initiative, which encourages young people to apply a scientific research approach and tackle practical climate challenges with pragmatic and sustainable solutions.

Reporting according to a civil society-led framework

In 2022, the Bank published its annual set of sustainability-related disclosures, which include reports drafted according to disclosure frameworks developed with civil society:

- EIB Group's flagship **Sustainability Report**
- **Disclosures in accordance with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)** standard
- **Disclosures in accordance with the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)**
- **Sustainability disclosures in accordance with the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB)** framework
- **EIB Group Carbon Footprint Report**

The Bank considers sustainability-related reporting to be an important tool to communicate its sustainability performance to partners and clients.

Engagement with civil society for the Finance in Common Summit 2022 in Abidjan

The third **Finance in Common Summit** (FIC), co-hosted by the EIB and the African Development Bank, was held in October 2022 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Finance in Common is the global network of all public development banks, which aims to align financial flows with the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Paris Agreement**.

Preparations for the Abidjan summit involved early discussions between civil society groups, in particular the civil society coalition **FORUS International**, the co-hosts and the Finance in Common secretariat. This early cooperation led to the participation of civil society representatives in most of the conference's panels (in particular on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and human rights, moderated by the president of the **International Federation for Human Rights** and with the participation of the Accountability Counsel) and in the closing session (with the president of FORUS).

Partnership with European Movement International

The EIB continued to cooperate with **European Movement International** in 2022 to organise events for the series **Investing in the Future of Europe**. The events feature debates in different EU Member States and accession countries and involve members of civil society, EU institutions, national governments, businesses and employer organisations. They offer an opportunity to highlight the benefits of European integration and to discuss how to invest in the European Union and the well-being of its inhabitants.

The events are organised with the support of the European Movement's national offices and are supported by an online communication campaign. Since its launch in 2017, the series has had events in numerous European countries, including Poland, France, Serbia, Ireland, Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Finland, as well as digital events during the pandemic.

Two events were held in 2022, one focusing on **the European Union's climate action post-COP26**, and another on **the Future of Ukraine in Europe**. These events were also an occasion for civil society representatives to participate in a panel with representatives of the European Environmental Bureau and the **Anti-Corruption Action Center — AntAC (Ukraine)**.



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More information about the Civil Society Division and its engagement activities
can be found here: www.eib.org/cso